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[00:01:01] <Music>

Annie: Hi friends, welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with y'all today. Oh my gosh, I'm so happy to be here. We have got such a great show in store. Today on the podcast, y'all, I get to talk to an absolute hero of mine Coach Mark Richt. He's a beloved football coach, philanthropist, motivational speaker, husband, father and author of the new book *Make the Call*.

Coach Richt served as the head football coach for the University of Georgia, "Go Dawgs Sic 'Em" and the University of Miami as well as longtime assistant coach for the Florida State University Seminoles, under his mentor Bobby Bowden.

Throughout his career, Coach Richt's team have won two SEC Championships, five SEC Division titles, one ACC Division title, and he was the SEC Coach of the Year twice, and the ACC Coach of the Year as well. And with football season starting out, there is nobody I'd rather have on the podcast than my-all-time-favorite football coach, Coach Mark Richt.

[00:02:11] <Music>

Annie: I would love to start I mean, it's going to be hard for me to talk much about your FSU days or your Miami days, when you know you've got a Georgia Bulldog

here. But one of the things you wrote in the book that I would love for you to talk about, because there's so many of our friends listening are faith people as well.

Mark: Right.

Annie: And you said, you were talking about how you saw God tying things together in your life, and it says, "Loose threads, but I could see how they were coming together."

Mark: Right.

Annie: Has that been kind of a theme of your life? Have you seen that over and over again?

Mark: Well, when you go back and look, when you're going through it sometimes you don't see it or don't understand it. But when you look back and go, "Oh! That's what God had in mind. One big example was just when I was a young, trying to decide what school to go to as a graduate assistant coach. I'd made my decision to go to LSU.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: My U-Haul was packed ready to go. And the night before I left to go to Baton Rouge, I got a call from Coach Bobby Bowden in Florida State, who invited me to not only be a graduate assistant helping the quarterbacks coach, coach the quarterbacks but basically helping the head coach, coach the QBs which I knew would give me more responsibility. So if I didn't get the call that night, if I had got it the next night after I was in Baton Rouge, I never would have changed my mind. But since it came when it did, it was kind of a no brainer.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: But I needed help.

Annie: Yeah. And that was before you were walking with the Lord, because it's through Coach Bowden that you really became a believer, right?

Mark: Yes, that's right. So it was, God was preparing me for that moment.

Annie: Yeah. Can we talk about Coach Bowden for a minute?

Mark: Sure.

Annie: Yeah. I mean, so much of your book, all throughout the book, he keeps kind of being a theme of, "We did these mat drills like Coach Bowden taught me." And, "Spiritual leadership like Coach Bowden." And I know he just passed away a couple of weeks ago.

Mark: Right.

Annie: What was your experience like the last few weeks as you're hearing people talk about him, knowing how much he meant to you as well?

Mark: Well, next to my father he was the most, by far, the most influential man in my life. It was my coaching career, as I just mentioned a second ago, and he did lead me to Christ in 1986 after the death of Pablo Lopez. But I knew that he was the kind of guy that was not just picking out Mark Richt to change my life.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Mark: He just was living his faith, his family, and football. A lot of people say that, that that's their priorities is faith, family, football, but I saw it firsthand for 15 years, that's what Coach Bowden was all about. And that's another reason why, as you mentioned, some of the things I said in the book that I emulated from my days at Florida State. Because I really, other than 11-month stint at East Carolina University. I was at Florida State for 15 years prior to my opportunity to be head coach at Georgia. So I didn't know any other way, I knew the Florida State way, I knew the Bobby Bowden way. So that's kind of what I incorporated at Georgia.

Annie: Yeah. There's a quote from Eugene Peterson, I think it's even maybe one of his book titles, where he says, "Long obedience in the same direction." And I feel like, Coach Bowden seems to have really modeled that for you, I feel like you model that for so many of us, this long obedience. Tell me why does it matter to you now, as there's so many of us who look up to you? Why does it matter to you to live a life of long obedience in the same direction?

Mark: Well, when I became a believer in '86, things did change dramatically. I mean, I didn't know exactly what happened. I didn't understand completely that the sin nature I was born with, we know when Adam sinned, sending it to all of us and we're all descendants of Adam. And so we kind of got this sin nature we're dealing with, and then when we become believers, and that sin, nature gets eradicated and it's replaced by the Holy Spirit.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Mark: It's Christ who lives in us. And so if your spirit changes your behavior starts to change. And so our behavior kind of lags behind who we are in Christ. So little by little, we kind of get there. But if you're pursuing integrity, if you're pursuing God, and then here's the deal, my goal after becoming a believer became one very simple goal, and that was to try to live a life that would please God, period. And it was a very simple goal, it was not necessarily an easy goal, to always attain. But it was something that was very simple, and in my mind.

So when I made decisions along the way, the question always came either from the Holy Spirit or my wife, Katharyn, "What is God wants you to do? How would God feel about this decision?" And I think when we have time to think about it, and pray about it, and try to hear what God's saying, that's an awesome thing. But sometimes you got to make decisions quick.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Mark: And when you make those quick decisions, hopefully you're in a state of mind or a state of being that you will make the right decision that one that would please God. So that's kind of how I rated things.

Annie: I think I like your, "Your behavior starts to behave," that's true.

Mark: Yeah, that's it.

Annie: That's a good line. Okay, so Coach Richt, you came to UGA when I was a sophomore. And I'm sure you remember this, but I would love for you to tell this story. I remember that spring, you went around to a lot of the campus ministries and gave your testimony.

Mark: Right.

Annie: Will you talk about why that was important to you?

Mark: Well, they asked me, first of all-

Annie: Well, sure.

Mark: ...and, but the bottom line is, I want everybody to go where I'm going.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: I want everybody to have the peace knowing that they're going to heaven. And that's hard to obtain any other way than truly humbling yourself, and submitting yourself to the gift of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. And without it we're not good enough, we know that we can't get to that destination. But I think when I give my testimony, it helps people understand that a life can change. And that sin nature that was in my spirit and soul can be eradicated and become a new creation.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: And when that happens, that's when things really get good. But the good, the best thing about it is in the end, we're all we're all going to have an end time. We know that we'll spend all of eternity with Christ and with God. And that's a huge amount of peace, that people talk about that the Bible talks about, that surpasses all understanding.

Annie: I remember that night so clearly, I was part of the Wesley Foundation, that's right there on Lumpkin. And you came and you gave your testimony. And then the other thing you asked us to do, which I wonder if anyone's ever told you what we did when you asked this?

Mark: Correct. I remember.

Annie: You asked everyone to pray for the football players by name.

Mark: Yeah.

Annie: And you said and do you know that that next fall, our leadership team split up the roster. And we prayed for players by name that whole season.

Mark: Wow.

Annie: And I remember getting on the bus, Coach Richt, I got on the O, I got on the O bus. And one of the guys I was praying for got on behind me. And I was like, "Oh, he doesn't know what I know." I was like, "I've been praying this guy's name every day. Because Coach Richt asked me to, last spring."

Mark: I think we won the SEC that year too.

Annie: We did win the SEC, that's exactly.

Mark: Well, the other thing that happened that night, if you remember, is I came off stage and everybody stood up and gathered around, and laid hands on me and prayed for me as well. So that was pretty special night.

Annie: Yeah, it was. Tell me about asking people to pray for the players. How have you seen, well, we love talking about prayer around here, and everybody has different prayer lives. But how have you seen asking other people to pray really make an effect in changing things? Besides helping you win the SEC, you're welcome. You're very welcome.

Mark: Well, thank you. People often say, "God doesn't care who wins the game." And maybe He doesn't. I'm not saying He does, but if God cares about who's playing the game.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Mark: So when we prayed or when I prayed it was always about the health of the players, and for them to be able to focus and for them to be able to do their very best. It's a very emotional time before a game or during, even before during a practice. Because these guys are putting their lives literally on the line, it's such a physical sport, and things can happen.

Obviously, there's injuries in football, and some of them are more devastating than others. And, so the thing we would always pray for was just the safety of not only our team, but of everybody we played. That's one thing over the years that regardless of what these young men might have had as a faith base in their lives, nobody felt, nobody got mad about us praying for their health. Nobody got mad about praying for their well-being.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: No one got upset about that. And there's people outside the program that wanted to make a big stink about us praying, but I didn't worry too much about them.

Annie: What's your prayer life look like now?

Mark: Well, you try to stay in continual conversation with God. I was just reading this morning, when I do my workouts and then I got to ice my hip afterwards and that's when I settle down and get in the Word. But I'll do an Old Testament chapter, a New Testament chapter, a Proverb, and a Psalm. And one of the things that was in the New Testament was the crucifixion of Christ, I'm reading about that.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Mark: And the first thing that was said in Mark, "After He gave up His spirit the veil was torn from top to bottom."

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Mark: And not a lot of people know what that means. But basically the tabernacle where the Holy of Holies was, only the priests could go in to communicate with God. All of a sudden, that veil was torn, which allowed all of us to communicate with God, to pray. And so what a privilege we have to do that, to be able to pray directly to God and not needed intermediary in our lives.

So, I mean, I personally just try to stay connected all day long. And some of the smallest things I pray about and some of the biggest things. So there's a lot of you know, the older I get the more my prayers become prayers of thanksgiving just for the blessings that I have, and that I've had throughout my life.

Annie: Because y'all are back in Athens, right?

Mark: Well, what we was trying to split time between Athens and Destin. I'd like my taxes to be in the state of Florida.

Annie: I get that.

Mark: If I could. But family, my side of the family, when I coached in Georgia during that 15-year span, my mom, my dad, my brother, my two sisters, all their husbands, wives, children, all the nieces and nephews, everybody in my side of the family is in Athens.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Mark: And basically three years later after I retired from coaching and left Miami, and spent two years at the beach, they're still in Athens. So maybe the most important group; my son Jon and his wife Anna, and our two granddaughters Jaden and Zoe, they're the big attraction for us.

Annie: Yes.

Mark: So we visited so often that my son was like, "Hey, dad, you either got to pay me rent or you got to get your own house." And so anyway, we decided to buy a

home. And a lot of it had to do with, well, we knew I was having this Parkinson's too.

Annie: Yeah.

[00:15:19] <Music>

Annie: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, Genexa. It's founded by two dads on a mission to make everyday medicines with the same effective active ingredients you need, without the dirty stuff like artificial dyes, preservatives and fillers.

Whether you need to manage pain, allergies, or just a common cold, Genexa treats the same symptoms as the leading brands because they use the exact same active ingredients. But none of the dirty stuff you don't need, it just makes too much sense, you guys.

It makes you wonder why has someone not done this before now, my gracious it is 2021? Genexa has a huge network of health care professionals across the U.S. helping patients and their families join the clean medicine revolution. It's real medicine made clean. So start cleaning out your medicine cabinet today, go to genexa.com/thatsoundsfun, for 20% off your first purchase. Again, go to genexa.com/thatsoundsfun for 20% off your first purchase. That's genexa.com/thatsoundsfun. And now back to our conversation with Coach Richt.

[00:16:24] <Music>

Annie: How has that affected your faith being diagnosed with Parkinson's?

Mark: Ah, it's a blessing that I have faith. It's a blessing that I understand what's next.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: It's a blessing to know this, now I've been talking about my spirit and soul being made perfect in Christ through the gifts of Jesus.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: And when I talked about what lags behind is our behavior. Because we're still in this body, our brain is still part of our flesh. And there's still old stupid sin habits in there and things that just don't go away. They get better, hopefully, but you'll

never be perfect in your body until you lose it, and you gain this new glorified body that God's going to give us with no disease and no sin.

And so we'll get a perfect glorified body that'll match our spirit and soul, and that's, again, when things get really good at heaven. It allows me to look at my health, my Parkinson's, and say that it is truly a momentary light affliction compared to the glory that we will have in heaven. And so it's kind of what I tweeted out when I announced that I had it. I didn't do it for people to feel sorry for me, I did it because I got tired of answering the question, "What's wrong with you, Coach? Do you need help?" I'm like, "No, but if you wait long enough I could do it myself."

But anyway, that I told people, basically because I just got tired answering the question, but I was able to tweet out. I truly feel that this is momentary. I mean, I might say momentary it might be 20 years, and that's, that's nothing compared to eternity.

Annie: Yeah. When you think about getting a diagnosis like that, after a life where you've seen God be good to you and your family, and there's been tragedies and joys. And there's so many of our friends listening, who get diagnoses and think, "But I thought God was kind." Or "I thought God was for me." Or, "I thought..." What do you say to those people? How does that still feel kind?

Mark: Well, because in the end He's going to heal us of everything.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: When we die, we're going to heaven forever. I mean, the time on earth is so short, it's like a blink of an eye compared to what's going to happen in our future and that's so good. I mean, I had a heart attack, too, that was fun.

Annie: Yeah, I remember that too, Coach.

Mark: So I mean, when you think you're moments away from death, which I thought I was. And you have this peace and this excitement that you're going to see Jesus, that's pretty good stuff. And I'm not saying if somebody is on the deathbed and they're afraid, I'm not saying they're not a believer by any stretch.

Annie: Sure.

Mark: But for me, I was fired up. And I was kind of disappointed when they woke me up, to be honest with you.

Annie: Which came first, writing *Make the Call* or getting diagnosed with Parkinson's? The idea that they're both happening about the same time publicly, which came first?

Mark: The book doesn't reference Parkinson's at all.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: So I might have to add something one day.

Annie: Yeah little something.

Mark: If we sell enough books

Annie: To do another print run.

Mark: Then well, maybe we'll do a different book. But, so, I thought about journaling the adventure and Parkinson's. But I mean, I haven't been much of a journal person.

Annie: Yeah. So the book, *Make the Call*, you do such a beautiful job of telling these great stories from behind the scenes. I mean, I was just living it up in all the UGA chapters, I was so happy reading some of my favorite stories. So let's talk about "Finish The Drill," that's a great one.

Mark: Okay.

Annie: "Finish The Drill" is something UGA fans and team, I mean, we know this is something to live by. But you took a football idea and made it into like a life idea for us. Will you talk about what it means to finish the drill?

Mark: Right. Well, going back to Florida State, we had an offseason conditioning program called the Mat Drills, M-A-T-

Annie: It sounded horrible-

Mark: Mat Drills.

Annie: ...I read about it in the book and that sounds the worst.

Mark: Well, I've got guys that have gone to the military boot camps. I don't care if it's a Marine Corps, Army, Navy, Air Force, that say it was nothing like mat drill.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: But, so, the reason why we called them mat drills it was on a wrestling mat, 1/3 of it. But one 1/3 of that conditioning program was **[Inaudible 00:21:24]**

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: For those guys it was tough. And every drill we had not only on the mats, but every drill we had, whether it was a shuttle run or a L drill or just all these different conditioning drills. Every drill had a finish line, there was a cone or a line that they knew was the finish line. And we always emphasized finishing the drill.

And if you didn't finish the drill as hard as you started it, you got to go back and do it again. And not only you but your teammates, you might have 10 guys doing one drill, one guy blows it everybody's got to go back.

Annie: That's awful.

Mark: So everybody had to do it right. But that was the thing, that's the thing about football is it takes 11 guys doing it right.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Mark: And if one guy blows it everybody suffers. So the war cry for the mat drills was "Finish the drills."

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: So I take these drills to Georgia. We were emphasizing finish the drill, finish the drill, finish, finish. And, so that's where it came from. And so anyway, we're playing year one, we're playing at Tennessee the year after you guys tore down the goalpost.

Annie: I promise I wasn't part of that. I promise I wasn't part of that.

Mark: So anyway, we're playing those guys and where we take the lead with a couple minutes to go, and get an interception looks like we're going to win. We're on the

ball three times, they call three timeouts. We have to punt. And they're like 87 yards away, throw a screen pass. And with less than two minute, maybe less than a minute, I can't remember exactly the time. But they go at seven yards for a touchdown to take the lead, and the stands just started erupting. The ground started shaking, it was the loudest I've ever heard any crowd.

Annie: Wow.

Mark: So anyway, we get the ball back, throw the ball, three or four completions. Eight seconds to go, we call this play called P-44 Haynes. P means play pass means we're going to fake a run. 44 was the run we'd faked. And Haynes was the name of our fullback, Verron Haynes.

Annie: Oh, yeah.

Mark: And he was the primary receiver for that ball. So long story short, we call the play, they're in the right defense. And he's wide open in the end zone we score, and we end up winning the game. So we're in the locker room celebrating wildly. And I calm everybody down, and I started to explain what they had done. And somebody jumped up and said, "Hey, coach, we finished the drill."

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Mark: I'm like, "That's right, we finished the drill." And just not to wear this thing out, but there's that same Verron Haynes, he calls me while I'm writing the book, all right. And he says, "Hey, I want to tell you a story. My daughter is in dance she doesn't like it. She says she wants to quit." And he says, "Hey, honey, in the Haynes family we finish the drill, we never quit."

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: And then he hits me up a month later. And he went back to get his degree after, because he went on to chase a pro-career, he didn't quite get his degree finished. So he goes back to finish his degree. And his son who was old enough at the ceremony, graduation ceremony, said, "Hey, dad, you finished the drill." And so it's like you said finish the drill means, "Hey, do your best in that football drill." But it also means never quit.

And so many people have been encouraged to keep fighting through disease and fighting through relationship issues. And so a lot of these players are like, "If I can make it through mat drills, I could do anything." And so it's been a pretty great thing. Oh, by the way, one last thing. I got a former player who grew up

wanting to be a bulldog, he grew up in Athens, but I ended up having him go to Miami with me, as a fullback. Well, he's got a small business called Pop's Socks, okay, he makes men's dress socks.

Annie: Aha.

Mark: And so he made a pair of "Finish The Drill" socks for me. So every time I go out and I'm wearing anything black I'm wearing my Pop's Socks that say "Finish The Drill."

Annie: It just feels like it has, I mean, for starters, you should have taken me through those mat drills in college, because I would have learned perseverance a lot sooner than I did. I didn't learn it quite soon enough in my life. But I mean, when you're talking about Parkinson's, when you're talking about the rest of your life. How are you talking to yourself about finishing the drill of being faithful, and with your family and all that? How does that play out in your real life too?

Mark: Right. Well, the Parkinson's, the worst thing you could do is get depressed and roll up in the ball in your bed. Because that's what you're going to become, your muscles want to tighten up.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Mark: So you're constantly fighting that. You need to exercise, you need to stretch, you need to get those hot showers.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: You need to eat right, you need to rest properly. All the things I should have been doing I'm doing now, so I actually feel really good.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: My biggest issue is I move a little bit slower than I used to move. But I can still pretty much do almost anything I did in the past. But the simplest things now take a focus that really shouldn't have to. But the bottom line is you got to keep a positive attitude.

And some of the things that, some of the reason why people get Parkinson's is inflammation in your body, that's some of the foods you eat. The toxins that we breathe in sometimes or drink through these plastic bottle waters and all that kind

of stuff. That all of a sudden, your body just can't handle all the toxins, can't handle the inflammation. And if you don't get rid of them, you got problems.

So now, when you have motor symptoms in Parkinson's, movement symptoms, by the time those manifests, by the time they'll show up you've probably had it five to 10 years.

Annie: Ha! No way.

Mark: And what happens is your dopamine, your dopamine is an action cell in your body, that's what helps you move. By the time you get movement symptoms with Parkinson's, you've probably lost 80% of your dopamine in your body.

Annie: Gosh, that's so much.

Mark: So you're battling to save what's left.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: And take good care of that. And if you do, you can stay in stage one for a good long bit.

Annie: There's so many of us that are in the middle of something hard. I mean, you said it, whether it's a relational thing or a work thing or college students who are listening that are starting a year that's going to be hard. When it gets hard, when you're in the middle of the drill. What kind of things do you say to keep yourself going? I mean, "Finish The Drill" is a great sentence, but it's not going to like make me keep going every time. So what are the, is there stuff that God says to you? Or is it stuff you're praying? Is it stuff you're telling other people? How do you get to the finish line?

Mark: Well, I'll be honest with you, sometimes you fake it till you make it.

Annie: That's right. That's exactly right.

Mark: You just keep going, I think. It's just like with Parkinson's, you got to keep moving. If you don't keep moving you're going to get stiff, your muscles want to get rigid or things of that nature. So same thing in life, you got to keep moving, you got to wake up the next day.

I mean, there was a time and I write this in the book too, when I was at East Carolina. First time offensive coordinator scared to death that everybody around

me knew more than I did in that offensive staff in which they did. And so, I mean, every morning, I'm like afraid to go in the office and get embarrassed. And I got to the point where I didn't want to get out of bed.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Mark: I got to a point when during the night I wouldn't sleep, I'd be sweating at night, I'd be thinking all the things I had to do the next day, there's no way I could get them all done. Then you wake up and you take that shower and you get moving, and all of a sudden by 11 o'clock everything is done and you're like, "What was all that about?" You know it was fear.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: We just can't let fear cripple us. Because, just like when Coach Dooley, as the Athletic Director of Georgia, offered me to head job. And I wasn't sure I wanted it because I was scared.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: Here's my wife again, and she's like, "God didn't give you a spirit of fear, honey, that's not coming from God. That spirit of fear is coming from Satan, so you've got to say, 'No way.'" So anyway, between the Holy Spirit and my wife I tend to make it.

[00:30:24] <Music>

Annie: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about one of our amazing partners, Rothy's. Okay, so even though the kids are back in school and football season is here. The 88-degree weather and 70% humidity tells me that summer is still around. None of us need to be caught without comfortable footwear to finish out this season, and thankfully, Rothy's has got us covered. Rothy's surveyed 1000s of customers and you know what the number one word is that people use to describe their shoes, "It's comfy." I agree. I absolutely agree.

Their unique, seamless design, that's one of the things that sets Rothy's apart. They're also incredibly comfortable the moment you put them on and they're a fan favorite. Their styles are sustainably made with materials like plastic water bottles, I love that. You can toss them in the washing machine whenever they need a little refresh and they're available in tons of shapes, styles, and colors.

So you can always find the right one for you. With best-sellers like the flats, the loafers, the sneakers, along with sandals in an array of colors. Their newest styles have something for every outing you've got planned. Plus their spacious washable bags are perfect for summer getaways or if you're driving to a Georgia game somewhere. I wear my Rothy's all the time because they're both cute and comfortable, and without fail I get compliments every single time.

And gents, just in case you thought we've forgotten you. Rothy's newly launched men's shoes are intentionally designed with an incredible level of detail, and they are created with nearly zero waste. Rothy's men shoes are durable, washable, and better for the planet and they're a perfect fit, wash after wash.

Step up your summer-ending wardrobe with washable, sustainable, stylish shoes and bags from Rothy's. Head to rothys.com/soundsfun to find your new, warm turning-to-cool weather favorites today. That's rothys.com/soundsfun. And now back to finish my conversation with Coach Richt.

[00:32:14] <Music>

Annie: I mean, I'll tell you, I don't know if there's a coach's wife that's as loved as Katharyn Richt. I mean, she is-

Mark: She's special.

Annie: ...she's amazing. And will you tell about her being the water girl for the football team? Because that was one of all of our favorite things.

Mark: Right. Well, Katharyn became the water girl basically, because she didn't like being in the athletic director's box at the away games. And if anyone wants to gripe about what's happening on the field, she didn't want to hear it. Or she didn't want people to have to hold it on the inside when they wanted to say it when things were going well. So she would try to watch the game. The only alternative is to watch it from the stands or from the sideline.

But one day Barbara Dooley, Coach Dooley's wife took her on the field, and they're watching the game from the sideline. And while Katharyn was watching them, she's like, "You know what, I could do that water girl thing. I could be there and no one will even know I'm there. I can help the team do something for the boys and all that kind of thing." Like she used to do when it was just me coaching quarterbacks and all that, those are the good old days.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: So she decided she's going to ask the athletic trainer, could she do the water? And of course, what are you going to say to the head coach's wife? "Yes, you could do that." But just so everyone knows, those guys work hard. I mean, just setting up the athletic training, I mean, they're like four or five, six-hours prior to kickoff.

Annie: Oh my gosh!

Mark: And she was there with them every step of the way. So she didn't just shove them Powerade, she helped set up everything and worked her tail off actually. The other thing that was a nice fringe benefit is when we won a big game, I could go and kiss the water girl and not get trolled.

Annie: Yes, you did. We all saw it, yes you did. It was one of our favorite things. So why was this the right time to write your book? Why did you want to sell these stories?

Mark: Well, at one time, as head coach of Georgia, I was trying to write a book. And I got approached I was like, "Yeah, we'll do that." But I only have a certain time frame to do it, we got to meet this window of time. And as we're getting ready to do it, for whatever reason, the co-writer couldn't get it together, so to speak, at the right time. And by the time we started working on it, two things were about to happen. I mean, the season is about to start.

Annie: Right.

Mark: And we're on chapter one, and I read the chapter, and I'm like, "This stinks." I'm like "We're stopping this right now." So anyway, I figured I'd wait till I quit coaching to do it. After I retired from coaching in Miami, I got approached again about writing the book. I said, "Maybe, maybe not." And then the heart attack came.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: Which I barely survived. And after that I'm like, "If I'm going to write a book, I better hurry up and write it before it's too late." So that was the final motivation was the heart attack.

Annie: And Lawrence Kimbrough who helped you with yours helped me with one of mine. He's unbelievable isn't he?

Mark: Ain't he good?

Annie: Oh!

Mark: He didn't know the football much, but he didn't need to. Well, here's the deal about him as you know, he's so meticulous.

Annie: Yes.

Mark: Like I would tell a story and then he'd go back, and fact-check me and I was wrong about 70% of the time. So he'd get the story straight. But then he'd go back and watch a game, and he'd look at what was going on in the stands, and he'd get to see what's going on. Like the little things that I never would have thought to bring up.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: He's observing and writing about so we were a good combo.

Annie: He's one of the only people I know that still actively carries No. 2 pencils sharpened all the time. He just always carries them.

Mark: He's was good.

Annie: He should have called me, I'd have given him some color commentary from the stands he didn't know, I should have told him.

Mark: Exactly.

Annie: In the book, you talk about walking by faith and not by sight? Will you talk a little bit about what that means? You're in an interesting turn of events, you're about the third podcast we've had lately that talks about walking by faith and not by sight. So I think God's trying to teach us something here at That Sounds Fun. So what does it mean to you to walk by faith and not by sight?

Mark: Well, for me personally, faith has a lot more to do with eternal things. Now walking by sight has a lot more to do with temporal things, things that are short term.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: When we think in the short term, we could get overwhelmed. And we could say, "Is this all there is? And why am I going through this?" And all the pain and

suffering and all that. But if you look at life through an eternal window or glass, however, you want to say that. Then all of a sudden, you get excited about the future. And there are so many good reasons to be excited about the future.

And also, I think it also helps me personally, like I mentioned earlier, just to be thankful for the things that I do have. And I got Parkinson's, okay? Well, right this minute I could still get in the car, drive, go grocery shopping for my wife, which is what I'm going to do when we get done with this. And so, maybe a year from now I can't do that.

So I'm going to enjoy every little bit of what I can do right now and be thankful for it. Be thankful for the life I've lived. It's just when you look back on it, it's been such a wonderful life and so I've got no regrets. And I'm not mad at anybody about anything that's come up health wise or anything else.

Annie: I lived in Athens for seven years. After I was in school, I interned at the Wesley Foundation, and then I taught school in Jackson County, so I lived there for a few more years. And I don't know that I've ever prayed for a city like I prayed for Athens as a student and continue to as an adult.

Mark: Right.

Annie: What do you see God doing in Athens, Georgia?

Mark: Well, we are just now getting back into the groove of things. But I am part of a prayer group that started in 2001. Started by the leaders in the city of Athens, and our primary goal was to pray for the city of Athens and for the leadership, and just for the students and for each other.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Mark: I mean, we've been doing this thing for over 20 years now. And I got reconnected, I lost connection when I went to Miami.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: But one good thing about COVID is we started to Zoom call our prayer meetings.

Annie: Oh sure.

Mark: So I'm back in the group. And even now when we meet in person, we also have if a guy can't make it in person he can Zoom on in and be there every Friday

morning. So but there's just so many moving parts. And then in all cities across America, Athens isn't much different than most are just trying to figure out the best way to love everybody.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: And we still do a lot of things to help the youth in the area. I've been to a few events to try to support what's going on in downtown Athens, and just the things we used to do. We lead the nation and community service hours everywhere I've been. Our players did a lot of community service in Athens. And in the University of Miami, those kids did a bunch, in Miami as well.

And I just think it's so important for guys that are used to being the center of attention to learn what it feels like to help somebody who can't help them back, and once they do that, they get addicted to it. I mean, so many guys become wonderful leaders in their communities. Trying to help the young kids just like somebody helped them along the way.

Annie: Yeah. I just had my assistant Lindsey bring me this painting, I had a dream, my sophomore year of Sanford Stadium filling with water and one of the Wesley students painted it for me last year. But I mean, I really saw God kind of, in my dream what I knew is that, that was God filling our city and filling Athens. And so it still sits on my bookshelf here at the office every day.

Mark: Very cool.

Annie: And I think about God changing Athens and people feeling love there, I mean, I want to see revival come to Athens, Coach Richt, that's what I want to say.

Mark: Yes.

Annie: I want everybody getting saved in that town.

Mark: Yes.

Annie: Okay. Is there anything we didn't talk about that you want to make sure we cover?

Mark: Not really, I think somebody said you're supposed to ask me about what sounds like fun to me and all that good stuff.

Annie: Oh, yeah. I'm going to, that's the next one don't worry. I just wanted to make sure if there was anything else you want to make sure we said before we do the fun question.

Mark: I'll say one last thing. When I was on the Cath Table in the Cath Lab, they're putting stents in my widowmaker in another artery that was 100% blocked.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Mark: There was a time on the table that I did think that I was dying, everything went numb. Through your eyelids you could feel light when you're in those operating tables. But even that went black, it went dark.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Mark: So I'm feeling this spirit of peace. Well, my body I mean, I could hear my body gasping for air, but in my spirit I'm at peace. I'm like, "Here we go." I'm excited. But I think the point I want to make is, when you get to that point, at the end of your life or you think it's the end or it is the end. There's only one thing that's important, and that is where are you going to go?

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: Where are you going? You're going to live forever somewhere. Are you going to live in heaven? Or are you going to live in hell? And that's your choice, so make make the call, right?

Annie: Yeah, that's it, make the call.

Mark: Make the call.

Annie: That's exactly right. Well, thank you, Coach Richt. Okay, so the last question as you've been prepped for, the question we always ask because the show is called that sounds fun, tell me what sounds fun to you, Coach Richt?

Mark: Well, I wrote them down.

Annie: Oh, good. Okay.

Mark: One of my favorite things that I've ever done is I was the emcee of a fashion show, for my seven and three-year-old granddaughters. This went on for two hours.

Annie: Oh my gosh!

Mark: They kept going upstairs, changing into a new outfit, and then a different princess or a mermaid or whatever they were. And so I was given a play-by-play, and I got video of it the whole thing. So that was wonderful, Jaden who's seven, and Zoe that was fun in there. But family gatherings, playing cards, going to the beach. We did a Disney Cruise one time, we went snow skiing one time.

Annie: Yeah.

Mark: I've learned over the years to spend your money on experiences more than things. Because things get broken and thrown away. You need to experience those things then...

Annie: Well, Coach Richt, you have a very good list of fun things by the way, well done.

Mark: Yes.

Annie: That's impressive-

Mark: I was ready.

Annie: ...you were ready, well done. You finished that drill very well, Sir. Thank you. Selfishly on my show, this is my opportunity to tell you what a huge impact you've had on my life. And not just as our football coach, but the man you've been and model for so many of us has affected me greatly.

As you can tell, as I'm getting teary telling you. So I just wanted, it feels like a real honor, and I feel like I get to represent my like college-friend group who would all give anything to get to talk to you. So thank you for how you've lived in front of us. You have modeled not only did we hear you talk about the Lord, but you modeled how to love Him well and continue to do so. So I wanted to thank you for that.

Mark: Amen.

Annie: As someone who has been on the receiving end for 20 years, 20, half of my life you've been important to me, so I'm very thankful. Thanks for doing this today.

Mark: I enjoyed it very much, thank you.

[00:44:36] <Music>

Annie: Oh, you guys, isn't he amazing? I'm sorry I cried, I couldn't help it. My gosh, what an honor to get to talk to him. I mean, half of my life I have looked up to him as a spiritual leader, and an example of the faith and so I just was so honored to get to do this today. Hey, make sure you grab a copy of his new book, *Make the Call*. And make sure you're following him on social media so you can tell him thanks so much for being on the show and what today meant to you. Tell him, "Go Dawg Sic 'em".

If you need anything else 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 from me today, friends go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you I will do the same. Have a great couple of days we'll see you back here on Wednesday with Bear Rinehart from NEEDTOBREATHE, see you then.

[00:45:26] <Music>