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SPEAKERS

RC: Ross Cochran

MH: Melanie Hester

LB: Leah Broach

0:00:09.0 RC: This is the Resilient Disciples Podcast, powered by Awana. I'm Ross Cochran, you know who you are, thank you for listening. On Tuesday, August 24th, I had the privilege of having a conversation with Leah Broach. Alongside my co-worker, Melanie Hester. Leah is the National Director for Alliance kids for the Christian and Missionary Alliance. She works with leaders across the country to equip local churches in child discipleship, and Melanie and I were able to have a super practical conversation with Leah in advance of the Child Discipleship Form. If you haven't saved your seat yet for the Child Discipleship Forum, you gotta click on that link in the show notes, save your seat today, childdiscipleshipforum.com. You may have missed it, but we offered a chance to join this conversation live. It's a new thing that we're trying and it was really fun. So you're actually gonna hear Melanie in a second, start the conversation with Leah, and if you're listening to this prior to Monday, August 30th, make sure you check out the show notes because there's a link to register for our next conversation, and that'll be with Gabe Lyons from Q-ideas. So here's Melanie and our conversation with Leah Broach. Thanks for listening.

0:01:35.5 MH: If you've never met me before, man, I hope that that happens one day, but until that day comes. We can do a virtual meeting. My name is Melanie Hester and I have a privilege of working at a Awana alongside Ross, and we're bringing these conversations to you, we were able to have one yesterday with Wess Stafford, and today we're having a Leah Broach, and next week we're gonna be able to have one with Gabe Lyons. These are opportunities to connect with the heart and soul of the people who will be coming to the child discipleship form, stage and Leah, let's just dig right in. I'm so glad that you're here. Thank you for your time and tell our community a little bit about who you are and the role that you have in children's ministry.

0:02:58.7 LB: Sure, well, I am the National Director for the Children's Disciple-Making Ministries. It's a long name. So a lot of times I just go by Director of Alliance kids, but my work really is to support our new 2000 US tries across the entire country and several different demographics and

cultures, and I work hand-in-hand with our church leaders to help them get ministries up and going, or to rejuvenate them, or whatever they need to help with child spaceship in the local church.

0:02:59.3 RC: That's awesome. And I'm always fascinated to talk to people like you, because you have such a unique and broad perspective of seeing what child discipleship looks like quite literally around the country. And one of the things that stands out to me about the community, particularly of those who are invested in the local practitioner, the local leader type of level, I sometimes feel like they're on an island, that their struggles are unique, they're the only one struggling with anything, so just for sake of... For the person listening, can you... What is the most common roadblock to a culture of child discipleship, 'cause I imagine someone of your work is trying to create that culture so that the community can live it out to its fullest.

0:03:43.5 LB: Yes, so the thing I hear everywhere is we don't have enough volunteers in our ministry, it doesn't matter if I'm in New York City or if I'm in rural, Albania, everyone is all struggling with that same thing of not having the people that they would like to have or not recruiting to get the people, the people are in their churches, they're just not always filling those roles in children's ministry, so that seems to be the number one, if you're struggling with that, you are in great company. So...

0:04:21.5 RC: Just out of curiosity, how do you begin... 'cause one of the things that's interests me, about the question about volunteers in particular is that it is indicative of other issues or other problems or context within the church. How do you begin to not only allow people to see what you said, that you're not alone, but also begin to practically change something that is really that complex...

0:04:45.5 LB: Well, I think from my perspective, what I'm seeing and what's happened over the past so many years, we enter this new world of child discipleship, quite a while back, I call it like this plug and play philosophy, where children's ministry just sort of became this place where we were just trying to get anybody to show up to step in, but these master schedule manipulations and a lot of our major curriculum houses, their tools while they were fantastic, we're starting to adapt to this, and so... We have a lot of people that are like, "if you can just come in and press Play on the video and lead the discussion, here's your script," that kind of thing. And a lot of ministry ownership from the local volunteers just started to go down and we started seeing this more as anyone can... Do I step into the role? While it was true, anyone can do this, it creates a different vision for people and it creates a different understanding from the level of church I really watch is so... I've really been working hard with our local leaders to, let's change that, let's change the story that we're seeing and how people understand that this is quite possibly, if not really most important, right up at the top, most important ministries and enable churches. What keeps our churches alive and vibrant and growing, and if our mindset is we just gotta find people to do plug-in play ministry, it's going to be a vicious cycle, you're always gonna have turnover and you're always going to be in for more people to do this so I'm trying to be an agent of change to say, No, let's really look at the hard what discipleship is, and how exciting and life-impacting, not just for the car, but for the adult it is to jump into this and get back to some of the... Just basics of what it means to love people and be a part of something and be committed to it, it's not an easy road, it's difficult, 100% difficult to change the culture that we've been living with for quite a while, but the results are really beautiful and sometimes we have to change our methods to get to that point, I always tell the folks that I'm preaching, let's put our dream scenario out there and let's back up and work on the steps that God is

from purely Ministry to really impact from ministry people are taking ownership and what they're doing.

0:07:20.7 MH: Yeah, Leah, I resonate so deeply with that, and I know for those of you who are watching at a different time, you don't realize that we actually have some people who are with us on life today, and so one of them mentioned in the chat, but they said that they actually want people in the room who are pouring into the kids and not just filling a space, and I think that... I remember I was a children's director at a church in Colorado Springs for a couple of years, and I remember... I remember that frantic feeling, I remember that only goodness, Saturday came Saturday night, it just keeps going downhill because all of a sudden it's like, who is going to fill that space? And I know that I can only fill one, I can really fill one of those gaps, and so I think to watch that transition go from... We have a leader who's in that reporting in to them to that desperation can be the simple journey of us, like a Monday when you have everyone set to a Saturday when kids are sick and they're all failing and it's not their fault, but there's that feeling of desperation. And so I think as we look at that and we see that in my opinion, man, that's not going to work for this next season of discipleship, in fact, I'd even probably argue that while the Lord was in the midst, and he used those Sundays where I just had someone fill the room, it didn't work then the... Right, right. Or really much, it's never really worked, but it's been... It's just been... It's been necessary. Exactly. And so I guess I'd love to hear from you. We're heading into the season of discipleship where we have to kind of create a difference between what does it look like for us to lead in our churches, but then also balance the practical sides that come with our ministries, so how do you see those things coming in this next generation and this next even year, let alone decade of ministry.

0:10:07.8 LB: Yeah, well, one of the biggest misconceptions I think people have about children's nesters is that their number one job is to be fantastic with kids, while that is certainly very high on the already list, if we want our children in history leaders to have a good report with children and to connect to weeks really, leading a ministry is about leaving that volunteer team and gaining the skills that it takes to read your leaders well, because you are just one person, and I see my time coaching our folks to understand that they are... Most often decline, those adults that they're leading just as much, if not more, than the children that they're dealing, so when we talk about our curriculum choices and we talk about volunteer requests and the things that we are asking people to do, we need... Realize that we're leading leaders, we're teaching these newer, younger, less experienced, whatever... Where do you wanna use some times they're very experienced. They just may not have the confidence that you need. But we have a real job and responsibility to teach those that are serving in the ministry, if you're doing Children's restraint and well, you're going to spend probably much more time in that category, then you are even on the child discipleship side of things. In the practical sense of the word, I think one of the things that I'm really challenging our folks to do is let's get better and making a bigger ask, sometimes what we do without realizing out of our own desperation, I just need to... serve kindergarten, that's what comes out of our mind, our mouse, say, if you could just step in for this or just serve here for this one Sunday, and there will always be an element where that's gonna be a conversation that we have to have.

0:11:26.3 LB: Because like you said, people's children get sick, teachers have things that come up, there's always going to be the surprise element, and you are gonna be the just... But we have to learn to quit talking about The gist and invite people into actual ministry that has longevity, and so making the bigger ask, making the aspects, will you partner with us to see these kids become well recycled, that means... We don't want you to sign up for every other Sunday or whatever it is that

you're trying to... We really want you to commit to this chunk of time, and committing to this chunk of time means doing these things, and so watching our own language in our own expression in fighting back that urge to project our desperation on others and being more inclined to be excited and casting vision for really what we're asking people to be a part of, 'cause it's so much bigger than just, Can you do this one Sunday for me? And the other part of that is, you will always have some people in your ministry that really aren't gonna commit to that long-term Discipleship process, but they might be great for those who you fill in when no one else will, but they don't just sit off in the corner often no lies waiting to be tactic, we need to be bringing them in the process and the dialogue and helping them understand what's going on, and then the issue so that when they do pop it, they don't look like the uncomfortable substitute in second grade public school that's going, What? Why did I say, What's gonna do to sign up for that?

0:13:06.2 RC: I've been the uncomfortable substitute many a time, so that resonates with me deeply. I love how... Why that invitation is, because I think that folks who listen to this as a podcast on a regular basis or who are connected to our ministries may sometimes feel that they're not qualified, that they were asked to step into that role just because some senior pastor saw them talking to a kid one day and we're like, Hey, how about you be our kids person... What I love about that White imitation as it is about... Well, we around here, we call belonging, you're creating a culture where a child can feel like they belong, or to your point earlier, that a family that can feel like they belong, that I volunteer, who's stepping into that, can feel like we have a long regardless of what their skill sets are... I'm curious, because you, in your work are not only spending time with that local leader, coaching them up, and in discipleship, I love all the practical stuff that you're dishing, but you're also... I imagine having a lot of conversations with senior leadership pastors and executive pastors who are connected to a church who maybe previously haven't paid a lot of attention to it, or maybe they're super... We get this response a lot, they're repentant, they're recognizing that this is something that they haven't managed... I'm curious, sometimes for some folks at conversations, intimidating, and you've had quite a bit. How do you begin to bridge the gap, or maybe a different way of saying it is, can you speak for people who are intimidated by the conversation to their senior pastor about Why does work matter so much...

0:14:35.3 LB: Absolutely, yeah, we... Is out there first? If there was a gift, covid brought us... At least what I've seen on my end, that gift was that realization from a lot of our senior pastors for the first several months when people were starting to come out of walk down and churches were trying to re-open, some still are struggling with that, but my phone and my email was full, not too much of children's ministry is a senior pastor saying, We can't get people to connect to church because... Not humidity, I never realized how important this was. So I would venture to guess that most of our senior pastors have been... Struggled with that at all, but there's an open door there that might have not existed previously, so the conversation should not be quite as intimidating as it once was in that regard, but... Here's the other thing I want to say, our senior pastors or executive pastors, whoever it is that we're working with, where our brothers in Sisters and Christ as well, and they have a heart for decal ship and for seeing their churches be driving and healthy and sometimes it's... Just we aren't doing a good job of helping them to cable picture, and one of the things that I talk about a lot is this whole discipleship strategy, and how important it is for every member and a leadership team in a church to sit down and say What do I wanna try to accomplish in discipling the people in our church and asking those big questions and who's responsible for what part of this, and when you start diving into more of that strategic conversation... One of the things that I ask often when I'm in these meetings as goals, do we have to get people through the whole Bible, and it's really interesting

to see the looks on a lot of places to not... Have that as a goal.

0:18:00.3 LB: Ask the question, are we deciding our people... Are we getting the prescriptive who in the church leadership team is responsible for getting the win, and so when you go back to IT, rotten, you can start saying, Okay, now do you see how important it is to... it is super important because that's really the bedrock for most people up to get those foundations of their faith, and as you all are, where we know that the longevity of people in church, in children who grow into adults that stay in church, often their story begins there in child discipleship spaces, and it's the ones that really felt connected and seen and love and talk to become a MERS in our churches, and so having that conversation with your senior leadership saying, this over here met a result open here. The cons of different types. A whole different scenario. It's not... I think sometimes what people get intimidated by is, I feel like I'm walking to a space saying, I can't do this job, it's too big, I need your help, Pastor, I just need your help to get more people, and then it becomes more of his desperate conversation. And then it becomes a little bit emotional, because if the children's ministry director walks out of the pastor's office doing like, he didn't hear me, he doesn't understand, he doesn't see the urgency and what I'm doing, I'm not that I make it, if I can't get some help. If we can shift this to a No, let's talk about really what it means to disciple our congregation well, and how are we gonna do this and... Not to belabor the point, but one of the things I see often, a lot of times, children, especially like a mid-week children's ministry activity or The Cycle Ship moment often happens at the same time as most of our other outreaches in the church. So we plan these children's deal things, while we've also invited every single one of our adults to participate in everything else, and we're wanting our children industry departments to grow, but we've not given any resource of our adult leaders to be able to participate in it. So it's just a simple conversation saying, If you're expecting us to host a children's ministry discipleship program on Wednesday nights, but all of our adults invited to divorce care into grief share and to Bible study, who's gonna take part in this? And sometimes it's just asking those questions in helping our leaders to see, Oh yeah, that decision causes a problem over here, and it's not always an instant expenses on where you have to wait through some things and you have to go through some scheduling conflicts, but Debra, have those conversations, but really elevate what is that you're trying to accomplish and not, I just need your help any people, because you're just perpetuating that same message over and over of desperation, and ...

0:22:37.7 MH: I wonder perhaps let is... I need help, I need people. Did that actually reflect what we need, it's the symptom of what we're seeing, but does that communicate to our leadership the actual foundation of core of what we need from them? And I think that one of the things that I am so excited about at the child discipleship forum coming up in just a couple of weeks, one, is getting to actually meet you face-to-face, so... Yeah, it looks like we have another friend on here who's gonna be coming as well, and so I'm excited to be able to meet people, but we're actually going to... This is a little safe guys, so we're going to be having an opportunity for people to start thinking through how to connect with their pastor and what it looks like for them to start building bridges, because I think that what often happens is that we've come a long way, right, let's take people down a very short, but other concise, that long journey of when did we really actually start really emphasizing like children's ministry in the church in the western world, like that started coming up and like the... Starting in the 60s, 70s, but really 80s, 90s, early 2000s, we started seeing people being hired to serve the children. So now we stand at 20-21 and we're like, Wait. But kind of what we've done is create just a session where we're like, Here's where the children go, We're so glad that you can now come to church because your kids are also getting a little about Jesus too, and what

we're here to tell you is that your church is in the children's wing, and the adults that are coming because they now have opportunity for their children to be discipled, are the leaders of today's church, and those children are the ones who are going to be leading the church tomorrow. And so as we continue to go to our pastor and say, Hey, I am your child champion, I am your advocate, I'm the one that you've hired to say, Here is what we need to disciple the children, but the rest of the church, the staff, this community of believers has to be the people who hold the priority of it too, on the eye can be the champion because that's who God has called me to be, but I exist in a community who knows how much of a priority that is, and we work together to say Hey, adults, we need this for our children, and also we're gonna ask ourselves the question of like, Are we doing what we need to be doing? Is what we're doing, the thing that God has actually called our community to do, and if that doesn't align with both the senior pastor and the leadership team and what God has called, Citytv got some really strategically intentional conversations that need to happen. So I'm just gonna kind of ask, you look to the CDF and you're going to be having some time where you're gonna be speaking... What are you hoping to share, like what are you hoping to connect people to in this specific conversation that says, Hey, you have to be here, and this is what God's laying on my heart. Well, just that idea, the happy of what you're saying, that children do do so much more than just a thing that's happening over here, and to do it well, we have to have invested well, disciple leaders, it's not just a siloed thing, it's not just a fun spot to send your kids a safe... So I hear it all the time, this is a say on, but... And we want him to be safe. And we want it to be fun. But it's so much more than that. And as a person who spends a lot of her time working with either our new church plants, or we have a program assistant in our alliance where we talk about revitalization, and that's churches that are on the decline, a lot of times the number one marker for a church to be on The Cline is they have no children, and so learning how important and how critical and Vitis is not just for the church of the moment, but for the story of the church, the whole history of the church, and being a voice for that.

0:25:46.6 LB: I've heard someone say it's easier to start something new than it is to resurrect it from the dead, which seems like... Well, yeah, of course it is. But a lot of times what happens if we don't start having these real deep meaningful conversations about leading well, from children through out, then we'll find ourselves in a position where we're constantly trying to bring life into something that's dying and the life is already there, so let's nurture it and grow it. Inside about members, right? It's about growing that depth of understanding in our Biblical world view what it means to be well, disciple and believer of Jesus, so that we have a sustainable faith, that gives us a sustainable faith, but if we're not teaching that to our kids, then working out the consequences of that throughout the whole church.

0:26:45.2 RC: Well said, I wanna land the plane here to be respectful, not only of your time, lean, thank you so much for just sharing your voice with this community now and with the support inform, but as well for the people who've been joining us live. Obviously, we hear, we're excited about the job safer, we are excited about an opportunity to see you inverse and excited about an opportunity to gather with this community, but ultimately our heart is that we want to serve those who are attending and provide a valuable experience for the person who hasn't decided to come to the form, actually I'll even broaden it from the form will make it not quite some marketing. Can you speak to why it is valuable... Why the person who's the sing to this is that their valuable time should be invested in something like the child superior... And if you talk about the child deception form, that's okay too. Because I think sometimes he'll be like, Oh, I can't, I gotta make sure this snack, have it is filled or some of the other things you've spoken to...

0:27:42.5 LB: Well, I think what's different and unique specifically about this is, this is not what the conference is, is it all about Tito, do ministry better or how to make your spaces look great or... We have a lot of that out there in the world that's done well and it's needed... This is really a time for us to understand the priority and the consequences if we fail to make it a priority, and really how to see holistically where children's ministry fits in the heart of the church, and how to become a better voice for that and a bit of leader for that, it's not so much about some tools and tricks and behavior problems or whatever it is that a lot of times we get a lot of giant, this is more about those conversations that we're having right now, like how do we see this from what it really is. And how do we give a bigger, louder voice so that our kids can know and grow and tell a story of Jesus to the next generation and the next generation. And I think if there's anything that we need to spend more time on, is that far more vanillin this next...

0:29:03.4 MH: Yes, I think those pieces are critical to our ministries running and like... We're not gonna downplay that. You're not downplaying that none of us are like We have... I have those things happen. But if we get 10 years down the road, and there were a couple of Sundays where they didn't have Goldfish or dairy-free gluten-free snacks, but they did have solid discipleship opportunities to know love and staff Jesus, then I think we've... Warning, if we see that opposite will all of a sudden we look back and we're like, Well, they've had snack in or make sure there's been somebody in there that's love them every week, but let's go back to what you had mentioned about some of the people you're sitting with, we're not sure that in the time that they've been in our care, then the time that they've been entrusted with us, that they've actually ever gone through the whole Bible, and that's where we stop and we start asking strategic questions that don't shame or judges for what was then, but that has got to lead us into where we are supposed to go, and to your point, Lee, this is an opportunity for you from Hu leader, you children's ministry director, wherever you may be, to come be a part of that conversation, because I remember those days, and honestly, I remember having these questions and not really sure, honestly, having the words to ask them, but I remember that intuition, that gut of trying to figure out something's going on and I have no words for it, and I didn't have access to it, I didn't have access to figuring out where this conversation was being had and who could help me continue on in this, and so this is an opportunity for you to come, and in fact, we've even set the table for you, and so as we go through, we're gonna be hearing from people in three different topics of conversation, it's going to be leaders like Leah who are engaged, deeply engaged in the local church practice, both on the leadership level of leading people who are all involved in also on the level on the daily basis where Lia and her husband are discipling their kids on a daily minded basis of their existence. The other thing we're gonna be talking about is Child Advocacy, and guys, we all know it, but sometimes we have to remember that the children are the future leaders of our church, but that doesn't mean we wait until they become the leaders to disciple them today. That's child ask, that's what it looks like for us to meet them today and give them the Jesus that loves them today more than they could ever know. And then the third is going to be on just cultural relevancy and the topics that are coming at us and changing, and so when you come to the CDF, those are the three big topics that we are going to be having speakers come out and we have 16 people who are ready, I'm telling you, we've been meeting with them over the last couple of weeks, hearing there, what God's laid on their heart, and man, they are ready with a word for us to take back to our churches, and so Leah, I... Just as we close, thank you for your leadership and the moments and the people and the conversations and the care that you are investing into the children's ministry world, and to everyone who's on with us today, thank you for joining.

0:32:25.7 MH: But more so, thank you for investing in the lives of children, thank you for them to the feet of Jesus, because we know that that is our responsibility, and Jesus and the Father do the rest. They transform lives, and we know that you see that on a weekly basis, so we've shared... We have shared the link if you would like to register for the CDF in the comments, we'll also throw that out for people to see as well, if you're in person, Lea, Ross, myself, we will be there and we just would love to sit down with you and meet you. But until that day, I hope you guys have an absolutely wonderful week. We are always praying for you and reach out if you have any questions... Thanks for joining us today.