

TSF Tour LIVE: Mike Kelsey

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Intro: Hi Friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm really happy to be here with you today. We've got a great show in store. Today we have our friend Mike Kelsey and his wife, Ashley Kelsey, at the end too. It's such a good show, y'all.

Throughout this month. You've been hearing all of our That Sounds Fun tour live conversations from June on the podcast. Now, in each city, we did save some of the interview just for the live audience, but you'll hear most of it here and you'll hear some live feedback from the audience as well, which I think is so fun.

Pastor Mike Kelsey currently serves at McLean Bible Church in Washington, DC area, and he's on the teaching team. And as you will hear us talk about, he has a long, strong lineage of serving God in DC. He is passionate to advance the gospel in multi-ethnic context and longs to see the emerging generations invest their lives for the glory of God.

He's married to his college sweetheart, Ashley, y'all are going to love her, and they have three young kids. You may remember him from Episode 223 last year, or remember, last June, June 2020, he actually took over and hosted the podcast for a week. And we will get him to do that again really soon. I'm so grateful for his friendship and that he came out to Grand Rapids to be on the show with us. So here is my conversation with Pastor Mike Kelsey.

Annie: Will you please join me in welcoming our guest, Pastor Mike Kelsey. Yeah, yeah, that's so good. So good. So glad you're here. You're one of the only guests with long enough legs that you could do the Ellen thing around the table.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah. Well, I've never done this before. I didn't know how intimidating that the walkout... like deciding how you're going to do that, that's very intimidating.

Annie: Do you need another go?

Mike Kelsey: I don't know. How did that one go? You got to decide: do I want to be cool or do I want to be like, "I've done this before. It's not a big deal."

Annie: I thought it was cool.

Mike Kelsey: Oh, was it?

Annie: My hot take was that was cool.

Mike Kelsey: Okay, good.

Annie: I loved it.

Mike Kelsey: All right.

Annie: Okay. You're not from here, you flew in from DC.

Mike Kelsey: I did.

Annie: This morning?

Mike Kelsey: This morning.

Annie: Wow. That's traveling.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah.

Annie: We appreciate you. Your wife Ashley came with you?

Mike Kelsey: She's out there somewhere.

Annie: How many years have y'all been married now?

Mike Kelsey: Twelve.

Annie: Twelve?

Mike Kelsey: Yeah. I'm pretty sure. Yep, live.

Annie: We're about to get into it.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah.

Annie: Tell me what you know about being married that you didn't know before 2020.

Mike Kelsey: With my wife here?

Annie: Yeah.

Mike Kelsey: That I didn't know... Man, I mean, I knew this, but I think I learned it in a new way. We got three kids: ten, seven, and four. And just those family rhythms, I didn't learn that they were important. I knew that. I think I re-learned how fun the mundane things of life are.

Annie: Wow.

Mike Kelsey: So just I think in our marriage and being parents, you know, we just moving so fast, and for a moment everything was shut down. We were going on walks. You know what I'm saying?

Annie: Yeah.

Mike Kelsey: Like, I was like 72 years old. You know what I mean? We're not running, like legitimately walking.

Annie: We need to use an hour of time by slow walking.

Mike Kelsey: Hey, you got to slow down, please. We got to extend this thing. So we were doing walks every day and just little things like that. That was actually helpful for me. So that was a big thing.

Annie: What do you love more about Ashley after COVID than you did before?

Mike Kelsey: Oh, my gosh. Man! I love her...ah, there's so much. Her resilience. Because I think this year has been really tough. She was furloughed for a year from her job.

Annie: Wow.

Mike Kelsey: That came just out of nowhere. And the way she pivoted to prioritize our family and our kids, and just her resilience in this season has been, I think, spectacular. And since she's in the room, y'all can give it up for her.

Annie: Yes. Yes, Ashley. Why does resilience matter?

Mike Kelsey: Because I think it goes back to what you were talking about earlier. I think resilience is so necessary for joy. There's a buoyancy that I think we have to have in life because life is going to be tough sometimes. And if people ever doubted that, 2020 did what 2020... Do you know what I'm saying?

Annie: Right.

Mike Kelsey: It's like continuing to do apparently.

Annie: Right.

Mike Kelsey: With sidebar, did any of y'all have cicada problem? Or was that just the DC area? Anybody? Okay, cool.

Annie: Oh sorry. But I heard it got loud.

Mike Kelsey: My God! My Lord! It was ridiculous.

Annie: They're so loud, right?

Mike Kelsey: They're loud, yes. It's crazy.

Annie: In 2013, they hatched in Nashville, and you could not hear a friend outside.

Mike Kelsey: It was crazy.

Annie: It's like a buzz all the time.

Mike Kelsey: It was really crazy. So that was a great exclamation point to last year. But I think-

Annie: Oh, great a plague. We're in the middle of a plague.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah, it was crazy. It was like biblical.

Annie: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Mike Kelsey: I just think resilience is important for joy, because there's so much stuff that beats us down, that threatens our joy. And you got to be able to, I think, bounce back. Like you said, to chase fun. But to make that decision that I'm going to give myself permission to chase fun, to experience joy even though there's so much stuff weighing me down.

Annie: This is a hard question I'm about to ask you.

Mike Kelsey: All right.

Annie: How do we know when to be resilient and when to move on?

Mike Kelsey: Man, like-

Annie: Do you hear them? They're like, "Oh, yeah."

Mike Kelsey: What do you mean?

Annie: Like you lose a job or a relationship or you lose something that really matters to you, and resilience would say, "Hang in there. Get back up. Try again." And there are times where it's like, "No, move on to a different job, don't like..."

Mike Kelsey: For sure.

Annie: So how do you know the difference? How do we know?

Mike Kelsey: Why are you in my life right now? You're really in the midst of our whole prayer situation.

Annie: Really?

Mike Kelsey: It's so hard. I don't think there's an equation. We've been walking through it. I know this sounds kind of cliché. I think there's times where it's like when you know you know. So it really is something that's personal. For those who have a faith life and a relationship with God, I think that discernment just comes over time through prayer and community with other people who really know you. Because there's a lot of other people that swoop in in those moments to offer you opportunities. And to be able to sit with people who really know you, we found is so clutch in being able to discern those times. I think there's a lot that goes into it. But I think, man, when you know you know. But a lot of us I think we struggle to... when it's time to go, it's way more comfortable to just stay in what's familiar.

Annie: Wow. For sure. That's true.

Mike Kelsey: Do you know what I mean?

Annie: Yes.

Mike Kelsey: So I think that can be so, so difficult. I don't know if that's true of you as a seven.

Annie: I mean-

Mike Kelsey: I'll just be out here. You know what I mean? But I'm a nine. I just want to be like-

Annie: You're a nine?

Mike Kelsey: I'm a nine? Shout out to nines because we're here making peace. Let's make some peace.

Annie: They're like this, "Yay. We are here." What's Ashley identify as?

Mike Kelsey: She's a four.

Annie: The rest of the fours are crying. They're just crying.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah, she is very much a four. Yeah.

Annie: Man, that's interesting. Okay, knowing that about y'all and just knowing y'all and our friends, I mean, we talked about this before, but you aren't considered a guest on That Sounds Fun, you're literally considered a part of what we do. Our friends listening on the other side, somehow you have ingrained yourself into our hearts so deeply. There are guests people ask for and then they want you to have your own show. That's what happens all the time. So in front of everyone, please, can we just put you on the network? Can we just get you a show?

Mike Kelsey: Oh.

Annie: It needs to happen.

Mike Kelsey: Let's go. I don't know why you put me on this. Why did you give me... I know you're the one asking questions, but-

Annie: I am.

Mike Kelsey: ...it seems like it was a little bit of a irresponsible decision for you to just blindly give me a week of your show. You never even checked in.

Annie: I wasn't on it.

Mike Kelsey: On the one hand, I was like, it's very encouraging that you trust me that much. On the other hand, I was like, it's not like a low-key podcast. Do you don't know what I'm saying? I don't know what I'm doing. Annie is not helping me at all. You were like on vacation chilling.

Annie: Oh, no. Did you need help?

Mike Kelsey: Sabbatical, whatever the heck you were doing.

Annie: I was not.

Mike Kelsey: Oh, my gosh.

Annie: Mike! "Yeah, she was on vacation."

Mike Kelsey: You were just... yeah.

Annie: I was just hoping you would handle it. If you haven't heard what happened last spring Mike being on the show, Mike and I met... two summers ago?

Mike Kelsey: Yeah.

Annie: And I mean, it was this. I mean, we were sitting by each other at dinner, I was like, "Oh, you're stuck with me. You are my friend forever." And then last year when we were at locked down and racial tensions just got everywhere, and the murder of Ahmaud Arbery, I called Mike and I said, "Will you come talk to me about this on the show?"

And then what I wanted more than that is I wanted you to have conversations with other black people without me in the room. Because I thought y'all will tell stories that you may not tell if you knew Annie F. was there. So that's why I gave it to you. Because I trusted you and because I knew you would host the conversations that I actually cannot do. So I'm ready to do it again. I mean, I want you to do that anytime you want to. And I will go on vacation. That is what I will do.

Mike Kelsey: That is fun.

Annie: I want to talk—we're coming back to that—something you mentioned a second ago when we were talking about resilience and when to walk away, and you said, "Well, in our prayer life, we're there." I love hearing about how y'all pray. What is your prayer life? What does it look like? When you say, "We pray," does that mean you and Ashley every morning? Or is it just like, "We're both praying like this and then we're coming in talking about it?" What does it look like?

Mike Kelsey: It looks I think more like the second. I think especially in times where we're really trying to discern, I think one of the things is so just on an individual level that, I mean, obviously, we know there really is a guy who hears and responds to our prayers.

Annie: That's it.

Mike Kelsey: Well, answered prayer actually changes things. God who controls everything responds to our prayers according to His will. But there is also something that happens in us. And so I think when I'm praying through that time, and even when we're praying together and we're trying to discern stuff, what I found is some of the most meaningful stuff that happens is what God reveals in me.

Because a lot of times we're wrestling with stuff in our head, and just to say it out loud, whether it's through journaling, or talking to God about it, or especially if you're praying with other people, it doesn't have to be a husband and a wife, it could be with your roommates or your friends or people in your small group, at your church, but to be praying about those things out loud, you are hearing and giving voice to stuff that's in your heart that maybe you haven't even giving yourself permission to express. And maybe you didn't even know was there.

And so it's really a refining process, I think, for me and for Ashley when we're praying through those kinds of things and we start to realize, oh, this really matters to me more than I was aware it did, or these motives are really down in there, or these fears are really driving some of what's going on in a situation. I mean, Scripture says, I think it's in Psalm 42, it says, "Pour out your hearts to God." And I know like my personality, I don't really pour on my heart to nobody. You know what I'm saying?

Annie: Yeah.

Mike Kelsey: So just kind of praying through that stuff, it reveals some of how God is already working and moving in my heart, and it helps to give clarity. In a practical way, it just looks like, for me, like I literally have an app I use is called Day One. It's a journaling app.

Annie: Oh.

Mike Kelsey: It syncs to all your different devices. And I use it to just journal on a regular basis. I use it to pray through what's going on-

Annie: And you just type it all out?

Mike Kelsey: I just type it all out.

Annie: You put all your journals in the cloud?

Mike Kelsey: You can hashtag in this app.

Annie: So I can just download it and now I'm gonna read it all?

Mike Kelsey: Well, thank you. Thank you for saying that.

Annie: That's terrifying.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah, it is absolutely terrifying. Yeah, yeah. It will be a problem to pick that app. But I like it because I can access it anywhere. I, literally, before we walked out here, pulled it up when I was writing through and just chronicling the first time we met.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Mike Kelsey: Like when we met in Colorado and I was just journaling through that experience and praying through that. And so that helps me because I'm an external processor. I don't do very well sorting through my emotions. Even the way I just said that it was kind of derogatory. You know what I'm saying?

Annie: Yeah. All the fours are sad again.

Mike Kelsey: I'm sorry about that.

Annie: You made the fours sad again.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah, yeah, sorry. So doing that, journaling my prayers and my thoughts in that way is like a conversation with God that's just out there for me to see.

Annie: People ask me almost every night in the Q&A what I've learned about God in the last couple of weeks of the tour. I have the same answer every night. I've had an experience these weeks that I probably for the first time in my whole life, I'm like, "God, hears every single thing I pray. Hears every single thing." It is blowing my mind. So when you journal all that, how often do you go back and go, "You did more than I asked. You did exactly what I asked. You knew better than me so you didn't do what I asked." I mean, how often are you reflecting like you did today?

Mike Kelsey: Usually it's at different moments. It'd be dumb stuff like today. I've been in Grand Rapids before and today for lunch we went to Slows BBQ. Anybody have been to Slows? Okay, cool.

Annie: That got a very medium response.

Mike Kelsey: It did. But I don't know, it was amazing to me. And I remembered that I went to Slows before when I was in...I literally when I journal through that, I wrote down, "We went to Slows BBQ." So I had to go back and be like, "Where did I eat? Because I need some good food." So usually, it's events that trigger me going back.

Annie: Oh, interesting.

Mike Kelsey: But there's also... we do a staff retreat every year where it really is just about us as a team connecting with God individually and together. And I challenge our team to go back through... We answer a question together: if you could summarize this, what God's been doing in your life over this past year in one word, or a book title, or a movie title, what would it be and why?

Annie: Oh, wow.

Mike Kelsey: So we give everybody like four hours to go and think through that. And one of the things I do is just go back through that journal to see how God has been responding to prayers. What was that feeling? And one of the things that's helpful man is we talk about resilience. There's just times where you are in the grips of something, whether it's fear, anger, whatever it is, sometimes it feels good to just go back and read that and realize I'm not in the grip of that right now.

Annie: Right. Right.

Mike Kelsey: It's just good to be reminded this stuff comes to an end. You know what I mean?

Annie: Yes. I mean, it's that mode of going like, "I'm out of the season I thought I wouldn't get out of and it just happened." And if I wouldn't have journaled what that felt like... You know me. I'm big into journaling, too. I think... this may be bad theology. You're the pastor here. Sometimes I think God shows out because He knows I'm watching and I'm gonna write it down. Sometimes it's like, hey, that one little detail, I may not have noticed that but because I did and He's like, "I heard you."

Mike Kelsey: I don't think that's bad theology, though. Matter of fact, 2 Chronicles talks about how... It says, "The eyes of the Lord go back and forth throughout the whole earth seeking to work on behalf of those whose hearts are fully devoted to Him." He is eager-

Annie: Why does that make me cry?

Mike Kelsey: Oh, boy, if I could cry then I would.

Annie: That's fair. That's fair.

Mike Kelsey: That's a whole nother episode.

Annie: No, we got time. We're going.

Mike Kelsey: Okay. I think sometimes we don't think of God this way, that God is on... He says His eyes are roaming back and forth throughout the earth. He is sitting on the edge of His seat waiting for... it is a hobby to Him to prove to you and prove to me, "I am who I say I am. I can do what I say I can do. And I will do what I have said I'm gonna do." So I don't think that's bad theology. I think God is eager to prove to us, to show us, to demonstrate for us that He is who He says He is. You know what I mean?

Annie: Yeah. I'm just teary. Jamison run me some tissues. It's never happened.

Mike Kelsey: Jamison is working.

Annie: That boy is getting some steps.

Mike Kelsey: That dude is-

Annie: I'm working on his step count for today. Mike, I just saw on your Instagram a couple of weeks ago, you posted about rest.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah.

Annie: Will you tell that story about everybody praying for you and what happened.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah, yeah. I was out here, matter of fact. Not here in Grand Rapids. I was in Colorado Springs, matter of fact.

Annie: It's a very different place.

Mike Kelsey: It's a very different place. I apologize.

Annie: "I was here but I meant like..."

Mike Kelsey: Sorry.

Annie: "...in Colorado."

Mike Kelsey: My bad. Somewhere.

Annie: It's fine. You weren't in DC is what you're saying?

Mike Kelsey: That's basically what I do. Isn't that what I said?

Annie: "I was not home." Does that mean here if I'm not home? No.

Mike Kelsey: Okay, cool. All right.

Annie: Okay.

Mike Kelsey: So I had an event there and there was a whole lot of people who were there, a lot of influential folks that I really look up to, and just do a lot of cool stuff. And so I was there. I'm a pastor. Sometimes it's hard to take the pastor head off. So we were in this prayer time, and while we were praying, all of us praying together, Matthew 11:28 just kind of came to my mind where it talks about "coming to me all who are weary and heavily burdened and I will give you rest."

So that's been resonating with me. And I thought to myself, "There's probably somebody else here who's feeling weary and we should pray for them." So I mentioned that, and everybody said they're feeling weary. But a friend of mine was there who knew some of the stuff that I've been going through, and he said, "Hey, you know what..." I think me and Sam Collier, who you interviewed, Sam Collier, who's a new pastor at Hillsong, Atlanta, we were in the room and he said, "I think we should get Mike and Sam in the middle of room and we should pray for them." We were the two pastors in a room. And he said, "Because so often pastors always feel the need to be ministering to other people instead of allowing people to minister to them."

So they circled around us and lay hands on us. And they were praying for us. And afterwards, it dawned on me what I had just done. I was the one who was weary. I was the one who was feeling heavily burdened. And instead of just saying that, I had to be the pastor. And I didn't even realize. It was so subtle. The move was, "There's probably somebody else here who feels that way and we should pray for them."

I think that sometimes it's a pride thing. You know what I mean? Where I struggle to be vulnerable enough to say, "I'm the one who's in need in this moment." There's a picture that I posted on Instagram as somebody I don't even know who took the picture, and sent it to me with all of them surrounding us and just praying for us. And that was just a reminder to me that it's okay to be in need, it's okay to show other people where you're feeling weak and weary and insecure, and inadequate. That was huge for me.

Annie: I think so many of our friends listening in here that are moms, that are parents, that are teachers feel this like, "I don't get to be the weak one. Because if I'm the weak when the whole system falls apart. That has to be how pastors feel."

Mike Kelsey: Absolutely. Especially over the last year, year and a half, or so. I mean, when you have repeatedly been meeting people in the midst of their trauma... You know, we did funerals

for people who lost their life because of COVID, 32-year-old dude in our congregation who had three young kids, who left his wife a widow because he got COVID. He went into the ER and he never came out.

Annie: My gosh.

Mike Kelsey: So when you're carrying all that and you're dealing with all the drama and all the tension around should we wear a mask or not? Should the church be open or not? And people are leaving. Every pastor I know has been going through kind of same stuff. But you just have this illusion of, that you have to be the one who is always doing the ministry rather than being one who receives that. I Corinthians 12, I'm just one member of the body. I'm not the head. I'm just one part. You know what I mean?

Annie: Yeah.

Mike Kelsey: And we all need each other.

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And now back to the show.

Annie: So for our friends who are in a church that they're plugged in, they know the pastor, they can DM him or text him or call him or whatever, what do we need to ask? How do we know if they're tired? Like I don't know how to ask Pastor Kevin if he's tired.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah, yeah. That is a great question.

Annie: Thank you. My dad loves when people say that.

Mike Kelsey: What I was gonna say is ask your pastor how they're doing, if they're like me, they're gonna lie. Which I know is not for... The way that came out...

Annie: They're all liars like me.

Mike Kelsey: If you're here and you're not a Christian, Christians and definitely Christian pastors should not be lying. However, however... I mean, we just are gonna be like, "Oh, you know, I'm doing good." You know what I'm saying?

Annie: Right.

Mike Kelsey: So how do you get beyond that? That moment... matter of fact I may have put this on Instagram too. That moment when they were praying for me, my friend who was in the room... One of the things I posted in that same post with that picture is I said, "A lot of people ask how you're doing, friends stick around long enough until you tell the truth."

Annie: Oh, wow.

Mike Kelsey: And so I would say, you may not have that kind of intimate personal relationship necessarily with your pastor, but if you do, if you are around, I would say, ask your pastor, "How are you doing?" Get their answer, and then say, "I really want to be praying for you. So really how are you doing? Because I know this last year and a half has been really, really difficult and I'd love to just be able to pray for you in that." And I think that might be a prompt for your pastor to know, oh, this person is real. You know what I'm saying?

Annie: Right.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah.

Annie: Have you known a lot of pastors-

Mike Kelsey: Then I would definitely tell the truth.

Annie: Okay.

Mike Kelsey: For the record.

Annie: We know you. We believe you all the way. Have you known a lot of pastors who've quit?

Mike Kelsey: Yes. Yeah. Even like quit life.

Annie: Really?

Mike Kelsey: Yeah.

Annie: What do we do for pastors after this year? I actually don't know another job, another profession... I'm not going to call it a calling in this situation, because a lot of people are passing in a lot of different ways. I don't know another profession that I watched suffer quite the way pastors did. Everyone suffered in different ways. Pastors suffered uniquely. I don't know what to do, Mike. I don't know what to do to help the men and women who are leading churches that are exhausted, that are wanting to give up, that did give up, that are wrestling around with sin because secrets are better than nothing. And they're not. That's not a true statement. What do we do? How do we help? I don't know.

Mike Kelsey: It's an issue. It really is an issue. I was listening to a podcast episode. I wish I could remember the dude's name. I had never heard of him before. A friend of mine sent me an episode. The episode was "Why Your Pastor Needs a Sabbatical." What I loved about it is in our church, you have sabbatical... We've got a good situation in our church, a lot of churches don't. But he basically made an argument and he said, "For four reasons why the pastoring is uniquely difficult." There's so many things that are difficult. You know what I mean? If you work at UPS, that has unique difficulties. If you're a teacher, especially in the season we just came out of, unique difficulties.

Annie: Doctors, nurses.

Mike Kelsey: But he just helped people understand why pastoring is unique. I loved it. And I would just say, if you're in a church, I would say make it a part of your personal responsibility to advocate for your pastor to be human. I think part of that-

Annie: So I better write that down. We get to advocate for our pastors to be humans.

Mike Kelsey: Thanks, Jesus.

Annie: Right.

Mike Kelsey: You know what I'm saying. They are-

Annie: And Jesus didn't have unlimited strength. He slept all the time.

Mike Kelsey: Straight up.

Annie: And we can't ask them not to sleep when Jesus was asleep at the boat.

Mike Kelsey: No. The pastors are... like a tour bus?

Annie: Right. Serious. "Sir, there's some problems. Wake up."

Mike Kelsey: The difference is pastors are sinners.

Annie: Right.

Mike Kelsey: Pastors don't know how to wrestle with their weakness all the time in the most healthy ways. Pastors take on a pressure that is not for them to carry. So like basic things like, do they have a break? Do they actually have a day where they don't have to take phone calls, and they don't have to work? Is there a rhythm of sabbatical for your pastor, whatever that looks like, in the ministry of that church? Is their spouse taken care of? Because a husband and a wife and pastoral ministry are carrying that load together.

Annie: Together.

Mike Kelsey: So just advocating for them to be able to be human in all those practical ways, I think you can do that in your context. I know me as a pastor, I love being a pastor. I feel so thankful to God for the privilege of being a pastor. I love the people that we get to serve. I love to work. I love my job. I struggle sometimes with being a workaholic because I love doing pastoral ministry. And I also never, never, never, never want to take advantage of the people that God has entrusted to me to care for.

It's very, very difficult for me to say I need a break. It is very, very difficult for me to say I really need a little bit more free time because my wife is really struggling right now with the load that she's carrying. It's very difficult to say that. It's really, really helpful when there's other people who can advocate for that in that way.

Annie: What is y'all sabbatical rhythm?

Mike Kelsey: At our church-

Annie: At McLean Bible Church MBC, David Platt pastors along with them.

Mike Kelsey: So, at our church, every five years, our pastoral staff gets six weeks. If you skip that, and you go to seven years, then you can take a full three months.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Mike Kelsey: So it's every five years or every seven years, then you get sabbatical. And there's no limitations or expectations necessarily on that time. Obviously, we want to use it to be diving deeper into God's word and studying and that kind of thing. But it's whatever we need to do-

Annie: You don't have to come out the other side with a book written. Nothing like that.

Mike Kelsey: No. No, no. Here's the other side of it, though. I need to take it. That's part of what I mean advocate for your past to be human. Even where those things are in place, I would say put a little bit of healthy pressure to be like, "No, you need to do it for real."

Annie: "We're on year seven, man."

Mike Kelsey: You know what I'm saying?

Annie: Yeah, yeah.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah, yeah. "Because you're acting a little cray cray lately." You know what I mean? "You need some rest, though." You know what I'm saying?

Annie: Let me tell you some things I respect about you so much. You're third-generation pastor in DC?

Mike Kelsey: Yeah.

Annie: So for three generations, your family has cared about the spiritual health of our nation's capital. And you've been at McLean Bible since 2007. Same church, pouring into the same people, moved around to different campuses and different jobs. That's so impressive. People don't do that anymore. People don't stay. People don't stay.

Mike Kelsey: Is it? Or is it just a nine thing? Like I don't really want to... just help me out? You've been doing EnneaSummer. You know what I'm saying? It might just-

Annie: I don't care actually. I don't care why. I don't care if it's your personality or your soul. But whatever it is, it's impressive. What is it like pastoring the same people your grandfather pastored, your dad pastored? What do you feel about that family line thing?

Mike Kelsey: I mean, I didn't always look at it this way. I never wanted to be a pastor. Just real quick asterisk, my dream was to be Diddy. For those of you who... That was my dream. Like legit goals. Goals.

Annie: Then that intro should have been better if that was-

Mike Kelsey: Ah, sorry about that.

Annie: If that was the other dream-

Mike Kelsey: Listen, I think pastoring took the cool out of me.

Annie: That was the pastor entrance. That was the pastor-

Mike Kelsey: There was a time in my life, though.

Annie: Yeesh! Tough to have to hear.

Mike Kelsey: So I wasn't really following Jesus until I got to college. And even when I was following Jesus, I did not have any desire.

Annie: You didn't follow till college. So grandpa's a pastor, dad's a pastor, you're like, "Not interested."

Mike Kelsey: Mm-mm. I knew how to do church.

Annie: Man, your parents were praying their tail feathers off, right?

Mike Kelsey: Hundred percent. And I still got two brothers. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So it was a lot of prayer.

Annie: Wow.

Mike Kelsey: But even when I started following Jesus, I didn't want to be a pastor. I never thought I would work in a church. But now being a pastor, I'm honored, y'all. I'm beyond honored. It's over 70 years of consecutive pastoral ministry in Washington, DC, and I get a chance to step into that legacy, and help shepherd people and reach people with the gospel and serve our city. And so it's a real joy.

For a lot of younger leaders, I just think being in a pa... every time I go places, and they're like, "How long have you been there?" and I'm like, "It's 14, 15 years," people look at me like I'm an extraterrestrial. You know what I'm saying?

Annie: Right.

Mike Kelsey: Because that's just not what we do. Millennials... you know what I mean?

Annie: They don't stay.

Mike Kelsey: There's like... there's... I don't know how to describe it. There's an equity that you accrue in relationship with people. There's a credibility because they know, "Oh, you love me. This isn't an opportunity. This is a calling. You're here because you love us." And so I get to be the OG on staff now because I've been there so long, even though there's a lot of people there that are older than me. And there's just a credibility that you accrue over that time. So it really is pretty sweet to have been there for a while. My wife has been at the church. She's a worship leader. She's been at the church longer than me. She's been there for 17 years.

Annie: Wow.

Mike Kelsey: So we've gotten a chance to-

Annie: She is the more impressive one, isn't she? I made the wrong call. I know. I made the wrong call. Ashley, my apologies. Next time it's you-

Mike Kelsey: Most definitely. Yeah.

Annie: Mike, I cannot wait. When we're long way down the path, when we're in heaven and I want God to pull up a graph or a map or something that shows the impact of your family on that city and the way it spread to the globe, I just think, man, looking at the depth of how... The bar chart is going to be off the chain. It's just going to be massive. And it inspires me to stay.

One of the conversations you're really generous with us about is about race and connecting. And I would love for you for a minute to talk about right now where there's not like an apex story that is like, well, we have to talk about it because it's all Twitter is talking about, or we have to talk about it because it's the news, it's all... there isn't an apex story right now. What does it look like for us to stay in the conversation to keep trying to fall in love with the fullness of the kingdom of God?

Mike Kelsey: So there's not a headline, national tragedy right now. I think one of the things that's really important is to remember that we are in a national tragedy. Our history and the ongoing effects and implications of that, it is a national tragedy.

So there's not a headline about a murder or a headline about a trial or anything like that right now in this moment. What keeps happening though, is those are volcanic eruptions. Right? And it shows itself in our churches, in the media, where we work, in our families. Like that stuff that has been beneath the surface, it erupts when those things happen. How many more times do those things need to happen to show us it's not just the presenting event itself?

Annie: Right.

Mike Kelsey: That lava didn't come from nowhere.

Annie: That lava was already here.

Mike Kelsey: Do you know what I'm saying?

Annie: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I get. I get it.

Mike Kelsey: I think we're in and out. So that's helpful because there is still an urgency for us to pursue healing and reconciliation and justice. So I think we have a tendency to be like, "All right, cool. Everything is true. Everything is sweet now."

Annie: "We're good." Yeah.

Mike Kelsey: Until the next thing, right?

Annie: Right.

Mike Kelsey: And we keep being surprised that there's the next thing. That's because there is this national tragedy that we find ourselves in. And have we made progress? Absolutely. When my grandmother and my grandfather, my grandfather, who actually picked cotton, when they migrated from the south to DC in order to find work, you know, and my grandmother came to DC, and her job was to basically clean white people's house, that's how she describes it, that's literally what she did, and she was able to buy real estate at a certain point. Have we made progress? Absolutely. But we are still in the midst of a really, really challenging situation that has continued to unfold. So I just think that perspective is helpful-

Annie: That's helpful.

Mike Kelsey: ...because that then motivates us to continue to do the work. And I think that work doesn't always have to be as hostile, and angry as it has been, although that's warranted. You know, you interviewed Jemar Tisby.

Annie: Yeah.

Mike Kelsey: He wrote... what's the name of his book? How to Fight Racism?

Annie: Yes, you said it?

Mike Kelsey: How to Fight Racism, yeah.

Annie: Thank you.

Mike Kelsey: And I love his framework.-

Annie: I do.

Mike Kelsey: His arc framework, awareness, relationships, and commitment. I think that's just so helpful. So being aware, not just of national headline tragedies, but being aware of history, and then how that flows into and shapes today.

And then I think relationships are so clutch. But relationships, I think in the context of what we're talking about, because we need to be able to learn from one another, we need to be able to listen. And a lot of what we might think as kind of abstract history, I think, is able to become very personalized when we're talking to one another.

Not just on social media. You know what I mean? But actually looking other people who are different from us in the face, hearing their pain, their fears, and all of that, and leaning into that. Humbling ourselves to say, "There's something I need to learn in this. There's some way I need to be changed by this." And then being committed to being a part of solution. And none of us need to feel guilty because we can't be a part of the solution in the same way as this person is part of the solution.

Annie: Right?

Mike Kelsey: I think all of us have a different role to play. We're in different contexts. Grand Rapids is different than DC, is different than Atlanta. So it's all going to look different. But we all need to be committed, I think, to playing our role in the context we're in.

Annie: You're pastoring a lot of people. You've got people have a bunch of different races in your church. You're known for that, actually, that your church is really diverse. And I'm just going to say, they're also policemen in your congregation.

Mike Kelsey: Yes, they are.

Annie: How do you pastor-

Mike Kelsey: Federal, state, local.

Annie: How do we love our police friends well right now, too?

Mike Kelsey: I think acknowledging how difficult their job is. And I'll be totally honest with you. I have not always done that well, because there have been moments where I've been so angry and so frustrated that some of the things that I've said or the ways that I said them, I think just completely ignored people, friends, people that I know and love, people that actually show up on Sunday to help protect me. You know what I mean?

Annie: Yeah.

Mike Kelsey: One of our security team and stuff like that. When I said humbling yourself, there's stuff you need to learn, ways you need to be changed. I literally preached one Sunday and I mentioned race in the sermon, and I mentioned police officers. I preached at 9 a.m., I had an 11 a.m. service. In between those services, one of our pastors in our church who is a legendary or was a legendary undercover narcotics officer in DC, he called me in between services and said, "Hey, you know what would really be helpful? If in the next sermon you at least acknowledged how difficult the job is for police officers."

So I think that's huge. I think the majority of police officers are doing honorable work, have good motives in the work that they're doing. We've taken strides in our church to facilitate real conversations. And some of it is challenging police officers that be like, "As an African American man who grew up on the other side of the tracks, you know what I mean, who did not grow up in a community that really trusted police officers, like, "Hey, I can help you understand a little bit of why that is, and the perspective that our community kind of brings to the table. But I need to hear from you."

When you see headline news and you and we are all looking at this YouTube video, and there's dynamics we don't understand about what we just watched, it's helpful for you to explain that to me. And so I just think acknowledging our-

Annie: That's why the relationship matters, right?

Mike Kelsey: ...is so huge.

Annie: Because we can't have those conversations on Twitter or on Facebook. That is like, "Will you come over and I'm gonna make spaghetti? We need to talk about this."

Mike Kelsey: We've had real conversations. Like men and women in our congregation who are in law enforcement, and we've just really laid it all out. And it's been hard, but it really has been a beautiful thing, and I've been shaped by it.

Annie: What do we need to pray? We need to act. I'm not saying we don't act. I mean, Jemar Tisby's book is a great example of "Here's some real direction." But I want to change stuff through praying too.

Mike Kelsey: We have to. I mean, Ephesians 6 talks about this. It says, "We don't wrestle against flesh and blood."

Annie: Right. Right. That's what I'm saying. So what are we tearing down?

Mike Kelsey: I think the first thing we got to pray about seriously is humility.

Annie: Okay.

Mike Kelsey: Because I think it starts with us. It starts with us. If I come into the situation assuming I know everything, assuming there's nothing for me to learn, nothing for me to change, then I'm not gonna make no progress. And so I've had to learn that. You know what I mean?

Annie: Yeah.

Mike Kelsey: I do think my perspective of racial justice is the right one. I think it's biblical, I think it bears itself out historically, all of that. And I've been put on my face in conversations with real people and I've been humbled. So I think just praying for humility. And I also think praying for God to bring revival, man. I think that's what it's gonna take—praying for God to truly intervene. And I think it starts with His church. It is sad, it is sad that the barometer of what's happening in the church is usually the culture when it comes to race.

Annie: Wow.

Mike Kelsey: If you want to know what is really happening to church, all you got to look at is what's happening in politics. I mean, we saw that with the whole pandemic debate. You know what I mean? And so I really think just praying for the Lord to really revive His church, for the church to prioritize gospel-centered, gospel-motivated justice and gospel-centered, gospel-motivated reconciliation. And then be willing to really live that out not, just in our little country club church environment, but also in the community.

Annie: Yeah.

Mike Kelsey: You know what I mean?

Sponsor: Hey, friends! Y'all know how much I love a good Hallmark movie style rom-com story. Well, I want to tell you about a new podcast I think you'll really like. It's called Double Date with Marlo Thomas and Phil Donahue from the folks at Pushkin Industries. Marlo and Phil fell in love on live television and wed over 40 years ago. How awesome is that?

On Double Date, listeners eavesdrop as they visit the homes of their favorite long married celebrity couples for intimate conversations about enduring love and all its challenges, family, career, conflict, addiction, illness, jealousy, everything under the sun. Hear those personal and often hilarious stories that all married couples like to tell, from Viola Davis and Julius Tennon, Sting and Trudie Styler, Judges Judy and Jerry Sheindlin, and so many more. You can click the link in the show notes for more information. Can't wait for you to listen wherever you get your podcasts.

And now back to the show.

Annie: We've talked about this. You know, last year I read the Gospels every month and loop through them. And one of the things that's done is it's changed my language a little bit, where I'm not going like, what should Christianity do? Or what should...? I mean, in my head, I'm saying all the time, "What would the gospel say to do? What would the gospel say to do? And what can we do to move the gospel forward? What do we need to do to move the gospel forward?" So if I'm hearing you correctly, to help move the gospel forward, we need to pray for revival, we need to show up in conversations, and we need to make friends with people who aren't like us. Yeah.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah. And I think-

Annie: Not a ton of that happens on Facebook.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Annie: Can we just not do this on-

Mike Kelsey: Yeah. And I think then where God gives us opportunities to put some feet on that, then we got to do it. And that's hard. That's some hard conversations with some family members.

Annie: Right.

Mike Kelsey: Some hard conversation with some family members that are so beholden to their politics that they forget about people. Right? That's hard conversations with some family members who say low side comments. You know, that's conversations with people at work, where you're looking at certain policies or ways certain kinds of people are treated. That is looking at your decisions.

I had a really good friend who was just talking about how their family lives in a certain community. And when different racial minorities kind of started moving in the community, everybody started talking, and they were kind of like, "Oh, property values are probably gonna start going down." And people start selling their houses and moving. This is recent. You know what I mean?

We got to look and say, "What am I going to do about that?" And that's a real challenge. It's a real thing to be like, "Yeah, because people are moving now and property value might go down." This might not be what you need to do, but it's something to really pray about. Like, maybe I take that L. Maybe that's what justice for me looks like is saying, "I'm not going to be one of the ones that chooses equity in my home over justice. I'm going to be one of the ones who stays and helps build a culture of reconciliation and hospitality right here and trust God, trust God to pick up the slack for this decision I'm making."

So I would say like we pray about it, we're in relationships and all that, then God is going to give us some opportunities, I think, to put some feet on it and make some hard, difficult decisions. That was a moment for me. When I got that phone call, saying, "You know what will really help?" I'll be honest with you, I was salty. I was like, "Y'all, we don't ever really talk about race like that."

Annie: Right.

Mike Kelsey: So one of the few times that I'm addressing this issue, I gotta balance it out. I don't feel that happening on the other side. So I got to balance it out in the sermon and make sure... I'm not saying nothing crazy. You know what I'm saying?

Annie: Right, right.

Mike Kelsey: But I got to make sure everybody is com... And I was mad. I wrestled with God backstage. And I was just like-

Annie: For those eight minutes? You're like, "We got eight minutes to sort this out."

Mike Kelsey: For like eight minutes while that worship team... I'm just like, "That song's about to be over." And I'm wrestling with God. And I just decided I'm gonna take the L in this moment. I'm going to humble myself because I think he's right but I can't feel how right he is right now. But I'm going to trust him and I'm going to make the decision to come out here and add that part in my sermon." And I'm so so so glad that I did. So all of us will have those opportunities, and it's hard.

Annie: Now y'all know why I gave him my podcast. Right? Because this is the kind of friend we want to have. No question. No question. I just want you to hear how much I want to learn.

Mike Kelsey: You have that reputation. Yeah, you really do. Annie knows this. I told her. When she first asked me to come on the podcast to do an interview, we had met, hung out, I was like, yeah, we're low-key BFFs but I don't really know her like that."

Annie: Meanwhile, I was high key. High key. Very interested.

Mike Kelsey: But I'll be honest, I had to do my research. You know what I mean? I was like, "Is she legit? Is she for real? Is she just trying to use me, is she trying to, whatever?" And so I called some friends that knew you. And I was like, "Yo, what's the word?" And a friend, I won't say his name, but a friend that we both know said... this is what he was like, "She's a real one." This is somebody who's very vocal. He goes very hard. He's very vocal about racial justice and all that type of stuff. He was like, "She's a real one." So you have that reputation and you've proven it. And I appreciate it. And I can't thank you enough for irresponsibly trusting me enough to host your podcast for a week.

Annie: We're doing it again. That's all very kind of you. I wish I'd have been thoughtful sooner. But I'm here now. Is there anything we didn't talk about that you want to make sure we cover?

Mike Kelsey: Have I ever told you the story about how I proposed to my wife?

Annie: No. Do it right now, though. I'm so here for these stories.

Mike Kelsey: It's a fun story but-

Annie: Wait. Does Ashley need to be up here?

Mike Kelsey: I think she should be. Let's go!

Annie: Ashley, come on. Just for this last little part.

Mike Kelsey: Where she at?

Annie: She left.

Mike Kelsey: Where she at?

Annie: Oh, Ashley, come on.

Mike Kelsey: You're like pointing out because she's sinking in her chair.

Annie: Please. Everyone is pointing.

Mike Kelsey: She gotta come up here now.

Annie: It doesn't look like she's standing up at all.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah, yeah. There we go.

Annie: Are you sure? Okay.

Mike Kelsey: Let's go.

Annie: Bam, can we get a microphone for Ashley? Is that right? Okay. Oh, look at all the thumbs up we're getting. All of them. They all thumbs upped us. Ashley, the stairs are way over there. And I bet they'll hand you a microphone when you go to... I'm sorry. Oh, she hates everything.

Mike Kelsey: She does. She hates life right now.

Annie: You're gonna pay for this later, but I might pay for this later too. Okay, so you proposed one time.

Mike Kelsey: I did. It was only once, thankfully.

Annie: Please welcome Ashley Kelsey. Hi. I'm sorry. I know. I'm sorry. I didn't even stand up. Your husband did. I'm sorry. But you look so cute.

Ashley Kelsey: Thank you.

Annie: You have to talk into the microphone. I'm sorry.

Ashley Kelsey: All right.

Annie: We didn't even ask. We'll pay for your flight. Sorry.

Ashley Kelsey: Appreciate you.

Annie: I'm sorry, but I'm not. Caleb, take pictures.

Ashley Kelsey: Oh, my gosh. Am I shiny?

Annie: Oh, my gosh, no, you're gorgeous. Are you kidding?

Mike Kelsey: Is this what girls talk about? Did she just say, "Am I shiny?"

Annie: Yes, she did.

Mike Kelsey: I wanted to make sure that was verbalized for the recording.

Annie: For everybody, yeah.

Mike Kelsey: This is very different than how dudes talk.

Annie: You have never asked me that. No.

Mike Kelsey: I'm looking at a dude and I'm like, "I'm am I shiny right now?"

Annie: No, no, you look gorgeous.

Mike Kelsey: You're not shiny, you're beautiful.

Ashley Kelsey: Thank you.

Annie: Didn't he do such a great job already?

Ashley Kelsey: He did. Honestly, I was impressed.

Mike Kelsey: Wow, I don't how to take that.

Annie: She's like, "That's not who I live with."

Mike Kelsey: "Didn't know you had it in you!"

Ashley Kelsey: No.

Annie: Okay, tell us the proposal story.

Mike Kelsey: Okay. Real quick, backstory. We met when she was in eighth grade, I was in 10th grade.

Annie: That's early.

Mike Kelsey: It was very early.

Annie: Don't propose then.

Mike Kelsey: Definitely not. I wouldn't had a chance anyway. But she ended up coming to my high school. She was a cheerleader. She dated basketball players. I was not a jock, nor was I an academic. I was just lost.

Annie: You were a rapper. We know.

Mike Kelsey: I was like, I want to be

Ashley Kelsey: No, he wasn't.

Mike Kelsey: What was that?

Ashley Kelsey: He was a wanderer.

Mike Kelsey: My shoe size was the exact same. I was shorter. I had braces. It was bad. It was a bad situation so I didn't have a chance.

Annie: You did the best you could.

Mike Kelsey: I did the best I could. But I always joke and I say I went to college and I went from being Steve Urkel to Stefan.

Annie: Oh.

Mike Kelsey: See, young generation don't know nothing about that. Y'all don't know. Y'all don't know. Look it up. Look it up.

Ashley Kelsey: The thing is he's so proud of that.

Mike Kelsey: I am. I am proud of that. I am.

Annie: You're like, "The first part of the story, quit telling it."

Mike Kelsey: The way she says is that I grew into my head. That's what she says.

Ashley Kelsey: No, no, no. I said you grew into your features. The potential was there.

Annie: You grew into your features.

Mike Kelsey: That sounds like a very profound way of insulting me.

Annie: My gosh. Oh, my gosh.

Mike Kelsey: Why didn't we bring her up here, again?

Ashley Kelsey: I don't know.

Annie: She's like, "I don't know, but I could not." Everybody started pointing.

Mike Kelsey: And you're real nervous but you seem real comfortable now.

Ashley Kelsey: No, sir. Because she gave me a microphone. You gave me a microphone.

Annie: My girl, let's go.

Mike Kelsey: I'd like to tell my story now. Anyway, so we started dating in college and then we dated long-distance afterwards because I was traveling doing some ministry stuff. Long story short, I wanted to propose to her, took a very long time. We don't have to get into it because we don't have time. I know we don't have time to talk about why I took so long.

Annie: But how long did you take?

Ashley Kelsey: We dated for six years.

Mike Kelsey: But wait, wait, wait, wait.

Annie: Mike!.

Mike Kelsey: Wait, wait, wait, wait.

Annie: Do you want me to tell you what's not gonna be my story?

Mike Kelsey: We started dating when we were in college. So like three or four years of that.

Annie: So what?

Mike Kelsey: It was college though.

Annie: You gotta be 84 to get engaged? I don't understand. I can't comprehend.

Mike Kelsey: Those years don't count.

Annie: Oh, remember when they liked you 10 minutes ago?

Mike Kelsey: Anyway. Where's Mike Goodwin. He was the only other dude that can rescue me. I also got a job at some... anyway. But-

Annie: Six years.

Mike Kelsey: ...came to my senses and was like, "This is the woman that I want to-

Annie: Resilience. My friend, you got some resilience

Mike Kelsey: Yeah, she is resilient. So I was planning to propose. However, because it's taking a long time, she was super frustrated. She thought that I was gonna propose Christmas Eve. I knew she thought that. I intentionally did not propose Christmas Eve.

Annie: You're a monster.

Mike Kelsey: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ashley Kelsey: And I told my family. I told them, I was like, "This is it."

Mike Kelsey: She did.

Ashley Kelsey: "I'm breaking up." I'm like sobbing-

Annie: Oh, Ashley.

Ashley Kelsey: ...in my mother's kitchen-

Mike Kelsey: I loved it. I loved every minute of it.

Ashley Kelsey: ...and she's like, "It's okay. It's gonna be okay."

Mike Kelsey: It was good. But here's why. Here's why it was good. But at that point, I had already met with her mom and her dad to tell them that I wanted to propose. So her mom is hearing her sobbing and all that type of stuff. Her mom is a boss. Like her mom just kept their game face on. I appreciate it. Anyway, here's what happened with the proposal. So what I did was... my birthday is December 27, and so in January, I had one of my best friends and my brother convince her to throw me a surprise birthday party.

Annie: This is awful. This is awful.

Mike Kelsey: And so-

Ashley Kelsey: But remember that I wanted to break up with him.

Annie: Yes. Is that right?

Ashley Kelsey: Then I was like, "I guess I'll do this one last hoorah."

Mike Kelsey: Yikes! Yikes! Yikes! Hoorah it was. So her, and my friend, and my brother planned me this epic surprise birthday party, family, staff from church, all these people are at my aunt's house.

Ashley Kelsey: It's so lazy. It is what it is. But go on.

Mike Kelsey: I told them exactly what to do. I told them what food to order, all that type of stuff. So I told them it was gonna be at my aunt's house, you know, connect with all that good stuff. In her mind, the plan was that she was going to come pick me up and then we were going to go out and she was going to tell me we're going to stop at your aunt's house. Because there's someone we need to pick up there and whatever. And the whole family, everybody will be there to surprise us.

Annie: Got it.

Mike Kelsey: So she shows up to the house and I'm taking a really long time. And this-

Annie: Yeah, we know. We know, bud. You've been taking a really long time for six years.

Mike Kelsey: I guess that's what I do. Okay.

Annie: That's a nine stuff. Hard.

Mike Kelsey: That is a nine stuff. Well, I literally, for real, I cut myself while I was shaving. It was like Quentin Tarantino blood. I think I hit an artery. And so I cut myself while I was shaving. I couldn't get the bleeding to stop. I was trying to get it to stop. I'm trying to do whatever I can for the blood clot or whatever that needs to happen. Because in my mind, I'm like, "I'm about to propose. The pictures... I can't be bloody." Do you know what I'm saying?

Annie: Yeah, right.

Mike Kelsey: And so I'm taking a long time. She's super frustrated because she's like, "You're ruining this." She's not saying this to me, but you're she's thinking, "You're ruining the surprise, whatever, taking forever." So we get in the car, we head to my aunt's house. We get up to the door, and we're at the door and she wants me to go in first so everybody can say, "Surprise," but I want her to go in first so everybody can be like, you know, whatever.

Annie: What were they gonna say? "Congrats on getting engaged," and you hadn't done it.

Mike Kelsey: Finally...no. So when I finally got her to walk in... I wish I had brought a picture of that because I have a picture of her when she first walked in the door-

Annie: We'll share it when the show comes out in July

Mike Kelsey: ...her dad is right there. Her dad walks up to her. Everybody is there. The lights are down. Everybody's there. Her dad walks up to her takes her coat. There's a chair in the middle of the foyer. Her dad walks her over to her chair and sits her down. She's realizing in all of this-

Annie: "I'm probably not breaking up with him tonight."

Mike Kelsey: Yeah. "What in the world is happening?" And-

Annie: She got words.

Ashley Kelsey: What I realized is the man that I'm about to marry will have me do all the work.

Mike Kelsey: Well-

Ashley Kelsey: And then he'll take the credit for it, and then he'll share it-

Mike Kelsey: On a podcast.

Ashley Kelsey: On a podcast and sermons.

Mike Kelsey: I did massively have her plan her own proposal.

Ashley Kelsey: It's a great story.

Annie: We brought the wrong Kelsey to start, didn't we? We needed Ashley all along.

Mike Kelsey: But honestly, here's why I share it. And I do share it with-

Annie: Wait. And then you proposed? You're forgetting the part.

Mike Kelsey: I did. Sorry. I did propose.

Annie: She sat in the chair and then what?

Mike Kelsey: By God's grace, you said yes.

Annie: Did you kneel down in front of everybody? You're leaving out all the details. We don't care about your blood.

Mike Kelsey: I am sorry. I forgot the detail that the women care about. You know what I'm saying? Yes, I proposed. I got down on one knee did the whole thing. And it was a really, really beautiful, beautiful experience. We've been married for 12 years. We have three kids: ten, and seven, and four. It has been amazing.

Annie: Yeah, we get it. Y'all are locked down. We get it.

Mike Kelsey: We're locked down. Here's why I share the story, though, is I think a lot of us often, and one of the things I've been learning from God in this is a lot of us, I think, feel like Ashley felt in that moment where she had plans and she was so frustrated that I was potentially ruining her plans. Like, what is taking you so long? I have these plans. And she had no idea that we were actually the entire time operating according to my plan, which worked out...

Annie: And was the plan she really wanted.

Mike Kelsey: It was. It was a plan that she really wanted.

Annie: Yeah.

Mike Kelsey: And I just think a lot of us are... I have been struggling in like, "God, I'm frustrated. I feel like you're moving too slow. I feel like you're moving so slow that my dreams are gone, my plans are ruined." And I just think God is just like, "I got it. My plan is right on time, is right on time."

Annie: Right.

Mike Kelsey: And you can't expect the way I'm gonna do it and you don't know exactly, but it's gonna be worth it. I'm not saying I was worth it. I do think I was worth it. But I'm not saying I was worth it. I'm pivoting from the analogy now. I just think that's one of the things I've been learning, we've been learning. We've been learning to trust God in that in-between time.

I mean, we have this fun story, whatever, we have 66 books of the Bible that show us that God is planning exceedingly, abundantly above all we can ask for or imagine. He's a good Father. Like He really is a good father. He knows what we need before it's ever formed in our lips. He knows the longings of our hearts. He won't withhold anything good from us. And I know it can feel like that sometimes. But that's not the nature and the character of God.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Mike Kelsey: Like we really have been walking through a season for several years of having to... Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "You realize so much of your unhappiness because you keep listening to yourself rather than preaching to yourself."

Annie: Wooo.

Mike Kelsey: And we've been having to preach to ourself, "Oh, God, I can trust you. God, I know we are in the midst of Your unfolding plan and it is good, and it is gonna be good." And yeah, God is just good, man. I know for me, she's one of the most tangible evidences of that in my life. So very thankful. I'm not just saying that because you're sitting beside me on stage now.

Annie: I am really glad you want to tell us that story. There are many of us that need to preach to ourselves and that story will carry us to it. Before we pulled out here, I was putting makeup on, whatever and I was saying some things to myself in the mirror, and my friend Kelli who was in the room with me, and I was like, "I am my own best friend. I will say all the things she needs to hear. I'll say them right now." Because we just have to preach to ourselves. That's it. The last question I always ask.

Ashley Kelsey: Can I go?

Annie: No.

Ashley Kelsey: Oh.

Annie: You gotta leave?

Ashley Kelsey: I mean, I thought this was... Okay.

Annie: I mean, I want her to stay. Don't y'all? Yeah. Everyone wants you to stay. I'm really sorry. I figure you have to be in the picture and everything. Do you want to leave a lot?

Ashley Kelsey: No, I'm okay.

Annie: Okay. Okay. I don't want to force that entrapment. The last question I always ask, and I'd love for both of you to answer, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

Mike Kelsey: I'll go because we were literally just talking about going on tour.

Annie: Yeah. Okay.

Mike Kelsey: I was talking to your crew and they were talking about like... like, you can see we're different. Because they were talking about being on a bus and the bunks and all that type of stuff and I was like, "That really sounds like it would be amazing." And she was like, "mm-mm, don't. Don't." So I think it feels like tour would be amazing.

Annie: So you want to come on tour?

Mike Kelsey: I thought that would be great.

Annie: Sorry. Sorry, Ashley. I will make an offer for him to go on tour.

Mike Kelsey: I told her, I was like, "Bucket list."

Ashley Kelsey: What kind of bucket list...? Okay.

Mike Kelsey: It seems like fun.

Ashley Kelsey: He was like, "I want to be on a bunk with a bunch of dudes. I don't know. Whatever. Those are your dreams. This is gonna sound very cliché, but because you just sat here and told the story, I'm actually just thinking like, what sounds fun to me it's just being open to whatever the next adventure God has for us. I think I've tried to control a lot of things, tried to make my own fun and I'm just like, "All right, let's just get on the roller coaster."

Annie: That's beautiful.

Outro: Will y'all please thank Mike and Ashley Kelsey for joining us. You guys, isn't Mike Kelsey the best? Listen, I know you want a podcast from him, you want books from him. Listen, we're trying. We're doing everything we can. And how great was that moment with Ashley? Listen, when we came offstage, we all kind of looked around and we're like, "That was magic. That was magic. They are amazing." If you're not following Mike Kelsey right now, go and do it. Tell him thanks for being on the show, how much it meant to you.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that's how you can find me. And I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. And I will do the same. Have a great weekend and we'll see you back here on Monday as our live shows continue with our favorite double name witches, Ginna Claire Mason and Mary Kate Morrissey.