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SPEAKERS

RC: Ross Cochran

GL: Gabe Lyons

MH: Melanie Hester

0:00:08.9 RC: This is the Resilient Disciples Podcast, powered by Awana. I'm Ross Cochran. Thank you for listening. On Monday, August 30th, I had the chance to interview Gabe Lyons, Founder and President of Q ideas. If you wanna learn more about Q Ideas, who they are at their conferences, their media, check out the show notes on today's episode. We have this conversation as part of a series of episodes, you've been listening to where I got a chance to talk to the faculty of the 2021 child discipleship forum. We would love to see you at the forum, and if you stick around to the end of this episode, you're gonna hear an invitation from Melanie Hester to the forum that... Let's just say if it doesn't motivate you to attend, I don't know what will... I start the conversation with Gabe asking about how he and his organization landed on the phrase "think well," to describe part of their mission. Thank you for listening. This is the resilient disciples podcast.

0:01:22.0 GL: It's so good to be with you Ross, and we just love everything that Awana does... Partly because I personally was impacted as a child, a huge impact on my life with my family's life. So thank you for letting me be with you and... Yes, right. Our work kids, we've been around 16 years now, trying to gather Christians to be thoughtful, informed, better understand the issues that we're all navigating in the world today, and to bring a posture of being humble, and we see that in the ability of being curious. We all do better when we ask questions, when we seek to understand, we seem to listen, but it's not enough to just hear people's opinions, you have to think well about it, So for us thinking Well, it means you know what you believe in this world view at the core of what is true, how things ought to be, and you recognize when those things are being in some way confused, manipulated, perverted, distorted, so that it's less clear what we ought to do. And so thinking Well means to both understand what we believe is true about the world, how the world functions, how issues come up, how justice and injustice moves forward, and then be able to apply that lens to everything that we encounter in life and what we're encountering this year, obviously. We wouldn't have been prepared for it. And so the way that we think doesn't necessarily change, it's just the current issues change, and we try to put it through this filter of like what does it maybe the lily think well about this particular topic and issue, and then to advance too. That's the final part of our mission takers, think, well advanced. It is not enough to just pump, talk about ideas, but what are we doing about it? How do we mobilize, how do we work together to not make our lives better, but actually consume our neighbors lives, the communities we leave in that everybody around us is flourishing because they've come to know what is true and what will bring life...

0:03:04.2 RC: Yeah, that's so good. And actually, that actually transitions perfectly into my next question, you must be a podcast host, but if you are not familiar with Q ideas, whether you're here with us live or you are listening to the podcast later... I would highly encourage you to check out the show notes where you're listening, check out Q Ideas, and become part of that community. There's a cohort that I would love to hear you talk about towards the end of our conversation game, about really just growing a place like this, I genuinely believe that you all have sort of carved out a unique

place in the kingdom that is so needed, especially for such a time as this. But you mentioned how advanced ability is such an important part of your mission, because otherwise all of us pontificate-ing, and that's here to... We are obviously heavily invested in the future of the faith, but it feels like a relatively new conversation as someone who has existed in what might be called a thought leadership place for 16 years, longer than that in some of your previous endeavors, you're an author, year speaker. Is that a new conversation for us, how do you see this idea of the future of the faith and specifically around...Our kids play out in the course of your work.

0:04:10.7 GL: No, I think you're right, I think this has been a refreshed conversation to think about our children and so much so. When we started Q-ideas, I was 27 years old. I was, I think Rebecca was pregnant with our first child, and then we were about to have our first couple of children in that season, and you're in a different phase of life at that point in your 20s, that when you move through your 30s and then you get to your 40s and as a leader of the stewardship of these children, these teenagers, you've lived enough life to not just have a philosophy about this, but you've lived in the real world of conversations, and I have my children to cite difficult conversations. Parents are having every day. But then also even statistically understand how much the earliest years are going to form a world view, are going to shape the way in which they view the world view, who they can trust, and if we're not willing to engage some of these difficult conversations earlier and earlier and earlier when they're coming at our children, unfortunately they're coming on our children earlier than they probably should, but because that's being forced upon our children, it now means we as parents must double down, must do the work to try to understand how to navigate this with them and that means some difficult conversations, I think when my daughter was four years old one day, she sat in the back seat, we're driving somewhere, we lived in New York City at the time, and I remember her pointedly saying, If God is a good God, why is there evil in the world. This is like a 11-year-old, I... The problem of evil question. It is like, Don't I get some time as a parent to figure out the best book for her to read it as... No, she wasn't gonna read you a book about this, she's asking her dad a very simple question that I then had to immediately be able to respond to again with humility of someone that I know doesn't make sense. But let me tell you the story and how we got here. And so I just think as parents, I think it's incumbent upon us to do some of this deeper work in places like Alanna or help me make it easier for parents who are busy, quite honestly, I haven't been... The discipleship type training, maybe that you would help, that they would have received or that churches we wish we're doing more of, but in a society where many people are running on fumes, they don't have a lot of time. They haven't been able to process it. We need partners, and so we... A Q ideas have just said, Look, we wanna emphasize the next generation more and more, much of our audience is having children, they understand this opportunity that they have, and this window is very short, and so we wanna be as intentional as we can and help them click them to know how to engage some of the more difficult conversations that we'd rather avoid, but if we avoid them, trust me, YouTube, Google their friends, every other content farm is coming at them to fill the vacuum, and so we can't leave that ground open.

0:07:04.8 RC: Such a beautiful... And I have a five and a half year-old and a two-year-old. So a terrifying story for me personally, but that's a separate issue, example of the exact kind of tension that you're talking about, because we talk about how screens disciple, but really it's this truth of your kids are being disciplined, your kids are being disciplined, and you get... As a parent, you have to choose to take back ground, I'm gonna get that phrase to a two to my arm, but that reminds me of this tension that I sometimes feel that I think listeners feel, which is this feeling of being overwhelmed in the moment while trying to build for the future, I would imagine as you're engaged

in this analysis space about the shrinking of the church or the breaking down of the family, Q ideas does not hold back on any specific topic. You guys engage in such a thoughtful conversation on what people are talking about, what people are hoping to hear, but... Well, that's a question is just how do you manage that tension with your own kids, because I... I would imagine you come home from work sometimes and you're just overwhelmed about the future, they're living into it, but you still gotta be their dad, you still gotta show up for them when they ask those kinds of questions, like, how have you found success in that...

0:08:22.4 GL: I've struggled with that at times. Sometimes I do better than others. In fact, it's just funny that you're asking, 'cause I feel like it was just Friday night that I sit around the dinner table with three of my children in Rebecca and we're having a conversation about the state of the world, and my daughter who's 16 says, you know every time we talk about this, I get anxious and I don't sleep well that night, and we kinda tone it back a little bit, and it was a bit of a review, and Rebecca was right there with... They're just like, Hey, we've gotta cut this off, like we know the work that you do do invest in thinking about the future, preparing for that building, even, you know what some describe as parallel structures, and then is other world where all consumed with the current action, but how are we as gospel people, partnering with God to build the kingdom? I get really energized by that, I don't go to bed with fear at night, it's not something that keeps me up at night, it's something I feel very called to pursue, and yet when I think about my children and the fact that they're having to get exposed to too much right now, it's just too much. They weren't designed for this... I've been reading... The summer I read a book by Neil Postman, and it's called Biblical bridge to the 17th or the 18th century. And I was with, I believe his Mike, we were having this conversation, and he talks about the fact that we've lost childhood and that the 1700s was the time of the world where we decided to protect our children, but we were gonna educate them, we weren't gonna force them into labor too early, we were gonna create this little moment in their world that they could start to imagine and dream and learn and get educated so that they could contribute even more to the world as they got older. And Neil Postman, in his book in 1997, what He warns is we're losing childhood because of all of the digital discipleship that's happening, right, all the Conwell, the information. And our children are being exposed to conversations that a five-year-old should never be exposed to, you should never be... Have an explain to your seven-year-old what a same-sex relationship is, quite honestly, and I had to do that, we lived in New York City who were... Was very aware with our neighbors and all of that, so I'm having to have conversations at a younger age for a child that's still just developing world view and trying to think about things, and so you're having to explain same sex relationships before you're even talking about heterosexual relationships, it is catching you early and he was a parent or... I'm gonna navigate that. That's an example of we're losing childhood, and so my encouragement to people listening, those who have the opportunity to kinda shape children is, it's okay to be very aware of that you might be accused of your children or AV or your children are living under a rock or whatever it might be, but in a world, the world that we're in, where we're inundated with information our children should not be having to think about, are exposed to as the parents have to try to create those boundaries. And so I'm saying it to myself because I'm from Friday night dinner, having a conversation with my 16-year-old like, bad, you need to edit it back, I need a boundary in here, even though I'm a teenager, even though I've thought about these things. You've talked about these things for years, like it's reaching a point for me that I need your support to kinda give me some space on some of this, and so as a parent, I guess I'm just trying to navigate that every day myself, and it's some of that but I would say for me personally, because I feel so called into it, I don't... It's a burden I carry, but when I carry really enjoy because it feels such important work to be doing, and I really

understand them believe that the more we pursue and get curious about the world, we discover that the way God's design things to function is the best way and it leads to people experiencing freedom, experiencing life and new experiencing flourishing instead of fear, and so I'm motivated to do that 'cause I know how much it sets people free.

0:12:15.0 RC: Yeah. Oh man. There's so much there, I wish we had 30 hours rather than 30 minutes. So one of the things I do wanna Derwin there though is, in that moment with your 16-year-old, even in the moment you're telling about with your five-year-old, that wasn't dependent on you having the exact right answer or the exact protocol that was dependent on... You being what we would call a loving, caring adult, and you allowing space for your child to feel like they belong, that they were heard, and I would imagine that when you talk about advanced good, that Q IDEAS. And we bring this down to a kid level, we talk all the time about the power of belonging and how vitally important is for kids to feel like they can be their full selves in this cultural moment... I'll ask the question I just... When you are looking at what we would call the church of 2050, when you're looking that far ahead to the future, how do you navigate the urgency of this work you're talking about with that feeling of needing, overwhelmed, how do you keep sort of motivating this conversation... I asked because I'm thinking about the local person who's listening to this, who's leading kids, who was just really trying to get their senior pastor to be invested in child discipleship in a way that they haven't seen in their local context, how do you begin to shift that mindset, because I think it's really valuable for people who are listening...

0:13:38.8 GL: Well, I think in a world that's confusing, it's in Second Timothy, I believe, or Paul writes, ever learning, were able to come to the knowledge of truth. Right, that when we recognize that we're all learning a lot, but our job with our children is to help them come to the knowledge of truth, it's not just information. Information creates a lot of chaos and confusion. Actually, what actually starts to help people is when you can classify information, which is knowledge. But we as Christians, we have to move to the next level, which is not a not just knowledge, but wisdom. You know what I think of the Old Testament passes that talked about looking for the Ancient Paths, rediscovering the ancient asks.

0:15:25.2 GL: That I wanna fill in, children and how they think about other people, how they understand... Everybody's made the image of God. Let's get down to these core beliefs and ideas about what it means to be human, what it means to think about the kingdom of God, operating in a world that the enemy has a lot of power in and a lot of control over what's happening. And it all sits through God's hands, but yet we're supposed to advance God's Kingdom idea, so how do I teach children kingdom principles, not just how to do the right thing, or not to lie, or how to kind of manage their sin, which I think is the easier thing, we try to do it. It's simple. We get them the rules. It's like the Ten Commandments. God did that for a reason. It was kind of, okay, I got a list, I'm gonna do that. But I think for the world we're walking into, we wanna empower our children to start to see King to ways of living in life in a new framework for what it means for them to be partnered with God to be launched into the world. To do this work. And so maybe the conversation with the leadership of the church as we think about our children, or are we instilling some values that no matter what the new issue is in 2030 that we're asking questions about or that we're faced with that we just can't believe or even having to talk about this in society, what are those principles that are gonna under-guard a resilience, and you guys discover writing about resilience, but how do we start building resilience now and teaching our children how to do hard things, how to be responsible for things, how to not just get caught up in a world right now of consumption, entertainment, of not

developing these skills. And I talk a lot about this, and I'll talk about this at our time together at the event coming up is we've stopped critical thinking, and we need to teach our children at the earliest ages now to know how to think critically, to be healthy skeptics, to know who ask good questions? That's missing right now, and even early childhood development, it's missing in our public education and private education, many of our private education systems, and yet this is the essential quality for how we know a human being is gonna be able to function well in a world that's got a lot of information coming at them, and discernment is gonna become key.

0:17:37.4 RC: Yeah, and I think what I find so valuable about Q ideas, what I find so valuable about ministries like yours is it provides space in a way that often feels inaccessible in other contexts where I can come to a few ideas talk or I can come to a piece from Q media to begin a conversation to begin answers, knowing that I'm not gonna get... You know, Here's this one really specific polarized view point that there's A... You guys embrace the sort of the journey that so many people are on really, really well, and I think when I think about it in the context of a local leader, and I think about advanced good, there's that difference that we're talking about it, whether giving someone rules versus child discipleship, because a child discipleship is advancing good, it is giving kids the tools to thrive in the culture, regardless of what the culture actually looks like. Now, you mentioned the form, and I wanna talk about the value of community, because when you have the right old age that you were when you started, you guys could have leaned into a sort of digital only space, you could have lead into a gathering of just connecting folks remotely, and yet you chose to put value in community, we're doing the child seldom, Awana is famous for having local ministry conferences, this is the first swing in a long time for us to bring sort of a national audience together. What was the value for you in coming together in a community, because I think for folks, especially coming off this year, the temptation is to lean back and if you need to for budget Ter reasons or covid reasons, like fully embrace, come into the Child subject form online but if you have the option, I want you to be there in person, and you are someone who could probably speak to the value of that in a unique way. Yeah.

0:19:29.4 GL: Well, actually 13 years, we're not gonna even offer online version of our national... When you were coming to our culture so that you had to be in the room, because we weren't gonna live stream it, we weren't selling life retakes, that only happened when covid force is two years ago or two events to go that route to... Right now, we offer both, but I still prefer the in-person, and the reason is is when you do have to take the time to come show up somewhere and you sit with other people, this isn't about just information, it's not about just content, it's about sitting with other people wrestling with very similar issues and learning from one another and starting to build friendships that last a lifetime, people who are part of our Q Ideas community, there are friendships that began 15 years ago, and every year this happens... That they become friends for life. And they become people who are on text threads and are encouraging one another and sharing articles with one another and continuing to keep the growth going, so if you can get her there, don't take the passive like, I'll just watch it, I'll get the information I'll hear about it, we have too much information. We don't need that, we need is communities that are thinking alike, that are willing to challenge and beat up positions, but also encourage one another and say, Hey, we're a line on this, we're together and we're gonna stick together, and how... When you think about developing our show and the sideline, and I think you'll find that when you participate in the forum, because you're gonna find people who are as equally committed to these conversations as you are, and the power that comes from you connecting in person... I have a dinner together at lunch, just getting to experience some other people from around the country thinking about these things, I think for the

future of the church, these kinds of galling to become more and more important. These physical gatherings in the same space are going to be essential.

0:21:22.3 RC: Yeah, well, and you guys have sort of launched a gathering within a gathering within the context of your cohort, and I apologize if that's not the correct term. Can you speak to why you guys are offering that, what that is for people who may not be familiar, 'cause I know that they might still be able to sign up...

0:21:39.6 GL: Yeah, we're doing... For the first time, they've been called the collaborative, but it starts in September, September 30th, where we're having leaders participate in an eight-month journey with us, where every month in these two-week moments or having this group gathered virtually to have these conversations. The conclusion is that our two-day Q event called The Culture summer, where it will be in person, and then some of these groups will be in person throughout the year, but what we're doing is we're bringing together panels around the most important conversations and topics, things like identity, sexuality, justice, polarization, and what we're trying to do is to create a community over eight months that we're gonna lay out our track, this is what we're gonna learn, but what we wanna do every week is apply that to every current issue that's coming your way and we know from us leaders that's what's difficult is the issues that are getting... They're responsible to respond, to help lead people, and they don't always have a trust the community to go to to navigate that, and so we're trying to create that space to say, Let's just have a journey together, we're gonna all be in a private censorship free kind of space to communicate, we're gonna have threads going on, remember to share information with one another, but we're trying to do is Armand prepared and IT leaders and on the front lines to not feel alone, to not have to navigate these issues without the best expertise. And so, as people have come to appreciate with our Q ideas events and culture summits in comedian, is we do try to assemble very thoughtful believers as well as some non-believers who are experts on current issues to help us think well, to be informed, to have a posture of the period viability, as we try to leave others who are equally confused right now, there's a lot of confusion, and for Christian leaders, you don't need to be confused, you get confused when you're isolating, when you just have these two people you're talking to your text thing, it's like, No, we need some more people on the road when it's some expanded ways of thinking about this really critical moment in our culture, and so people can learn more about that at Qatar, and they can see all the different people who are participating all the mentors that are gonna be a part of this with us. It's just gonna be an awesome experience. We're kicking it off as well in person, September 30, here in Nashville, so people have the option to come with this in-person that they can, but yeah, we're looking for... Into that journey.

0:23:57.9 RC: Yeah, that's really exciting, and I think it's a really valuable thing and it's... I'm gonna be John, the idea of Christian leaders don't need to be confused for a while, so thank you for that. I wanna transition back to the form with the couple of mints that we have left, for those of you who are here with us in person, monism in the beginning, like tickets are solvable, saviors today, a child, hisashi dot com. But Melanie, as you hop back on here, I think you're still hearing... Yeah. Okay, good. That worked out well is... What did I miss? Is there anything that you feel like Gabe, specifically, I bring into the form that you wanna make sure people know about.

0:24:33.7 GL: Or Ava... I think that that conversation is something that we could probably list then three or four times and consistently pull things out that will help us to just... I think you said, So did you say, Hey, I'm gonna chew on that a while... Right, and as that's just so, so true for where this is

leading us thinking, and I think the ending is just really sticking with me as well, gave... Your connection to that piece of, Hey guys. This is the culture that we live in. And as Christians, we shouldn't be confused because we do have both the Word of God and his Spirit to guide and direct us in the age that we are in, and so I guess the thing I wanna leave you guys with as we just close this out is that at the CDF, we're going to be specifically talking about what it looks like for us to really just sit in the fact that we live in a post-Christian culture, like gone are the days where many of us, not everyone, but many of us saw our... Our faith, our church, our church culture feel very in line with what our environmental culture looks like of what this just country's culture look like, and as that continues to spread, 'cause I think that gave you...

0:25:51.4 MH You touched on that conversation you said you had with your seven-year-old child of like, Oh my gosh, I didn't realize that we are gonna talk about homosexuality before we talked about heterosexuality. So many of us are there, I'm raising my hand with my son... Right, we're all there. And so for those of you who are watching, let's begin to settle into that now, we live in a place where we are now going to be able to separate very clearly, culture and the Word of God, and so may we lean ourselves to the Word of God because that is where the clarity and the strength lies, because the confusion only comes when we take our culture and we allow that to be the lens in which we interpret our spirituality, and so come to the CDF, engage in opportunities like the cohorts that Q is putting together, because it is in those moments that the Spirit of God is going to move in his people, and then God continues to build the kingdom that he started long ago. It just happens to use us in this specific season to keep building, so we're gonna go ahead and throw in a link to the child discipleship form, if you have not registered to this point, but please come join. Gave in Ross and I. We would love to see you there. This is a time for you to step up to the plate. We are all confused. Let's move from confusion to clarity through the power of God's word. Cape, thank you for being here, Rosses, always, you are just so great to listen to... Thank you for joining us today, and I hope you guys have a great week. See at the form.

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