

- Announcer: [00:00:02](#) Welcome to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. The 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: [00:00:19](#) Well hey, everybody, and welcome to episode 288 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. I'm so excited for a couple of reasons.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:00:30](#) Number one, we are one week away from the fifth anniversary of this podcast. Yeah. We're almost ready for Kindergarten. I don't know, what else do you do when you're five? I'll tell you what we're going to do. We're going to celebrate because it's been an exceptional journey and a lot of you have said just coincidentally over the years like man, I love this show but my library budget, my book budget, gone. So we're going to stack your library.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:00:55](#) So how to win is to go on to my social channels. I'm on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Instagram Carey Nieuwhof. Facebook and Twitter is cnieuwhof. All the links are in the show notes. Just go to leadlikeneverbefore.com and you can find everything in there. So what we're going to do is we're going to get nine listeners five books each. So nine of you are going to get five books of your choice. Just go through any alumni and we will buy you their books, okay?
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:01:22](#) So that's going to be a lot of fun. We're doing nine listeners because we are at over nine million downloads after five years, closing in on ten. Thank you so much for sharing. Thanks for the ratings and reviews and if this episode means something to you, please do share on social or with a friend. Just text them the link. I know a lot of you use this for team discussion. And there's a lot to discuss today because David Kinnaman who's the president of the Barna Group is back on the podcast.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:01:47](#) We sat down just outside of Toronto a couple weeks ago and had a long, free wheeling conversation. Again, so much my heart for this podcast. You know what? I used to think as a leader man, if I could ever have dinner with, if I could ever just for an hour sit down and pick the brain of leader X, this is what I would want to ask him. And that's what I did with David. It's a pretty wide ranging conversation. We do talk about some myths that people still widely believe and if anybody is going to bust some myths about leadership and culture in church, it should be David Kinnaman because he has all the research. Plus, we talk

about some surprising good news when it comes to faith in the next generation. So all that is ahead in this wide ranging, fascinating conversation with Barna president, David Kinnaman.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:02:34](#) Now, also, a couple of things. I am so excited to see what our listeners do. And do you know already, they've only been partners with us for about three months of shows and in those months alone churches who've heard about Remodel Health through this podcast have actually put \$625,000 back into their ministries. It's insane. You guys have saved \$625,000 on what? On health care because overall, Remodel Health a brand new company has now helped churches and not for profits save 7.2 million dollars on their health care. Because sometimes what happens is you look at your health care it's like one plan fits all when it doesn't really fit all. You don't really understand all the benefits. Maybe you could do a lot better for your employers and Remodel Health exists to use technology and their team to help you get the best you can for your health care coverage for your staff.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:03:33](#) So if you're an American church and you're struggling under health care costs and you want to do better for your employees and you want to save some of that 7.2 million dollars, this podcast alone over \$600,000 and funnel that back in your ministry, you got to check out Remodel Health. So go to remodelhealth.com/carey today to download their church buyers guide for free and start saving. So that's remodelhealth.com/carey. C-A-R-E-Y. And you can get their church buyers guide today.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:04:04](#) And then what's one area that will affect visitors to your church every Sunday and actually on Tuesday and actually Wednesday at 3:00 AM when someone is searching for what's next in their life or God or questions? You know what that is? Your website. Nobody visits a church these days without first visiting the website. So the question is, how are you doing on that front? Is it appealing? Updated? Good website? Because a good website's going to directly impact how many people you actually reach. That's why our friends at Pro Media Fire are launching a brand new service Pro Web Fire. It's a subscription service and they're launching it this month. They will build you a custom website and update it weekly. Yeah, weekly, as per your plan. They're also including digital outreach and long term strategies to help reach people online.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:04:54](#) So listeners of this show will receive a free custom website build for the plan you choose. A free custom church website will help

your church grow. It's a pretty amazing launch special. So here's what you need to do. Go to prowebfire.com and use the discount code carey, C-A-R-E-Y, 2019. That's carey2019. Use that discount code when you head on over to prowebfire.com and get started today.

- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:05:20](#) Well not only do I have this show for you on audio, but we also did some filming. We're doing more and more video. So I got a YouTube channel as well if you are of the viewing type you can head on over to YouTube, search my name Carey Nieuwhof, and you'll find us right there on the channel. We did a multi camera shoot for this one. David's using it in connection with a book he's launching called Faith for Exiles which we talk about. And yeah, if you actually want to see how the sausage is made on this show, head on over. You can subscribe and of course view for free. So audio listeners, get ready. Video listeners, head on over to YouTube. I guess that would be viewers, right? Okay. Anyway. Here we go. My conversation with David Kinnaman.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:06:03](#) Well David, welcome back to the podcast.
- David Kinnaman: [00:06:05](#) Thanks Carey. It's great to be here.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:06:06](#) Yeah. We're actually together just outside of Toronto.
- David Kinnaman: [00:06:09](#) Yeah. It's cool to be here in Canada. It's the best month to visit. It's August.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:06:13](#) Yeah, yeah. It's actually pleasant here. Right? I've been in California during the June gloom which I never even knew about until I think you and I spent some time together in June and it's like it's just kind of gray.
- David Kinnaman: [00:06:24](#) Yeah. It's funny because people come to California for the summer and the summer's actually one of the least favorable time of the year. We're in Ventura which is right along the coast and so we get a lot of overcast days. It's still pretty. It's not that cold, by comparison for sure, but they call it June gloom for a reason.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:06:44](#) Uh huh. And your favorite month?
- David Kinnaman: [00:06:47](#) October. The late fall is really beautiful. Nice crisp mornings, but just super clear. Our offices overlook, it sounds more luxurious than it is, but we overlook the Pacific Ocean and so we can actually see the islands, the channel islands. You can see all of

the graphic detail on the islands from our offices. It's just beautiful in the fall.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:07:12](#) That's great. And you've got a brand new book out called Faith for Exiles. And strangely enough, it's good news, right?

David Kinnaman: [00:07:21](#) Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:07:21](#) Did you go looking for good news or did you find it? Because so much of the stuff out these days, David, is bad news, right? It's like everybody's losing their faith. People are de converting. The next generation is lost. I mean, you've sounded alarm bells in the past, a lot of people have. It's good news.

David Kinnaman: [00:07:41](#) Well, it is. I have to kind of take you back into history a little bit, a small bit of my history that when Gabe Lyons and I first started working on unChristian, I had this particular book in mind and then I said yes to Gabe knowing that we were going to focus on 16 to 29 year olds, the negative perceptions of the church, really looking at non-Christians. And so when I said yes to working with Gabe on that project, it was an easy yes, it felt as though this would help to set up an opportunity to speak about next generation issues.

David Kinnaman: [00:08:15](#) So unChristian came out. It really focused on the negative perceptions of young non-Christians: we're known for all the things we're against, we're hypocritical, anti homosexual, judgmental. That was a very difficult book to write and focused on a lot of sort of the bad news.

David Kinnaman: [00:08:29](#) And then I turned to You Lost Me which was around young lapsed Christians. So it was like why do people lose their faith? And actually, again, I started that project it was called the Faith That Lasts Project. I was going to call it Faith That Lasts. And it was actually so hard to figure out the things that are working, it was actually easier to think about the things and just to research the reasons why people were disaffecting. So again, I kind of had to put off the search for some of the solutions or answers.

David Kinnaman: [00:08:58](#) So in this final project, Faith for Exiles, what we did is we look at the most resilient young Christians and it's called exemplar study where we're trying to figure out what are the characteristics that hang together-

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:09:11](#) Best practices, best habits.

David Kinnaman: [00:09:13](#) Yeah, exactly. So it's taken me 10 years, 10+ years to get to the story of the good news and I'm glad to do it. It's been the most thrilling project because we've got to interview all these young Christians who are really on fire for their faith. And it's set against the backdrop of all the bad news because those things are also true. I mean, this generation is struggling with their faith. Many are walking away from faith. And that makes the good news of these young resilient disciples all the more encouraging.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:09:44](#) What year was unChristian? Was that '07?

David Kinnaman: [00:09:46](#) 2007.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:09:47](#) Yeah. Okay.

David Kinnaman: [00:09:48](#) So it's been 12 years.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:09:49](#) I remember when that came out and it felt not obvious. Can I just put it that way? That you were one of the leading voices on hey guys, wake up. We are seen as homophobic, angry, judgmental, pharisaical and I think that was a little bit of a wake up call for the church. Now that was 12 years ago that that came out. It seems to me that that's just gone mainstream now, right? When you look at that and those 26-29 year olds that you were polling are now pushing 40.

David Kinnaman: [00:10:27](#) Yeah, that's right.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:10:28](#) How has that part of the perception changed? Has it gotten worse? Is it the same? Is it better?

David Kinnaman: [00:10:35](#) Well, as a researcher, the easiest way to say it is that it depends on who you ask and which segment of Christians, non-Christians of our population that you look at. So if you look at non-Christians, my contention is based on the data that they are as negative as they've ever been and-

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:10:52](#) About Christians.

David Kinnaman: [00:10:54](#) About Christians, about evangelicals. You know, the political climate hasn't helped because evangelicals are supporting Trump and so there's a sense in which the perception of being too political still exists. That the church has become know for right wing politics. But among young Christians, they're struggling with those perceptions more and more and in some ways what I'm beginning to see, we have actually a big brand

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new global study that's coming out with World Vision where we interviewed 25 countries, actually Canada. All English speaking countries as well as countries from every continent.

David Kinnaman: [00:11:33](#) So it's 18-35 year olds and we repeated some of the same perception questions and actually the early read, we haven't quite baked all the data to sort of analyze it, but the early read is that young people aren't as negative overall as they were when unChristian came out, even in the states. But the problem is that there's a greater wall of indifference. It's sort of like it doesn't even matter.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:11:57](#) Yeah. You're kind of irrelevant. You're off our radar screen.

David Kinnaman: [00:12:00](#) Yeah. They're sort of post Christianity in the true sense. They don't think about it at all. So it's a really interesting phenomenon. But they're still very pro-faith. I mean, they're a very spiritually minded generation. Some really cool things that are coming out of that study as well.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:12:13](#) Well, and is that for another sort of larger trend? You're the research guy, David. But it's not like people are becoming atheists in spades. What does that percentage seem to be these days? Is it holding steady? And people are spiritual or open, they're just not Christian. The nones, right? The Rise of the Nones as you've written about. Where does that sit right now?

David Kinnaman: [00:12:38](#) Well see, this is interesting because they are becoming atheists in spades among GenZ in our younger generation in America at least. It's the highest proportion of atheists that we've ever seen. Nearly two out of five say they're religiously unaffiliated or atheist. That's almost tripe the national average.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:12:58](#) So 40%.

David Kinnaman: [00:12:59](#) Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:12:59](#) In GenZ.

David Kinnaman: [00:13:00](#) Yeah. And so it's true, they're becoming more atheists, but at the same time even those who might say they're atheists would sometimes say they're spiritual.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:13:09](#) Right. And that's what I'm trying to get at.

David Kinnaman: [00:13:11](#) Yeah. There's all these different layers to it. So it depends a little bit on where you put the microscope and how you study it. I think this is why it's actually hard ... I mean, any kind of industry is hard, but in our market research trend industry it's sort of like well yeah, that's true. And that's true. And that's true. And all these things can be true at the same time depending on how you focus your analysis. Statistics lie as people say. So it depends a little bit on what you're focusing on and how as a researcher you have to sort of disclose who are we studying and what are we trying to focus on? How are we trying to tell this story?

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:13:46](#) What are some other trends ... and we're going to dive into the research, the good news part of this and if you have a faith, what do you need to do to maintain it? You know, it's not all bad news, but what are some other trends that have got your attention these days?

David Kinnaman: [00:13:58](#) Well we've been looking at evangelism. That was a big study this year where we focused on trends in spiritual conversations. The last year and a half we've been working with a couple different great groups. Alpha and then a group called Lutheran Hour Ministries and we were trying to focus on conversations in the digital age and how our screens, how our social connections are being reformed in the era of social media.

David Kinnaman: [00:14:24](#) And so one of the interesting findings was that 47% of millennial practicing Christians said they thought it was wrong to evangelize, even though 90 something percent, 94, 97 percent said they thought that the best thing a person could do would be to become a Christian. So it's this real interesting paradox-

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:14:41](#) Is that like a cognitive dissonance thing?

David Kinnaman: [00:14:43](#) I think so. I think there's this sense that they almost feel, I don't want to use the word embarrassed about their faith because I think that doesn't do justice to the setting for millennials. And that's where I was saying earlier, GenZ and their generation, they are certainly living in a more pluralistic culture where the idea of missions has been almost like cultural imperialism.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:15:08](#) Right.

David Kinnaman: [00:15:09](#) And there's been all these televangelists at their worst have given Christianity a bad reputation. And all the judgmental and hypocritical perceptions that we've been talking about. So it's been interesting to talk about and see from the research the

challenges that this generation has and is feeling related to spiritual conversations and at the same time millennials are also the most active in talking about their faith. Millennial young Christians even more so than baby boomers and others.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:15:36](#) Okay. How and why?

David Kinnaman: [00:15:39](#) Well, I think what's happening is that the millennials that we interview, especially these resilient disciples, they say listen, we want to be out talking about Jesus. He's at the center of our lives. We want to talk about Him in our work places, in social media, but we want it to be real. We want it to not feel like there is a condo sale at the end of the pitch. Or you know, I'm becoming friends with someone just to put a notch on the evangelistic belt.

David Kinnaman: [00:16:08](#) I think there's a real sense that they see the problems that come with certain approaches or metrics of success for evangelism. So they're trying to put a different take on it and they're wrestling with a lot of that as well. How do you effectively talk about your faith in the midst of a bone crushing culture that everything is up for grabs? So it's interesting. I feel like I'm an apologist for millennials sometimes trying to defend them against some of the bad news that we sometimes have about millennials and GenZ.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:16:41](#) Yeah. There's been a lot of talk about generational divides. YOU've done some good research on that. How is the faith of a millennial or now that GenZ, where do you draw the line at GenZ? Like 1997ish?

David Kinnaman: [00:16:58](#) 1999.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:16:58](#) 99. Okay. So when you look at them, they're in college right now.

David Kinnaman: [00:17:04](#) Right.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:17:04](#) Most of them haven't graduated.

David Kinnaman: [00:17:06](#) Right. Yeah, they're middle of their college years is the oldest GenZers. And remember that researchers and sociologists make up these things. And they make them up because it helps us to classify and cluster people.

David Kinnaman: [00:17:20](#) And by the way, the whole idea of generations emerged largely out of, in the way that we understand them today, out of World

War II. The baby boom generation was such a large demographic. Literally a boom of babies were born. And so marketers had to be more efficient with their spending in order to target a certain group of people. So you would advertise to a particular segment of people, whether it's radio or television. And so the idea of segments, generational segments as we have them, is really around how do you appeal to a particular sensibility based on chronological or generational age?

David Kinnaman: [00:18:01](#) And I think church leaders, again I'm a generational researcher, all the rest. But I sometimes get a little sick of it in the senses that to the extent that the church uses marketing segmentation in the way that we might advertise alcohol consumption. I mean, there's never an old person drinking a beer on the television commercial, right?

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:18:20](#) Right.

David Kinnaman: [00:18:22](#) It's always aimed at a younger sensibility. So I think that we have a lot to learn from generational theory, but we also have to have sort of a prophetic, theological response to the fact that it's often derived from just simply picking an age out of thin air and saying okay, we're going to call it millennials starting at this age and ending at this age. And you know, we're all actually human beings. The generations are actually all of us living together at one time.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:18:49](#) Yeah. And some of it, is it not, is just stage of life? I mean, you behave a certain way in college and then you start dating and you maybe get married and you buy a house and you get a career job. And people in their 30s are just different than they were in their late teens.

David Kinnaman: [00:19:05](#) Absolutely. I mean, stage of life is one of the huge story lines in the research. You can see that sort of bell curve of life and the things that happen at the beginning of life being very defining. And the one thing I would add to that and one of my great concerns for the church today is that we don't, however, explain away the different changes of our culture as stage of life factors.

David Kinnaman: [00:19:31](#) So it's what I hear so often from pastors. Well don't worry about the millennials or the 20 somethings because they're going to come back when they have kids and when they're married and when the stage of life is more ready for us to minister to them. And what is happening is this whole generation, the rug is being pulled out from under all of the assumptions that we have about-

- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:19:51](#) So you would say that's absolutely not true.
- David Kinnaman: [00:19:53](#) It's not true enough that we simply rationalize all of the problems and opportunities that we have with this generation by simply saying well, when they get older it's going to all be awesome. That's just ... I see way too many church leaders sort of bury their heads in the sand about that. And so if I literally had a dollar for every time I've been asked that, I would be a billionaire because it's so often where people say stage of life. Well stage of life is absolutely true. It's as true as the sun rising that a person in their 20s is different that a person in their 60s in terms of just life perspective, experiences, motivations, the whole thing.
- David Kinnaman: [00:20:35](#) But the culture has indubitably changed. I mean, fundamentally changed. And digital culture, our society, attitudes towards Christianity and for anyone who's sort of tempted to say well stage of life, stage of life. You're going to miss it, man. You're going to absolutely miss what's happening with this generation if you think that's the primary story.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:20:55](#) So let's bust some myths then. So one of the myths that you've already hinted at is that at a certain point they're going to get married, they're going to return to the church, going to have kids, they're going to come back to church. You and I did some research together, did some writing a few years ago, and were like no, no, no with orange. They are not coming back to church just because they had kids. True?
- David Kinnaman: [00:21:16](#) It's true that they are not coming back to churches with kids. When they do, in the minority of cases they do, they come back to church with a whole different set of perceptions, ideas. They've stayed away from church for longer, for more years. They've got a whole different social network than they would have had had they had a child an earlier age or had they come to church with the child earlier on. So absolutely, that's one of the myths that we should bust is that just having kids, just getting married is an automatic faith lifter.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:21:49](#) What about their life's going so well. When they hit a crisis, when someone gets a diagnosis, when somebody close to them dies, they'll turn back to the church.
- David Kinnaman: [00:21:57](#) They will turn to a set of deeper questions. It is a time when people sort of fundamentally think about who they are, what's going on, what is life all about. Human suffering's one of the biggest questions that this generation is asking of the church,

but they don't necessarily come back to church in the way that we would conventionally think about it.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:22:17](#) Yeah.

David Kinnaman: [00:22:18](#) That's the big thing. They've got the questions, but the church may or may not ... coming through the church's door to ask those questions and to have them addressed may or may not actually happen.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:22:27](#) Is that like the Google search bar confessional? They're going to Google it. They're going to look at alternate spirituality? What happens?

David Kinnaman: [00:22:35](#) Absolutely. Yeah. And Google, we talk about this a lot in Faith for Exiles, the digital Babylon thesis that it's become our counselor, our sex educator, our BFF and so Google search is ... and I don't want to simplify it. If any of us when we go through suffering it's not like you're going to Google "how to suffer." But the thing is and we've seen this in our research from lots of different millennials and parents of millennials and GenZ. What one guy in particular told me, he said, "I came across my daughter's search history and she was like signs that I'm depressed." You know? She was watching YouTube videos to help self diagnose, self medicate, to understand her anxiety and her depression.

David Kinnaman: [00:23:20](#) So there's all these other outlets for people's questions. And don't forget that we also really ... escape is our primary drug of choice today.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:23:30](#) Yes.

David Kinnaman: [00:23:31](#) As North Americans, at least. And entertainment. The sheer hours that we spend streaming television, playing video games, escaping the reality of our lives is also a way that we sort of drown out the pain. And so churches, this is one of the big, big trends is that people even who are regular church goers, don't come as often. They don't rely on the church as the primary source of their relational capital. They're fundamentally rewiring their relationship with the church. And that's even good church goers. That's not necessarily those who are seekers or who are non-Christians.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:24:06](#) Let me test another premise or assumption that at least I think I probably have and other people have which is oh, when they have a question at least they'll reach out to me or to someone

they know. And community's really a big part of Faith for Exiles, but generally speaking when you look at generational trends, are they more likely just to watch YouTube videos than to call up someone they know? Or do you find that people are going back to their family or maybe I would say mentors rather than the friend that you're hanging out with on Friday night going I think I'm depressed is different than saying hey mom, hey dad, hey neighbor, hey youth group leader, hey older person in my life at work. I'm reaching out to you.

David Kinnaman: [00:24:51](#) Yeah. I think human beings are fundamentally relational creatures. I think in the image of God we've got that gift in our lives of being fundamentally relational. And so we're talking about good news. On the one hand, we see throughout the research that people fundamentally are looking for friends and looking for connections and relationships of meaning and that they, in fact, do that. And when they go through a crisis, they do turn to people they know as much as they would do anything else. They try to find hope, solution, solidarity in relationships. So there's lots of really good indicators about that.

David Kinnaman: [00:25:30](#) At the same time, people have deep brokenness and disfunction and passive aggressiveness in their relationships and I think maybe part of the answer to Christian leaders is that they don't turn to the church for those natural relationships as often as they used to do. Again, partly because what's happening is our social networks, our relational networks, are changing.

David Kinnaman: [00:25:55](#) So look at the case of youth groups. When I was growing up in the 80s and 90s going to youth group, the youth group was, for me, my tribe. Those were my friends. I remember having this sheet of paper. I was sort of the youth group organizer and sort of-

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:26:16](#) Oh, that's a shock.

David Kinnaman: [00:26:17](#) Community organizer. Exactly. Yeah. So I had this whole paper with all the phone numbers and all the names of my buddies just front and back. I'd add new people on. And whenever we'd do an event, whenever I wanted to try to get people together, I would just make the calls. I was the call list guy. And I was making my phone calls, of course, to my friend's home phones. I was using my home phone which was attached to the wall. And I would dial through and we would get together, the parties would happen. Youth group events would happen. Mission trips. It was fun.

- David Kinnaman: [00:26:49](#) Today, people go to youth groups for a very different set of reasons. It's still see friends there, but the primary social network is digital social networks. You don't have to go to youth group to meet people, to have conversations after hours. You know, it was a very different kind of dynamic. And so the youth group as an indicator of our larger sort of Christian ecosystem is actually changing in it's relevance to this generation.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:27:17](#) So how does it function today in your view? Or how should it function today?
- David Kinnaman: [00:27:22](#) Well, those are two different questions.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:27:23](#) Yeah, yeah.
- David Kinnaman: [00:27:23](#) What it does function today is, and man we're hearing this from more and more students, is that it's functioning as a marketing department for the church to young people and their families. And we've heard this from young people. I can't-
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:27:37](#) A marketing department, like what do you mean?
- David Kinnaman: [00:27:39](#) So we interviewed a young person who said, we were talking about the relational network that they have, the relational connections they have within their church. And she had sort of lapsed in her church attendance. Again, we're doing all this quantitative research, but we also do a lot of qualitative research to understand the trends that we're seeing in the data.
- David Kinnaman: [00:27:56](#) And this young woman who we were doing a focus group with, I said did you have any good friends in the church, people that you could really count on? Said no, not really. So what about the youth pastor? I mean, that person must have been there for you. And she said no. He was paid to be my friend.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:28:16](#) Whoa.
- David Kinnaman: [00:28:16](#) And I remember just my stomach tightening up hearing that. I asked her to explain more and she said that's his job description is to try to reach out to befriend people like me so that we'll come to the church. And just yesterday I was doing something here in Toronto, we were talking to some friends at a place called The Meeting House.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:28:35](#) Oh yeah.

David Kinnaman: [00:28:37](#) And we were just having a conversation around the motivations they see with students, with young people and they said that they've heard themselves conversations where young people think that even volunteers for the youth group are paid because why would anyone be interested in me if they're not paid to be sort of the front line staff marketing the church?

David Kinnaman: [00:28:58](#) So there's this real sense in this generation, they doubt sincerity. They doubt that people do this out of their own good wishes for this generation. So it functions as an extension of this. I mean, I've heard pastors say I pay for the youth pastor so that I can get families to attend my church. That's the economic bargain we make.

David Kinnaman: [00:29:22](#) Now youth groups are doing great stuff. I'm not trying to criticize that. But what they should do, what they could do, is to think about how do we come alongside these young, resilient disciples and continue to grow them in their faith? How do we make sure that we're creating a whole structure of relationships and experiences with Jesus and building wisdom and discernment in their lives and vocationally training them for life's aligned with the Gospel?

David Kinnaman: [00:29:48](#) So there's a whole, this is part of the theme of this new project where we've learned there's a different sort of set of measures we could have to disciple young people into a life of Christ.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:29:58](#) Well, it's interesting. You're naming something I've kind of felt, but I haven't had language around it. I'm not sure that's unique to youth groups. I feel as a teaching guy at my church and founding pastor, that there has been and particularly in Canada. We're a decade ahead or two, or behind in terms of post Christendom for most of the US. That there has been a suspicion attached to church leadership. People, there's a level of scrutiny and perhaps a level of cynicism that wasn't there a generation or two ago. To the point where I'm pretty hesitant to tell someone I'm a pastor because I think it's immediately dismissive in a conversation. Like oh really, you couldn't get a real job? Or that's what you do?

David Kinnaman: [00:30:47](#) I meant to say this earlier when you asked me. Sorry to interrupt your train of thought there.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:30:51](#) No.

David Kinnaman: [00:30:51](#) But when you were asking me about the relational network that people have, one of the things we found out in a study called

State of Pastors was that people don't look to the pastor as having particular expertise other than wonky Bible things. So they're not viewed as cultural leaders in the way they might have been in the past. Like we want to hear from our pastors and spiritual leaders. We're more likely to esteem entrepreneurs, creatives, professional athletes. I actually have this whole study I want to do called The Soul of Sports sometime where we'd actually say as North Americans, as people around the world, sports has created a type of religious fervor. We look to our sporting heroes as our modern day saints.

David Kinnaman: [00:31:38](#) So the view of pastors has declined as reliable guides. My dad, who's a lifelong pastor, has all these interesting stories about coming across people who were surprised to see him at Target on a weekend in shorts because they can't imagine-

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:32:01](#) Yeah. You're a real human being. You're kidding.

David Kinnaman: [00:32:03](#) Right.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:32:04](#) So what do you do with that reality?

David Kinnaman: [00:32:09](#) Well I think there are some things that for us as pastors we can do to rebuild our credibility in our communities and credibility for sheer credibility sake is not the goal. But credibility for the sake of the Gospel is the goal. And so one of the things that I think pastors and leaders could learn from those of us in research and market research is just the power of listening and understanding and hearing from people. Because pastors are great communicators and love to teach and preach, seven out of 10 say that is their one biggest love in doing pastoral ministry is to be able to teach. So we're good talkers, but we're not as effective as we should be at listening. Listening to people who don't believe the same things we do or listening to especially younger generations in our churches.

David Kinnaman: [00:32:59](#) There's ways I think for us to rebuild credibility by ... think of the fact that most pastors are more likely to know the commute distance, average commute time, to the church than they are to know the kinds of industries and the places where people work Monday through Friday. And so we can rebuild credibility by helping people understand how they can bring the Gospel into their industry whether it's education or science or technology. I'm convinced that's a huge opportunity for us to rebuild credibility for churches.

- David Kinnaman: [00:33:32](#) I think we can rebuild credibility by having people in our community upfront and ordaining them for ministry. Sort of like we'd bring a public school teacher to the front on a Sunday morning, pray for them, have them share their testimony. More and more like it's not about the pastor simply talking.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:33:52](#) Pastor and the band.
- David Kinnaman: [00:33:53](#) Yeah. Great preaching is more important than ever. It's just I'm so fundamentally convinced that preaching is one of the most important skillsets that a pastor can cultivate and it's not the only thing he or she must do. So how can we rebuild credibility for the sake of the gospel is an important question for leaders to lean into.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:34:13](#) Boy. Yeah, the other thing that's changed, David, is people have Googled around whatever you're talking about.
- David Kinnaman: [00:34:20](#) Yeah.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:34:21](#) You know, you used to get 20 years ago people going I didn't know that. I didn't know that. And even if they hadn't heard it, they're going to fact check you. Is that true in our culture?
- David Kinnaman: [00:34:29](#) Absolutely. Yeah. We see it in the data. It was 38% of millennials last time we looked at it say they fact check sermons as the pastor is speaking. I always joke that's that like if they're interested enough in what you're saying because now we have screens. I mean, I see it in my family and people around me. It's not just true of young people. My wife, I, it's like oh this is a little boring section. I'm going to just look at Twitter right now. It's like there's more distractive moments in our services.
- David Kinnaman: [00:34:58](#) So we're awesome if they're fact checking us as long as we're using good facts and we can be reliably fact checked. But the fact is that we live in a distractive era. That's one of the big challenges, right? People just live in their own brains more and more. There's lots of social research that's showing that these devices are actually causing us to have shorter attention spans and live in our own kind of heads more. So trying to get through that as a pastor, as a communicator, is more difficult than ever. As any kind of person of authority whether you're a teacher, a police officer, a government leader. It's harder than ever to lead because people just believe they absolutely know everything they need to know and if not, it's in their pocket. The answer is on their smartphone in their pocket.

- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:35:46](#) I realize this part of the conversation is just making a pastor's job description longer and more depressing, but continuing in that vein my question-
- David Kinnaman: [00:35:56](#) No we said this was going to be an interview about good news.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:35:58](#) Yeah, it's good news. Sorry. We're going to get there guys. But I'm going to write a blog post on this. It will probably be live by the time this interview goes live. But one of the things I'm wondering about is whether we've lost the intellectual war in the pulpit. That our preaching just doesn't have enough good, strong thinking behind it. And that's been a challenge to me too. I've cut my teaching down from 48 sermons a year to about 30, 35. And will be cutting down even a little bit more next year partly because the quality game has to go up. When I'm researching apologetics, I better be reading Sapiens. I better be reading what other people are reading because if you're really reaching unchurched people, they've already read that stuff. They already understand it. And sometimes our simplistic defenses or our simplistic explanations or cute little pet phrases just aren't cutting it anymore.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:36:57](#) Any comments on that? Any thoughts on that? And feel free to disagree.
- David Kinnaman: [00:37:00](#) No, I 1,000% agree and I did the research and it's actually 1,000%. Stupid joke. Stupid research joke.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:37:09](#) I love it.
- David Kinnaman: [00:37:14](#) The pedagogical war that we are in today for not just truth, but for the ability to communicate a plausibility structure. And what I mean by that is can we give not just this generation, but the generation that is alive as we talked about earlier. Whoever is our intended audience, can we give them enough reasons that this stuff really makes sense? So I think you're on to something.
- David Kinnaman: [00:37:44](#) One of the contentions in the Faith for Exiles book is that we need to be increasingly viewing the church as a learning community. Sermons are one part of that, but like a symphony you don't just have the percussion or the strings or a certain instrument. And I think that we're trying to create a symphony of learning for our times and the church is too much relying on sermons and sermon making as the pedagogical tool for that. And if you look at it, there's all sorts of other ... I mean, just in Christian history, much less just the science of how people learn and epistemology, what we can know. There's all sorts of ways

that people learn. I mean, through doing, through mentoring, through classroom based learning, through experiences, through conversations with others.

David Kinnaman: [00:38:34](#) So if there's a single thing that a pastor could do leaning into some of the data we're collecting about what works is that you have to do a pedagogical audit. How are people in our churches learning and what can we do to make that more robust? And we were talking about youth groups earlier. It sounded like I was really down on youth groups and for certain reasons, I am. For the men and women who are in youth ministry or who are paying or supporting youth ministry, keep doing what you're doing, but please lean in to some of the things that we're saying.

David Kinnaman: [00:39:08](#) For example, I think that youth ministry is we're doing it like dial up ministry in a WiFi world. So you can't do 30 minutes a week and expect for people to have a pedagogical structure, sort of a plausibility of Christianity with 30 minutes every other week that they might show up. So what can we do through YouTube videos? What could we do through classes that we could offer or courses? What could we do through internships? Some of the best things about mission trips is that it's actually a learning environment where people can say oh yeah, this Christianity stuff really does make a difference in people's lives.

David Kinnaman: [00:39:49](#) So can we, as a church, take a look at how it is that we're creating a learning community? Sermons are one of the essential. They're sort of the key threads through that, but it's not the only way that people learn and we have a lot of work to do to reinvent how people are going to learn in this current environment.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:40:10](#) And well I suppose you don't have to produce all that content yourself.

David Kinnaman: [00:40:15](#) No.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:40:15](#) Right? I mean, there is the internet and even to put a curation together. Here are three links you might care about can be really positive. Any other myths we want to bust and then I promise you good news.

David Kinnaman: [00:40:30](#) Well, one of the other interesting things and we sort of talked about this a little bit earlier when you said do people go to relational network when they go through tough times. The other myth that's really interesting is that not everyone, and

actually a small minority, really want to learn. So this is part of the reason why I think churches sort of struggle is that those who are actually have the fundamental capability and there's a lot of trans theoretical model for change. There's a lot of data, not just Barna data, but just among us geeks in the world that shows that most people don't change very much and they're not motivated to change and they don't do much with self help books should have changed the world by now, but they don't because most people don't know what to do with it.

David Kinnaman: [00:41:23](#) This is I think another bargain that churches sometimes miss is that they try to change everyone. They try to provide the cookies on the bottom shelf for anyone who might be looking for some sort of spiritual insight, but instead we got to do a better job of trying to focus in on those who are really willing to learn and willing to grow and to give them tools because actually, by helping them be more catalytic, we have the opportunity of helping those who are spiritual couch potatoes let's say.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:41:56](#) Yeah.

David Kinnaman: [00:41:57](#) So we kind of spread our pearls before everybody, as the scripture says before swine.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:42:08](#) More polite than Jesus.

David Kinnaman: [00:42:08](#) That's right. But is there a way for us ... I think Jesus does this too, right? He says for him who has ears, let him hear. Or if you don't understand the meaning of this parable, than how are you going to understand these other deeper spiritual things that I'm saying? If you look at Jesus life and ministry, He so often focuses the majority of His ministry on the 12 and those that really wanted to walk with Him through that spiritual transformation journey that He led them through. I think churches cut this bargain because fundamentally we're built around how many people can attend, how big our churches can get. We think that there's impact by doing that.

David Kinnaman: [00:42:50](#) But if you just said man, what percent of people in my congregation, in my youth group, in my ministry are really here to learn? If you're not here to learn, it's not like I don't want you here. It's just like I'm going to try to do everything I possibly can to put the conditions around you and sometimes that's suffering and sometimes that's brokenness and sometimes those are things that are uncomfortable realities. IF you're not here to learn or grow, than we're going to try to catalyze you.

We want to get something happening in your life. We want to ignite something that's happening.

David Kinnaman: [00:43:20](#) And so for way too many Christians in America, in North America, around the world, we see this over and over and over. They are spiritual couch potatoes and we have a lot of work to awaken them to something more.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:43:34](#) Is it a little bit like the Pareto principle, this idea the 80/20 rule? That about 20% of the people, 20% of the things that you do are going to produce 80% of the fruit and maybe there's wisdom in targeting in a special way the 20% who are motivated or whatever the percentage happens to be and getting around them. And that's what you suggest in Faith for Exiles, right?

David Kinnaman: [00:43:57](#) It is. I think it is something like that principle. You can sort of see that the majority of Jesus effort, for example, was around His intimate relationships with His disciples. In this particular book, instead of focusing on the 64% of young people in the states who grow up Christian who won't be active in the church in their 20s. 64%.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:44:21](#) Wow.

David Kinnaman: [00:44:23](#) And I think we found in the study that 10% qualified as we describe as resilient disciples. So we have a few characteristics of what a resilient disciple looks like. It's a person who is involved in a church more than just attending. They attend, but they also are involved. They believe in the authority of the Bible. We have a pretty straightforward question about that. Does the Bible have things that lead to a meaningful life? They believe in Jesus death and resurrection and they believe that their faith should be expressed out there in the world. We have a series of questions. We call them our exile statements because it's like they believe they have one foot in the world, not just in the church.

David Kinnaman: [00:45:00](#) So it's a pretty low bar in our surveys, but 10%, one in 10 young people who grow up Christian, qualified as our resilient disciples. I think maybe 12 years ago when I started working on Christian, I would have just been sorely disappointed and depressed by the fact that it's only 10%, but I think today I'm actually really encouraged by the fact that it is this faithful 10%. They're bursting with energy for the Bible, for the church. They're the ones who are trying as we talk about just reconcile evangelism in our very complicated age. They're the ones who are ... we should be investing more and more energy into them

because they're the leaders of not the future, of today for the church.

David Kinnaman: [00:45:45](#) I came away with this great being so encouraged by the vitality, the spiritual vitality, of these young Christians that I was interviewing with. We called them resilient disciples because the more pressure you put on them, like Daniel in Babylon from the Old Testament, the more pressure you put on them the stronger their faith seems to get.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:46:10](#) So the good news is that yeah, there are people walking away at unprecedented rates, but you look a little bit deeper. 10% of the kids who grew up in church actually have a resilient, admirable, strong, growing faith that we can build the future of the church on.

David Kinnaman: [00:46:25](#) That's right. God doesn't need a majority of people to do His work. Of course, I wish the number were 20%.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:46:33](#) 90%.

David Kinnaman: [00:46:34](#) Of course I wish, yeah. But let's start with where we have a real foothold among whom there's this real sense of they're bursting with joy for the life of faith. Their relationships, one of the most fascinating findings in the book is their relationships are so much stronger than every other person we interviewed. They have people they say they can admit their deepest secrets. They have friends who are honest with them. They can be comfortable when they're alone, they say. And there's all sorts of different evidence in the project about really the Gospel is working in the lives of these young people. We found real evidence of the fact that they find deeper joy in Jesus. They find their soul's desire in worship. They find greater intimacy in relationships. These people aren't perfect, these young resilient disciples, but there's a sense okay, look. It's only 10%, but these people really are exemplifying the kind of Christianity that we all hope might be happening in the lives of young people.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:47:45](#) Yeah. Names are springing to mind as you describe and as I read the book, names are springing to mind of people in our church and young adults I know. I'm like oh yeah, that would be part of the 10%. So can you define exiles? Why did you use the term exiles?

David Kinnaman: [00:48:01](#) When I did the book *You Lost Me*, I felt like we discovered this group of people who hadn't just walked away from their faith or from the church, they felt like one foot was in the church, one

foot was in culture. They felt like they were viewed by society as extreme or irrelevant or crazy, but by the church they were viewed as compromising and you're watching that or your friends with that person or you're interested in those things. So exile for me felt like the right phrase.

David Kinnaman: [00:48:36](#) And I for the last 15 years have been inspired by Daniel for the kind of faithful life he lived. A guy that I just feel like we have so much to learn from his example and so often it's been told to us about Daniel that he was sort of this culture warrior and this person of prayer, and Daniel's in the lion's den. He didn't bow down to the idols of the age, he and his peers. But I think his early story, I can't wait for some sort of movie adaptation to be made of Daniel's story because those early years as a young person, as a teenager, learning the language and literature of Babylon and becoming influential and trusting God's power and bargaining with his captors about the diet and all the things that would have happened. It struck me as the kind of exile this experience is having.

David Kinnaman: [00:49:28](#) I mean, literally just in the New York Times the last few weeks there was a story about evangelicalism and young evangelicals in that sense that they are viewed by the society as weird and out of step, but they're viewed by their fellow Christians as being compromisers.

David Kinnaman: [00:49:44](#) So exile for me as I've tried to help the church think about our current cultural moment, I think we're in digital Babylon. I think we're in a new kind of Babylon where there's greater access, greater alienation, greater skepticism of authority, just a phrase we came up with but it seems to have a potency to describe where we're at. I'm convinced that without a return to a theology of exile, like we see in 1 Peter, like we see in Jeremiah, without a theology of exile, we won't be able to raise resilient young people or really any of us. So in some ways this is a book about the exemplars, the young Christians that we interviewed who are really trying to grow in faith. But it's also a story about why I think recovering a theology of exile is very important for us as Christian leaders today, how that's going to help us regain some of the credibility that we have lost that we talked about earlier.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:50:46](#) Well and this is one of the reasons I just love our conversations, David, over the years is this idea of Babylon. I want to sort of parse digital and Babylon, digital Babylon together. But let's start with Babylon. Your assumption if I'm reading your research, the body of not only this book but your other research

is that America is not Christian anymore and all you have to do is look at millennial and GenZ data and you'll see it there. We're not Christian anymore and we are in Babylon. We've been exiled. This is not Jerusalem to use Old Testament language. We're not living in the land we grew up in anymore. Is that the assumption under Babylon?

David Kinnaman: [00:51:25](#) It is. Throughout Scripture I think you see this story from the tower of Babel to actual Babylon and then in the New Testament there's sort of the spirit of Babylon. Peter even uses the phrase Babylon, he's referring to Rome.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:51:40](#) Which is the Roman empire.

David Kinnaman: [00:51:41](#) Yeah. And so throughout Scripture, Babylon is sort of the system of man where power, prestige, pleasure, all the things that are at war against the people of God or at least the context in which the people of God have to live out their faith. So it seems to me that if we read Scripture, Babylon should speak to us. There's seven sci-fi movies and other things, Babylon or whatever. It still sounds a bit ominous. So I think Babylon has a rich tradition I'm trying to help us wrestle with on one level. And when I'm talking about current Babylon, I'm not saying American government or even any government. I'm saying that Babylon, technology today is our current tower of Babel.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:52:31](#) It's our god, our reaching to the heavens.

David Kinnaman: [00:52:34](#) Yeah. We're actually seeing this in this global generation study we call The Connected Generation, the study we're doing for World Vision that I mentioned earlier, 25 countries. They're more likely to be residents of this new digital age than they really are to be residents of any particular nation or precinct in their particular country.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:52:51](#) Okay. Park on that thought because this is something that I think is not intuitive and the older you are the less intuitive it is to you. So what do you mean by that?

David Kinnaman: [00:53:00](#) The characteristics of this generation regardless of language and their aspirations and their greater level of connections make them very similar. They're more alike than ... and social research-

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:53:15](#) So a 23 year old in Vietnam, India and Alabama and California are more alike.

- David Kinnaman: [00:53:22](#) More like each other than their predecessors would have been alike. So there's more uniting.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:53:33](#) Right. There's a mono culture developing.
- David Kinnaman: [00:53:36](#) That's right.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:53:37](#) Generational mono culture.
- David Kinnaman: [00:53:37](#) And what's interesting is there's a counter trend to this which is nationalism and Brexit and sort of this hyper nationalism. So in the midst of this mono culture coming about, and there's still many interesting ways in which a young person in Vietnam or China would be different culturally-
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:53:58](#) Sure.
- David Kinnaman: [00:53:59](#) Than there would be a young American or whatever. But yeah, that's part of the Babylon we're trying to say. There's this technology, entertainment has created a new way that people are communicating and experiencing a sense of reality. So the church is now living in and having to deal with the affects of that.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:54:23](#) Yeah. So that's an idea of digital Babylon. And digital just being the online world, right?
- David Kinnaman: [00:54:31](#) Yeah. So another way to think about this is I think there are cultures that are like Jerusalem in Scripture where it's monotheistic, everyone believes the same thing, the sacred Scripture is at the center of our common narrative and understanding. And I think even though America's a very pluralistic country and it always has been in certain ways, there's a sense of a Jerusalem mindedness among some Americans like we're a city set on a hill, everyone believes in God, everyone's Christian, everyone can quote the Bible. But Babylon is a place where it's pluralistic, sacred Scripture is just one voice trying to interpret reality.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [00:55:12](#) Many gods.
- David Kinnaman: [00:55:12](#) Exactly. And I tell this little story in the book, but my daughter Anika on a Christian school bus, she was going up to this thing called outdoor education and she was in the fifth or sixth grade and she and her friend started singing 99 bottles of beer on the wall on the Christian school bus.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:55:29](#) That'd go well.

David Kinnaman: [00:55:30](#) Yeah. Exactly. It didn't go great because one of the teachers said, "Anika, beer?" And she said, "Oh, I'm sorry. Is it supposed to be 99 bottles of wine?" So she's like what kind of mixed drink are we supposed to sing about? For me the funny, the way I tell that story is there's a Jerusalem mindedness. We try to protect ourselves. We don't sing about alcohol. We don't think about alcohol. That's just not what we do in Christian schools. That's sort of an indicator of the Jerusalem mindedness. And then in Babylon, it's a fair game. Everything is awesome. Everything is talkable. And when I talk about digital, the fact is that look at the example of pornography. It's an easy one to talk about because it feels like such a great example or such an easy example, but it happens to be a really true and true enough example. Pornography is not new. Age old human vice.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:56:34](#) Yeah.

David Kinnaman: [00:56:34](#) But digital Babylon provides us with instant access to pornography at the swipe of a finger that in the past teenage boys and young women if they were so inclined had to go to the back of the weird building. Or they had to surreptitiously steal it out or find their crazy grandpa's or uncle's stash or whatever. That's how, when we do our interviews-

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:57:00](#) It was work.

David Kinnaman: [00:57:01](#) Yeah. You had to work for it and when we do our interviews about how people were first exposed to pornography, older generations say I found the stack of the dirty magazines under the bed or whatever. But this generation is so ubiquitous that they're being exposed to it at younger ages because they're just innocuously searching the internet and they're finding exposure to it. Men and women are almost equally exposed.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:57:26](#) Yeah. That's really changed in the last decade.

David Kinnaman: [00:57:28](#) Yeah. Because it used to be mostly the male-

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:57:30](#) Mostly guys.

David Kinnaman: [00:57:30](#) Mostly men. There is a sense of its frequency and its potency and its ... so will the church doing ministry in a WiFi world, if we don't have the structures to train and learn and help to think about grace filled responses and training and thinking about the faithfulness of our lives, when it comes to online pornography

among a host of other topics, it's just one thing we could talk about.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:58:02](#) Well let's go a little deeper on that. I mean, let's assume 80, 90% of the people that are going to gather in any church on the weekend, pornography use is a regular part of their life.

David Kinnaman: [00:58:13](#) If not regular, it's been a part-

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:58:16](#) Been a part.

David Kinnaman: [00:58:16](#) It's been part of their story in a way. It's a more universal experience for sure.

Carey Nieuwhof: [00:58:20](#) Yeah. So what would you suggest is a better approach than just to pretend it doesn't happen or just condemn it from the front?

David Kinnaman: [00:58:29](#) I think you should do a 52 week series on pornography and watch your church dwindle to zero. No, this is why we have a whole different, we have to have a completely different reset. We have to talk about all the different dimensions in which the world is encroaching into our very bedrooms and hearts and pockets on these lighted rectangles. And that's the digital Babylon part. So for the first time in human history, we're fighting, we're working at odds with an overwhelming colonizer to use a phrase that's loaded today. But these smartphones and we live in an incredible age. Who would want to go back? We're able to work and do things and communicate and change the world through technology and health care and technology and science are changing our lives by in large for the better. But we're doing ministry and trying to figure out a theological, Christian response to life in a completely new age. So I would say, you have to sort of rebuild your church to meet the demands and pressures of pornography.

David Kinnaman: [00:59:42](#) I don't have simple answers to that, but some of the kinds of things you might do is among children, to begin talking about the pressures and challenges that they're going to inevitably face. Not if, but when. You have to start to insulate, you're starting to build resilience. What's going to happen when you see this? How are we going to talk about this? How are you going to be able to seek and confess and get forgiveness within the context of the church? From a point of view of teenagers, we argue in this book, Faith for Exiles, that we're seeing churches are starting to do human sexuality 101 courses. Human sexuality 201 courses. And it's almost like we realize we don't want to teach every young person, we don't want to teach

an eight year old about masturbation. But we do want to teach at age appropriate levels how to think faithfully and appropriately and relationally about the challenges of living in this sexualized age.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:00:46](#) And some of it goes right down to the core of identity. Who are you? And who are you in Christ? And you are not your body. Your body isn't a commodity. Things like that that are increasingly counter cultural and just not out there in the ether.

David Kinnaman: [01:01:00](#) And one of the ways to think about sermons then is that it should be ... it's almost like maybe think about a pyramid where sometimes I think we think of sermons as the base layer of our communication ability within a church, our pedagogical muscle, right? So the better I can preach about it, the stronger our church is going to be.

David Kinnaman: [01:01:19](#) And I'd ask you to think about the preaching as maybe the capstone or one of the top layers and there's all these other pedagogical, that's a big fancy word for how we learn, other structures that are in place like courses and hey, if you want to watch a YouTube video or we're going to give you a set of ... this is the curation thing we were talking about earlier about hey, let's listen to these sets of teachers or leaders on life in the pornified age because I can't give you a sermon about all this stuff and we don't try to call this stuff out every single weekend, but we want you to know this church is here. We've got lots of resources. We're a learning community that can help you understand how to live life faithfully. And at the base layer of our pyramid of learning there's all sorts of resources that we have available to you.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:02:09](#) That's a really interesting idea, David, because you've got this graph in the book where you talk about digital consumption among resilient disciples versus others. And they're just consuming different content and shaping their minds. But the reality is I don't know if you've ever had this, it was easier when there were like 10 channels because you just turned on the TV, you saw something. Now there's 300, plus there's Netflix, plus there's Hulu, plus there's YouTube and the internet and sometimes I just get paralyzed because you don't know where to go. Or the algorithms, you click on something that's sort of okay and then the algorithm gods just send you more stuff in that genre.

David Kinnaman: [01:02:47](#) That's right. Which is part of digital Babylon, by the way. The algorithm is the emperor of digital Babylon.

- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:02:53](#) It is. And you don't have a lot of control over that, you know, to a certain extent and I don't know how to opt out of the algorithm.
- David Kinnaman: [01:03:02](#) Right.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:03:03](#) So maybe it's that idea of church's curator, church's suggester, church's prompter. And the sermon, I love the idea that the message goes to the top of the pyramid and that there ... because we are not dying for lack of content today.
- David Kinnaman: [01:03:17](#) No. No we're not. And I think you're right. That's where the role of a pastor or a youth leader of a church is to appropriately curate this learning community and to think about it like the work of Orange, they've got this sort of the stages project. Is that-
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:03:33](#) Yeah, Phase. Yeah.
- David Kinnaman: [01:03:34](#) It's just a phase. And part of this notion is we really do need to work hard at thinking about somewhat of an older word or in high church, but a catechism type process where you're saying we realize there's certain things at certain ages each of us need to learn and we're going to help curate the right kind of content for you. And not just content because information alone isn't going to help every single person-
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:04:02](#) And practices, rhythms, disciplines that are going to be helpful to your child at that age.
- David Kinnaman: [01:04:06](#) And remember we were talking about the 10% who are these resilient disciples with the 80/20 principle? One of the things we see over and over in the research is those that are the most interested in learning are finding that the church is too simple or has not enough content because we try to make it so easy for anyone to get access to the right kind of information. We're not actually curating it for the people that are the most likely to want to learn.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:04:27](#) No. And you think of, I don't know what the average consumption of podcasts and digital content is, but it is much higher than your 30 to 50 minute message a week. And even in terms of this podcast, it's five years old now. I think five years old this week.
- David Kinnaman: [01:04:42](#) Congratulations.

- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:04:43](#) Thank you. Yeah. We made it. Woo hoo. We're in Kindergarten.
- David Kinnaman: [01:04:46](#) Yeah, that's pretty awesome.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:04:47](#) Here we are. This is water by the way. It's still morning.
- David Kinnaman: [01:04:54](#) I thought you said it was 99 bottles of wine.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:04:56](#) Yeah, that's it. That's it. Well, I got kicked off the school bus for that, David. You know, there was a big debate even five years ago the proverbial wisdom as I sought advice was 17 to 22 minutes. Don't make it any longer. And now we're easily, most episodes are an hour, hour and a half long. What surprised me is just the appetite for that kind of content has just soared in the last five years. But I went with this because all my good conversations are never eight minutes and the sound bites get really frustrating after a while.
- David Kinnaman: [01:05:29](#) Here's another myth I think we should bust which is this, I think I've heard it provocatively stated that it's a sin to bore a young person with the Gospel. We kind of high five each other as Christian communicators. Don't bore people. If you're boring than it's worse than being whatever. But I actually think this is part of what we have to do as leaders. Listen, I'm not saying we should settle for mediocre-
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:06:00](#) Keep it boring on purpose.
- David Kinnaman: [01:06:01](#) Communication just because that's just what the culture wants. But if we're working so hard and I think the phenomenon that you're saying of longer podcasts is a great example. People are hungry to learn. They're hungry. Most people are. They're hungry to find things that help them and that they're interested in learning or thinking through, but we dumb it down.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:06:24](#) Yeah, we do.
- David Kinnaman: [01:06:25](#) And listen, one of the saddest parts of the work that we do, and there's a flip side that's very hopeful, but the saddest thing is when we interview these young people who are going off to one of the great universities, they're going to do a career in science or technology or engineering or math or they're young entrepreneurs. I mean, even in the Steve Jobs biography, that guy went to Christian churches in his growing up years.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:06:51](#) He did.

- David Kinnaman: [01:06:52](#) He grew up in a Christian home and yet he came away with Christianity being lacking. And with it not actually having a plausibility structure that allowed one of the great entrepreneurs of the last 100 years to believe that Christianity really spoke to his heart as an entrepreneur and as a creative and as a technologist. And part of what has happened is we have lost the hearts and minds of the most talented people because we've fallen into the trap of saying, and we talked about this earlier about the intellectual or the work you have to do to create a great sermon. We have to work really hard and I think people like Tim Keller and others who really try to reestablish the credibility, the intellectual and philosophical credibility of Christianity. We have so much work to do that. And we interview young people all the time and Carey, it's just heartbreaking when we hear somebody say this just doesn't make sense to me. I've been in sermon after sermon after sermon after sermon and I don't believe it.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:08:00](#) It's just too simplistic. It's so funny, I was pulling out my phone. I'm almost, I'm in the last minutes of a book, Why Buddha-
- David Kinnaman: [01:08:08](#) I thought you were going to Google how to end a podcast that's really boring.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:08:12](#) Next question for David and nothing came up. But on Audible, Why Buddhism is True by Robert Wright. So I'm trying to get in the head. I'm doing a series next Easter called Plausible Alternative where I'm actually making Christianity seem like a plausible alternative. Like I know most of you don't believe this, but it's plausible and I want you to look at the plausibility. Now obviously, I don't believe it's just plausible, but we're at that point in a post Christian culture where people think oh, you're ridiculous or sentimental to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. But at the very end of Why Buddhism is True, it's this real deep dive into evolutionary psychology and Darwinism and so on. So a very different set of beliefs from what I believe personally, but at the very final chapter he reveals that he was raised in a Southern Baptist, evangelical, conservative church, that he walked away from Jesus, has embraced Buddha. And I'm like, yet another. It just goes on and on and on.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:09:12](#) And part of me is like a lot of what he's saying, it's actually in John Ortberg who we were talking about before we started recording. John and I have had conversations like meditation is actually part of a Christian tradition. It goes right back into the Old Testament. It goes right into the monastic period, the desert fathers, et cetera. This is part of our tradition and we are

just losing because we're into sound bites and little clips and superficial thinking and how's this going to look on Instagram.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:09:45](#) I'm testing theories on you.

David Kinnaman: [01:09:46](#) That's all right. Test away.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:09:48](#) But I'm already working on my 2020 trends, taking notes. But you know what I think is disappearing is the middle. And when you talk about digital Babylon, you talk about the resilient millennial and GenZs who have a strong and vibrant faith. Even in my preaching, certainly in this podcast and some of my other writing, my blog posts aren't short. We get crazy amounts of traffic on the blog. They're not short. They're like 2-3,000 words and I'm actually going deeper. I'm actually trying to nuance thought and more complex thought and bring more research into my messages. And it seems like it's almost going higher on the shelf. Like Keller. Keller, I think, did a beautiful job of being accessible but not simplistic.

David Kinnaman: [01:10:28](#) Right.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:10:30](#) And there seems to be a growing appetite for that. And then yeah, if you're going to have a 20 second YouTube video or a clip that shows up on Instagram, make it memorable and make it good and make sure it resonates, but I think the middle is disappearing. You see this in retail.

David Kinnaman: [01:10:47](#) The middle what?

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:10:48](#) Middle everything. Middle in our culture's disappearing. I mean, that's true of the middle class, but it's also true of malls. What's thriving? High end retail is thriving. But the middle and the bottom. Like Walmart because of low prices continues to expand, continues to do well. And so that whole middle just seems to be disappearing. The middle of communication, the middle of ... our church service is good, but not great. Our thinking is fine, but I'm not really working very hard on it. I just wonder if that's what's disappearing.

David Kinnaman: [01:11:17](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:11:18](#) Thoughts?

David Kinnaman: [01:11:18](#) Yeah, it sounds plausible.

- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:11:22](#) Yeah. Plausible alternative. But I like that idea that you can actually shoot higher in your thinking. Shoot higher in your argumentation because the rest of the world is.
- David Kinnaman: [01:11:36](#) Yeah. It seems to me that there's one theme that I've been sort of ruminating on that part of the reason that our churches are struggling is because if that's true that the middle is shrinking or maybe there never was a middle, right? Like everyone is unique in a certain sort of way.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:12:01](#) Sure.
- David Kinnaman: [01:12:02](#) And so trying to aim for an average is itself, we are absolutely becoming a more nicheified culture and people are ... I heard it described as we're becoming a technocratic world where everyone is being trained for a particular kind of work. So one of the things that I think is true about our current structures of church based ministry and this is a bit of a thought experiment. This has just been in the last few weeks so maybe this is helpful, maybe it sounds overwhelming. But I've been thinking about the fact that in a particular area, we're here in Toronto, we're in Almira here in Canada. If there are a certain number of people that are going to go through a high school or secondary education, they're going to graduate from high school. Is that what you call it here? High school?
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:12:56](#) Yeah.
- David Kinnaman: [01:12:56](#) In Ventura there's something like 10,000 students every year who graduate high school. And if the Christian community of Ventura, to use my home town as an example, if we were convinced that we had to help those 10,000 students, there's no real average student. There's no middle student. And so I'm convinced that part of the problem we have in raising resilient disciples is that in our congregational ways where we're really focused on who's going to show up on our weekends to be a part of our programs, we're not actually thinking about our responsibility to the city as a group of Christians whether it's entrepreneurs, pastors, other kinds of leaders because it's true that each of those 10,000 students are going to come away having either been exposed to Christianity or not exposed to Christianity. Having become a resilient disciple or have the conditions ready for them to become a resilient disciple or not.
- David Kinnaman: [01:13:58](#) And I sort of think about how could we mentor, and we have one of the concepts in this Faith for Exiles book that is a distinguishing factor of these resilient disciples is vocational

discipleship. So those 10,000 students have a vocation. They have a calling. They're going to go out into university, community colleges, trade schools, mission fields.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:14:21](#) Calling is not just to ministry.

David Kinnaman: [01:14:22](#) No. And what if we saw our mission as a group of churches and Christians not just to try and grow our churches but to prepare students from birth to 18 or from 18 to 29 to really experience, to go through a set of lectures on the plausibility of Jesus. To go through a set of lectures on living in a way that the corrosiveness of pornography can not attach itself to you. What if we gave them a set of diagnostic tools and process to help them figure out ... what if we ran coding camps, but they're run by Christian coders? Or design schools. And so I think there's this opportunity for us to view the people that God calls us to serve and to love and to disciple in a more I want to call it sophisticated current way.

David Kinnaman: [01:15:23](#) That is if we're trying to see each of these young people and by extension their families and the others we're trying to minister to not just as like hey, could we figure out a way that we could run a program that gets you here to come to youth ministry, but we're going to do our very best to identify not just some average student who we could communicate to and make it like a really powerful talk, but we're going to actually find a way to vocationally disciple you into your calling and to understanding the reality of whether God might be calling you to a kind of work. That would be an incredible vision.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:15:58](#) Yeah.

David Kinnaman: [01:15:58](#) And I just think that the Lord is ... we're so ready for some new ideas about how to do ministry in our communities today. And that's just an example of something I've been thinking about the last couple of weeks.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:16:10](#) It's a great thought. So I want to talk about the five characteristics of resilient disciples and I want you to kind of go through them, just the thumbnail of them because I know if you have 50 under 30's, you have five of them in your church. If you got 500, you got 50. If you've got 1,000, you got 100. So just to think through that would be the percent. So, 10% of all young people who grow up Christian, but in a typical church setting it would be about 20-25%.

David Kinnaman: [01:16:38](#) Well it might be higher because it includes the walk aways.

- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:16:41](#) Yeah, exactly. You're right. These characteristics you're going to go through, are they descriptive or prescriptive or both? Do they describe or they say hey, if you do these five things you'll get a few more of them or you'll help them along?
- David Kinnaman: [01:16:54](#) They are descriptive for sure. I believe that they're prescriptive. The nature of social research is that we can't say with any kind of certainty but with some plausibility we can say that these are very likely to have some prescriptive power.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:17:10](#) So if you do these things you're likely to create a little more of an incubator.
- David Kinnaman: [01:17:14](#) And at the very least you should think about them as guidelines and guardrails for the kinds of conditions that seem to grow or seem to be consistent with people who are growing. So Jesus talks about the soil. He gives the parable of the soil. And for anybody who's a farmer or really has a green thumb, the pH of the soil, the chemicals that are in the soil make a difference. And so these are in my view the way to making sure that we've got the right conditions in which souls can grow.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:17:49](#) I love it. Okay. So walk us through these five conditions.
- David Kinnaman: [01:17:53](#) Well, and as I say this is ... we've been working specifically on this for about the last three years, but it's something that I've been working on for the last 12 because this sort of started as a project that as we began to work on unChristian and then You Lost Me, we were trying to find the silver bullets or magic bullets of discipleship. And of course there aren't any formulas, but we found these five characteristics of these resilient disciples and as you can see in the project in the book their lives are so much different in these five ways from other young people, even those who we call habitual church goers.
- David Kinnaman: [01:18:30](#) But they have an intimacy with Jesus, number one.
- David Kinnaman: [01:18:33](#) They have a level of cultural discernment, number two. They sort of think Christianly as much as they love and have an emotional connection to Jesus. They think Christianly.
- David Kinnaman: [01:18:44](#) Number three, they have meaningful relationships in the church. And a real easy way of thinking about that is they actually want to be in and among church goers. They say I want to be ... we heard this so often, our qualitative, I want to be like this person that I know who's the most generous Christian I

could imagine. They want to emulate those lives. That's the measure of meaningful relationships.

David Kinnaman: [01:19:08](#) Number four, they're vocationally disciplined.

David Kinnaman: [01:19:10](#) And number five, they have a counter cultural mission. They actually exemplify higher levels of sacrifice and service and they have a very different kind of way of life and they're counter cultural in that way.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:19:25](#) Can we do a little meat to them?

David Kinnaman: [01:19:25](#) Those are the five. Yeah, of course.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:19:27](#) Yeah. That'd be great. I'd love to. So go back to one, intimacy with Jesus. They have this relationship.

David Kinnaman: [01:19:33](#) Well, one of the very first things I remember being struck by as a Barna researcher, I started in '95 straight out of college so it's been almost 25 years. In February it will be 25 years. And the first data point that I remember just thinking how is that possible is that seven out of ten Americans say they've made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life. And that number has dropped a few percentage points, but it's still in the upper sixties. And I still, to this day in Canada, around the world, in Christianized-

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:20:13](#) Buddhism guy. He had done it too. He'd made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ.

David Kinnaman: [01:20:17](#) Yeah. So I was like how is this possible? And even a phrase that's still important in their life, right?

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:20:23](#) True.

David Kinnaman: [01:20:23](#) But even that is crazy because he might have answered, the Buddhist person you're talking about, might have answered yeah it's still important in my life and Buddha is as well. But I was flabbergasted, which is a word we should use more often.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:20:37](#) It is a great word, David.

David Kinnaman: [01:20:39](#) Flabbergasted to see that seven out of ten people say they've made a commitment to Christ. So it's easy to say you're a Christian and even a Christ follower, but it's very hard to have joy in Jesus, to say your deepest identity is centered on the

things He says. And a good example of what we found in the research was that resilient disciples believe that Jesus speaks to them in a way that is personal and real. They actually have a conversational relationship with God. That's very distinct from others. So I say and we argue in the book that we've introduced a brand Jesus experience and that people are actually sometimes following a culturally created Jesus rather than the real Jesus. So we've got to clear religious clutter and Jesus himself sees to do this. He has to sort of usher aside the religiosity, the things about religion that say, the practices or the rituals or God is found in doing those things. So this idea of an experience with Jesus is sort of a first and starting place for these young people.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:21:47](#) And so you've whittled away the fluff and the religiosity around it and your criteria, the way to measure this, you would say no, this appears to be an authentic, personal relationship with Christ.

David Kinnaman: [01:21:59](#) And again, finding the right words for that are important because it's so easy in our churchified, Christianized ... so I think the simplest way ... and by the way, part of the reason ... I'll finish the sentence. The easiest way to measure it is do people believe that Jesus is speaking to me? Can you have a conversation? Do you live your life with the sense that God today has something new to say to me? And that's the best way we can measure it. And it's hard work because in Christianized and the post Christian cultures it's easy to say you're Christian, but you don't always find it.

David Kinnaman: [01:22:37](#) We've given a lot of the questions in the book that we've used and they might actually serve as a real helpful way for you as a church leader to say are we actually creating that kind of culture?

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:22:47](#) Oh, that's great. So that's in the book.

David Kinnaman: [01:22:49](#) That's right.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:22:49](#) Okay. Good. Number two.

David Kinnaman: [01:22:52](#) Cultural discernment. And this is that learning community thing we talked about that the Bible actually applies to how we live our lives in our terms of technology, sexuality, money, that we've actually learned some rhythms of discernment. We don't just teach people what to think, we teach them how to think.

- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:23:11](#) Right. And you say, I wrote this down in my notes. There's some cultural values from western culture today. Sex is for my personal fulfillment. Self denial is unhealthy. Something's true if it feels true. Follow your heart. So these are people who look at values like that and go hmm, I don't know whether I'd buy that.
- David Kinnaman: [01:23:28](#) Exactly. Yeah, they have a more discerning capability of saying does this make sense in light of scripture instead of does scripture make sense in light of culture.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:23:39](#) Yeah. Okay. So good. So they've got some cultural discernment. We spent a lot of time on that. Number three.
- David Kinnaman: [01:23:44](#) Is meaningful relationships.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:23:46](#) Yeah. Now you and Kara Powell, you keep coming back to this in your research and I know you're good friends with Kara.
- David Kinnaman: [01:23:51](#) Kara's awesome.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:23:51](#) But her research at Fuller just seems to always amplify meaningfully intergenerational relationships as being key to someone's relationship with God.
- David Kinnaman: [01:24:04](#) Absolutely. And I think she has this great phrase, warm is the new cool. Right? So relationships are critical. This emotional climate, do people feel loved and accepted and in what ways do they feel like they can be their best selves? As I said earlier, do they actually want to be there? Do they want to emulate other people in the community like I want to be like, this friend of mine David Mentor. I tell the story in the book about him. He's a guy I'm like man, that guy's an awesome Christian. I want to be like that guy. The way he prays is just like, when I hear him pray I'm like he is actually speaking to God right now.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:24:47](#) Yeah.
- David Kinnaman: [01:24:47](#) You know, you hear other people pray-
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:24:49](#) Yeah, I know those kind of people.
- David Kinnaman: [01:24:50](#) You know how it is like when people pray and they're praying really so that other people in the room hear them?
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:24:55](#) Yeah, correct.

David Kinnaman: [01:24:55](#) And they're going through in their mind the things they forgot to say in the sermon or the things that they ... and it's a little bit of a posing. They're posing for the camera. And then you hear other people and you're just like oh my gosh, we just were talking to God right there. So think of that. So how often do we in our churches make sure that those who come to pray in public, like they are praying in private too because you can tell when they come to pray there's no posing. And young people are watching that. So those are the kinds of things that are the emotional climate.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:25:31](#) Clear the stage. Right?

David Kinnaman: [01:25:32](#) Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:25:32](#) Preachers.

David Kinnaman: [01:25:33](#) Another thing we saw on this was that these meaningful relationships, young people are taught how to deal with the disappointment they will inevitably have with other Christians, with hypocrisy of Christians and with disappointment with leaders. Because we live in a broken-

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:25:50](#) That's through in relationship.

David Kinnaman: [01:25:52](#) Exactly. So I think they help young people develop the muscles understand you're going to come to a place where you feel man, these leaders have let me down. And they say hey, it's not if, but when you find yourself saying that Christian, is that guy really a Christian? Of course that person's a hypocrite because welcome to the club. We're all hypocrites. You are too. And so the emotional climate is one in which we try to help people deal with that. And that's more important than ever because this generation, they're so comfortable on social media they don't always know how to deal in real life with the issues that are going to come up in community.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:26:27](#) Okay. Next one.

David Kinnaman: [01:26:28](#) Vocational discipleship.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:26:29](#) Right.

David Kinnaman: [01:26:30](#) I'm so excited about this one.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:26:30](#) We touched on this. Yeah.

David Kinnaman: [01:26:32](#) Because could we vocationally disciple not only those students in our church, especially those in our church, but also those in our community? And I think it's a great opportunity. Churches around the world run vacation Bible schools.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:26:45](#) Right.

David Kinnaman: [01:26:45](#) Could we do vocation Bible schools?

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:26:48](#) Vocation Bible schools. That would be fun. But seeing the marketplace as a place for mission as much as anything.

David Kinnaman: [01:26:54](#) Not just the marketplace. The heart of students that they believe they've been created to do something and that the church actually cares about their vocational destiny.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:27:05](#) Okay.

David Kinnaman: [01:27:06](#) The Bible actually has insights for us. One of the amazing stories I remember hearing was the guy who designed the PNC ballpark in Pittsburgh.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:27:16](#) Oh yeah. Beautiful park.

David Kinnaman: [01:27:18](#) It is. It's amazing. Yeah, it overlooks the city. He's a Christian and he said that the verses in Exodus 34 and 35 where we talk about the craftsman who made the tabernacle and the designers who were gifted by God as the scriptures say to do these craftsmany things, that it saved his faith. And this is my whole contention. If we're going to develop young, resilient disciples who are designers and artists and scientists and lawyers and doctors, we've got to find the way to connect them to the fact that the Bible actually cares about you and who you are created to be vocationally, not just your soul. Not just the eternal disposition of your soul, but we care about your giftings and the church is going to help to cultivate those as well.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:28:06](#) Right. And number five as we wrap up.

David Kinnaman: [01:28:09](#) Yeah, vocational ... counter cultural mission is the fifth one and this is a sense of being developed as part of a team, learning about the needs of the poor, living differently from cultural norms. Like you're living this sort of life on mission. Sort of like it really is this outward expression of how we live and that those choices we make in the marketplace and with our pocketbooks and with our donations and with our sets of activities together, those all matter. It's like the sum total of us coming together to

be the church. And so we found some super encouraging things there as well.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:28:46](#) Yeah, like overcoming ... I know you wrote in the book that when you have these five characteristics you kind of push past the entitlement attitude of our culture, the it's all about me and self fulfillment and you live to a bigger mission.

David Kinnaman: [01:28:59](#) Yeah. Totally. You know one of the interesting conclusions that I have come to from this is a lot of church leaders say so how do we create a church that appeals to young people? And first, I think if you did these five things, if you embrace these five practices your church would be stronger. I mean, for me as a dad I'm trying to do these things in the lives of my kids to put these five characteristics around them. But one of the things that I think for me has been really helpful is it's not just how do you build a program that embodies these. How do you find the people who are already, the resilient disciples who are already embracing these kinds of practices and platform them more?

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:29:38](#) Right.

David Kinnaman: [01:29:38](#) Instead of just figuring out how do we attract them and make our church appealing to young people. You know, as you said, as you started this little part of the segment here, you have young people in your church who are resilient disciples and how can you find ways of giving them real runway to do what God is calling them to do as opposed to just how do we get more young people here. How do we actually turn the tables and find a way to support what God's already doing in the lives of these young leaders?

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:30:06](#) Well the book is called Faith for Exiles. For those of you who are watching on YouTube, here it is. Obviously, you can get it anywhere books are sold. But where's the easiest, if people want to drill down. Is there a website you'd send them to?

David Kinnaman: [01:30:20](#) Yeah. Faithforexiles.com and Mark Matlock who's my-

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:30:23](#) Yeah, co-author.

David Kinnaman: [01:30:24](#) Co-author on this, he's former executive director of Youth Specialties. He's spoken to more than one million teenagers in person.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:30:32](#) Insane.

- David Kinnaman: [01:30:32](#) So he's got a lot of practical ideas that he put in through the book and we also have a couple of e-courses. One for parents called Raising Resilient Disciples.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:30:40](#) Oh, great.
- David Kinnaman: [01:30:41](#) And one for pastors called Making Resilient Disciples. So we have these great exercises you can do as a church team where you actually go up to a board and rank how well you're doing each of the people on your team can rank how well you're doing on these five practices. And we've got these different sort of facilitator tools that we've done to help you kind of work through whether you're a parent, whether you're a pastor, okay, how do I bring this home? What do I do? They're not simple solutions. They're not like formulas. They're really more of a way of thinking about the kinds of conditions we would want to create that soil, that rich robust soil that's going to grow these deep roots.
- David Kinnaman: [01:31:22](#) And as I said, for me the most common thing that I get asked about when I speak to pastors or leaders is man you're talking about my 20 something kid. And for me as a dad, this is like the rubber meets the road. I tell a lot of stories with my kids permission of the things that we're learning together and things that I'm trying with them. How lucky are my kids actually to have me as their dad?
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:31:48](#) Yeah, how fortunate are they, David?
- David Kinnaman: [01:31:50](#) I've got all the data and they get to be practiced upon.
- Carey Nieuwhof: [01:31:55](#) Oh yeah.
- David Kinnaman: [01:31:58](#) So it should, I hope the study takes us closer to some things that are more at the heart of what it means to be Christian in our current culture. And even having heard all these stories from unChristian and You Lost Me of people's disaffection with faith or disconnection with Christianity, I'm hopeful that this book actually might be really helpful to young Christians too who are saying what is important today as a Christian? My friend Gabe Lyons and I did the book Good Faith as part of that too, that effort to say let's try to write some things for our own kids and I had my daughter quote back that book to me about a year ago. She said, "You know you write this and so here's a chance for you to practice it." So I know this next generation, at least my kids, are paying attention. So that's part of my hope in this project is to give people a sense of where the brightest lights

are and could we turn our attention rather than on all the points of disconnection to some of the things that are really working?

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:32:55](#) Well as always, this could have been three hours. So we'll just line up the next episode now. David, this has been great. Thank you so much.

David Kinnaman: [01:33:03](#) Yeah, thanks Carey. I sure appreciate your friendship and getting to know you and Toni and just the ways you've loved on us and me during the last couple years has meant a lot to me. So I appreciate the interview, but even more your friendship.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:33:15](#) Man, I just love David. And I promise you this is one of the greatest joys of doing this podcast, especially for five years, is most of the people you talk to are nicer people than you would imagine. And David is certainly one of them. I've gotten to know him and his family and just great. And you're going to want more I would imagine and if you do we have transcripts. Again, this one's on YouTube so I know the vast majority listen via audio, but we are getting more and more into video these days. So you can watch this episode. Transcripts are available along with show notes at careynieuwhof.com/episode288. And we're back next week with a fresh episode. I'm so excited to be bringing you Tim Lucas. Tim is the lead and founding pastor of Liquid Church. Really a pretty sensational story. They are reaching young adults where nobody's reaching young adults, right? In New Jersey just outside of Manhattan. Tim's really a fascinating leader and a lot of fun too. Here's an excerpt from next week's episode.

Tim Lucas: [01:34:12](#) It's been transformational because they not only highlight the good, flag the bad, but they kind of redline the ugly. And what has happened is gosh, when I'm doing a message on relationships or marriage, she is able to speak in with nuance and practical examples that I just simply don't have. And it just drives the message so much more deeper. Having an Indian pastor helped me add nuance when I'm talking about racial reconciliation. But hey, here I am in kind of the dominant culture. One of the big secrets I have with speaking with folks in reaching the people who again, post Christian or just far from God, I always make sure I have a brand new Christian or kind of a baby believer who always calls me on religious jargon.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:34:59](#) Again, if you subscribe you get that absolutely free and I hope you do. If you haven't subscribed yet, it's also our 5th anniversary. Remember, we are giving away to nine listeners

five books from any podcast alumni. We're going to stack your library. We are celebrating nine million downloads. Next week it all comes together. The way you can win is to follow me on social. Careynieuwhof on Instagram. Cnieuwhof on Facebook and Twitter. And in the meantime, if you want a free website head on over to prowebfire.com and use the coupon code Carey2019 at checkout to make sure you get that when you subscribe to their new web service. And every church needs a better website. And also, if you really want to get in on the savings that's happening through Remodel Health, you got to head on over to remodelhealth.com/carey. Download your church buyers guide for free. This is a way of doing health care that's better for your employees and so far for listeners has put \$625,000 back into the mission in savings by going with Remodel Health. They use technology and so on to help you. So remodelhealth.com/carey to learn more today.

Carey Nieuwhof: [01:36:11](#) Guys, thank you so much for making this such a rewarding journey over the years. It's been great. The best is yet to come and we're just kind of getting started and I really hope this episode has helped you lead like never before.

Announcer: [01:36:26](#) 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.