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Annie: Hey 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 have got a great show in store for you. But before we jump into today's conversation, I want to take a moment and tell you about one of our amazing partners, BetterHelp. Are there things in your life that are interfering with your health and happiness, or keeping you from reaching your goals.

In seasons of feeling stuck in my own life, I found counseling to be a huge help in processing and working through those things, I think you will too. BetterHelp is here for you. BetterHelp will assess your needs and match you with your own licensed professional therapist, who you can connect with in a convenient, safe and private online environment.

You can send your therapist and message anytime and you'll get timely and thoughtful responses, plus, you can start communicating in 24 hours. You can schedule weekly video or phone sessions, it's so convenient and I love that. BetterHelp prioritizes facilitating great therapeutic matches, so they make it easy and free to change counselors if you need to. And the testimonials on their website are really helpful if you're feeling unsure about how it all works.

BetterHelp offers services for clients all over the world and they have licensed professional therapists that specialize in a wide variety of disciplines. Things like depression, stress, grief, self-esteem, anxiety, family troubles, and more. Which means that the right help is available for whatever you're walking through.

This is not self-help, and it's not a crisis hotline. It's convenient, professional, affordable, confidential counseling. I want you to start living a healthier life today. So as one of my friends you get 10% off your first month, by visiting betterhelp.com/thatoundsfun. Join over a million people and so many of our friends here, who've taken charge of their mental health. Again, that's betterhelp.com/thatoundsfun.

And just a reminder that tickets are on sale now for the That Sounds Fun Podcast Tour, coast-to-coast. We're getting to come to several areas that we didn't visit this summer, and that I haven't been to in a long time. And I cannot wait to see you at one of the stops on this leg of the tour.

So go to anniefdowns.com/events for all the details, and to grab your tickets today. Today on the show, I get to talk to Bethany Barnard many of us know and love Bethany as Bethany Dillon, from the early days of her career as a singer/songwriter in Christian music. And we mentioned her just a couple of

weeks ago when I got to talk to her husband Shane Barnard, who is part of Shane and Shane.

After taking time away from music to raise their four beautiful daughters and she's still doing it, and after walking through some really challenging things, you're going to hear us talk about Beth began writing again in 2020, and has released a gorgeous new album. Y'all, it's incredible, it's called all my questions. So here's my conversation with Bethany Barnard, who we also remember is Bethany Dillon.

[00:02:58] <Music>

Annie: Beth or Bethany, I get to do both, I just get to do what is in my heart?

Bethany: Yeah, we're just going to keep it real vulnerable the whole time. Because I started it out vulnerable got to keep you there with your blazer.

Annie: Okay, I mean, I wore a blazer because we were peacocking off in our text messages last night of who is going to be the cleanest, most put-together person today. But you have four daughters, right? So you have a lot of people you have to get ready every day. So you don't have to shower every day, I just have me.

Bethany: I mean, and you say that assuming that I'm getting the four daughters clean every day too, like, "Oh, I don't have time to get myself clean." So yeah, but it is a lot of people, you're right, that once we get clean it's work.

Annie: Uh-huh. What are their ages?

Bethany: They are 11, nine, six, and three.

Annie: So is everybody back in school except the three-year old? Oh, you homeschool?

Bethany: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, we do like a university model. So my older two go two-days a week and then I homeschool three. And then my six-year old is homeschooled. And my three-year old like already knows how to spell her name, because she's the fourth.

Annie: That's right. That's right, she has it there.

Bethany: She's just like, "I want to have a chinchilla when I get older." I'm like, "Fine I don't know what a chinchilla is."

Annie: But you heard it in our little school and so we welcome you, at Barnard Academy.

Bethany: There you go.

Annie: Okay, so the first thing we started on the show that your husband was on, when Shane and Shane were on is, we heard his side of y'all falling in love. And multiple people-

Bethany: Oh yeah, I heard.

Annie: You heard it. Multiple people from our AFD Week in Review email, responded and said, "We have to hear her side of the story."

Bethany: I mean, and then it becomes complicated because I'm supposed to honor him.

Annie: Sure, sure.

Bethany: You know what I mean? Like my husband, he didn't get everything wrong.

Annie: Okay. Okay.

Bethany: But it's a very subjective story.

Annie: Certainly.

Bethany: We did both end up getting married, so we land in the same spot?

Annie: That's right, the end of the story is the same.

Bethany: Right, right. No, I mean, wait, where am I supposed to start? You want me to tell you our story?

Annie: Yeah. From your point of view, I think that'd be so fun.

Bethany: Okay. Well, I started Christian music, I got signed the summer I was about to turn 14. And then my first, while we made the record, the first record under Bethany Dillon, and then my first official tour was with the Shanes, and my sister and I went out with them. And my sister was freshly graduated from college and single, and Shane Barnard was like, I mean, the most eligible worship-leading dude.

So I had thought as we were going on that tour, I'm like, "My sister's probably going to end up marrying Shane Barnard, and this is why she's out with me. Because it doesn't make sense why she would be out with me.

Annie: Which, by the way, you know your sister and I were friends when we both lived in Nashville, do you know that history? Like right when I moved to Nashville, I was friends with your sister?

Bethany: Excuse me?

Annie: Yes. I can't believe y'all haven't talked about this. I thought you-

Bethany: How have I never-

Annie: I know.

Bethany: ...heard?

Annie: I know, it's wild.

Bethany: What?!

Annie: I know. I think we both read each other's blogs.

Bethany: Okay. Yeah.

Annie: 15-years ago.

Bethany: Yeah.

Annie: Ain't that wild.

Bethany: Oh, my gosh.

Annie: I know.

Bethany: That's so wild.

Annie: Carry on. I'm already in the family. I've already been in the family.

Bethany: I love it. So Kate, my sister was out with me. And I was just 15, with hairy legs on purpose, not showering, we've already established that. I mean, some things have changed about me that I was for sure, also, in a very contrarian state being like newly-signed to Christian music, I was like, "I'm just going to be myself."

So I'm out with my sister who is a woman, but they Shane B. and her weren't, it was kind of like, "Okay." But we became good friends with that whole crew. And

it was just a really formative tour for me because a lot of the things I was being coached in or directed towards were not who I am.

Annie: Wow.

Bethany: Even just in like delivery or appearance or whatever and so I think just like with all that juggling around in my head. To be on the road with two guys that drove their own tour bus, and they were the bus mechanics. And they unloaded the trailer and set everything up, and then did the show, and then treated everyone from the greenroom to the people on the signing line, just the same.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Bethany: And like all of that, and then Shane would tune in the middle of songs or there'd be awkward pauses, or he would talk for too long or whatever.

Annie: Yeah.

Bethany: And that was all just really formative for me, because it was permission. It's like, "Oh, okay." Like ministry is still happening and this connects with me, and it's possible."

Annie: And really authentic, yeah.

Bethany: Really authentic. And so, of course, I had a massive crush on him. I mean, I just was like, I don't know if I wrote it, but I definitely said it to myself quite a bit like, "If I were older Shane Barnard would totally like me."

Annie: Yes.

Bethany: Because we're 12-years apart.

Annie: Right, right.

Bethany: So I'm just seeing all these girls like, waiting to meet him. And I just thought like, man, like, there's a kindredness there, and I just had a crush on him. But then we finished that tour. And then a couple years go by and sometimes we would intersect and be doing the same kind of cut camp or the same whatever.

And then I went back out on the road with them when I was 17 going on 18, and I still had a crush on him big time. But something did shift, and I noticed like, "Okay, it's not just me, like he is finding me every day." Because when you're on tour, and I'm an introvert, and typically the only female back then on the road. And so I just kind of figured out like a rhythm of like, "I'm going to get up before

everybody, because I love the mornings. And then I'm going to just make myself scarce, and like find a Sunday school room or whatever. "

Annie: Yeah.

Bethany: And so I wasn't just out like chilling with everybody and he would come find me, and be like, "Hey, are you working on a song?" Anyway, as the tour went on we definitely spent a lot of time together. But, and I did hear Shane say this, and that was just like a very unique grace was that we're around everybody else, and just kind of like in the context of community.

But I was just completely, I was so angsty thinking, "This is just a tour thing, he's 12-years older than me, and this doesn't make any sense. So as soon as this tour is over, like, I'm still going to have a crush, but he's going to end up getting married." I'd never dated, I mean, I was 17. My life up to that point, for sure was not the norm. And I knew that it wasn't the norm for me to like, have my heart set on a person who was almost 30. So then that summer goes by and this is where our stories start to like differ.

Annie: Diverge?

Bethany: Because he's right in saying I had no stinking clue. I mean, I totally did the Christian breakup on him multiple times without even knowing it. And maybe we'll get to talk about this but knowing now the way that my brain works, and just like some ditches for me, I can go back, look back, and like, have more grace on myself. But I think, my mind and then my heart was just like spaghetti all of the time. Because we both were really public, and I was like the token little sister in every situation.

And so as Shane, after that tour, started to pursue me little by little, and then had a conversation with me of like, "Hey, I want to pursue you." And I forget his exact wording, but it was like, "I'm not going to do this casually, because I'm 29, around 30, and you're 18." And then man, just a lot of really hard things started to kind of domino effect, like, my sister was going through a divorce at that time.

I had left the home really early, in a sense, in a big sense, because I got signed so young, and I always had a family member with me, but a lot of autonomy. And my mom was really grieving that along with grieving my sister's story, and then there was other stuff going on. And then anyway, we just had a lot of really strong opinions around us. And I had a lot of strong opinions around me at my label, and my family, and my friends, of just people, what's hard is that it's like, it's understandable.

Annie: Right.

Bethany: People just going, "Hey, like, are you flattered that Shane likes you? Because this is the first person that you've ever, you know?"

Annie: I mean, everybody has asked that question in their first relationship, like, "Do I like him or do I like that he likes me?"

Bethany: So all of that just created a lot of white noise for me. And I think what was so hard was that I was given such a long leash, basically at a young age. Like I was given so much trust, really, and independence of doing ministry, and being out of the house, and having just like a really different structure than most people my age.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Bethany: And then when it came to somebody that wanted to pursue me, who was fantastic, and the only thing against it was just our age difference. That there was all of these, I think, second guesses of his motives or my naivety or whatever, and so it was really hard. I did I mean, it's true that story of when I played a show in Houston and he was in Austin, and I didn't let him know it was horrible, I can't believe I did that. He loves sharing that story. But I'm like, okay, that 18-year old me was on the road with my brother who hated his guts, and at the time. And I'm just like, oh, I just really did do a lot of avoidance of I tried to compartmentalize a lot. And it didn't serve me well, and I've had to do a lot of work since then.

But truly the grace in all of that was through our engagement, through our dating and then our engagement, most of it long distance, I was in Ohio, he was Texas when we weren't touring. The grace was that I never had the question of, "Do I want to marry him?" Like there truly was such a confidence in, "This is who I want; I don't want to date around." And there just was such a contentment that I really believe of course, I believe that the Lord put in my heart.

Annie: Yeah.

Bethany: I think I'm supposed to marry Shane, and we're supposed to have our family, and our kids. And the things that were hard about it, like that I definitely would have changed in the moment and sometimes still would like to change. I see, not that like, oh, those things were actually good. But that God allowed them and permitted them for reasons, that years afterward they've been helpful for me to grow. And so anyway, that's our story is that yes, I was a mess. But he was a mess too because Shane, let's talk about it real quick.

Annie: Yeah.

Bethany: When Shane he's still this way, he is all or nothing. He is drinking celery juice every day, and like, I mean, going on three-mile runs in the summer Texas heat.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Bethany: Or I find paper plates with melted Velveeta on them in the morning, around different spots of the house. So, let's just talk about out how and he will say that, if he was sitting next to me. It's just like, he also has such a strong personality and such a strong wiring that I think some of that was helpful in pushing it forward of like, "Okay, let's get married or let's get engaged." So my like wrestle in it was real hard for him.

Annie: Yeah, yeah. Okay, so you said you identify as an enneagram One, does he know what he identifies as?

Bethany: He thinks the enneagram is total just like...

Annie: Sure, that feels on brand.

Bethany: It really does, so I think he's a four, and with a Three wing because he's does not have a number. Because the enneagram is not, you know, I don't even know.

Annie: Can't define people?

Bethany: You can't define him.

Annie: Right, right, right, right. Last week we did an episode all about singleness. And just kind of doing a Q&A about not being married yet. And one of the questions a lot of people kind of circled around was, "What if you miss what God has for you?" Or "What if I've missed the right person?" And so will you talk a little bit about how you experience the sovereignty of God in that story of your life?

Bethany: I'm actually reading a book called *Providence* right now, by John Piper.

Annie: Oh, okay.

Bethany: It's blowing my mind, especially in the context of I've been in a season of just grief, and mental health issues, and all of that. And I would say experiencing the sovereignty, and then the Providence in the sense that if the definition is that God is seeing to it. That what His plans are happening, not just that He's in control, but that He's actively involved.

Of course, there was freedom for me to really breakup with Shane, or for Shane to go, "Man, this is too risky." It's mysterious, but I can think back to when he was pursuing me. And when there was all this relational conflict and tension going on

in both of our lives, and the risk of so much loss and a lot of feels, a lot of negative feels, honestly. I can't look back and think on like a pros and cons list that I made, or just this really amazing conversation I had with someone that like the clouds parted. Or I opened my Bible, and there's this verse that has a Hebrew word that means Shane, or whatever.

Annie: That is what we want, you are so right that, that is what I want.

Bethany: I look back and I see like bowls of spaghetti going on in my head and in my heart, and a lot of mistakes. And a lot of things that I've had to go back and ask for forgiveness for, so I can't point to anything that I did or that Shane did that, like, "Oh, man, I'm so glad." It really is a mystery.

And I look back and go, "Wow!" Like I just told you, there really wasn't any, especially for someone who deals with being led by feeling, and being led by people's approval. It doesn't make sense that I pushed through, in the sense of, "No, I'm going to, I would like to be pursued by Shane and my dad says, that's fine." And all these things the Ts are crossed and the Is are dotted, and I'm "A yes," even though there's such risk. It doesn't make sense to me knowing myself.

Annie: Wow.

Bethany: So I'm like, man, the Lord saw to it, and I don't know how." But, man, it didn't mean that we had an awesome engagement or an awesome wedding day. Or all of our relationships were just mended on day one of marriage. Like there were some pretty crappy years that followed and conversations. Again, it's a mystery, but it does what it does do, it doesn't make me shaky it actually strengthens my faith.

Because I'm like, "There's nothing I did. There's nothing I did." And I have my own will, and somehow in the mystery of that the Lord saw to it, that Shane and I got married, and I'm so grateful, and it's a good, good gift.

Annie: I love that the Lord saw to it, that's exactly it. I mean, there are times, Beth, where I'm praying, and I'm saying to the Lord, "Hey, I didn't start this thing, so why am I stressing about finishing it?" You know, like, "Your mysterious ways, You're the one who's running this, so I'm going to remind You that You started it, because I'm stressed about it." And then I'm going to hand it back,

Bethany: Yep.

Annie: Right?

Bethany: Yep.

Annie: That's how.

Bethany: That's so good.

[00:20:54] <Music>

Annie: Here at That Sounds Fun, and at the That Sounds Fun Network, we love learning new things about podcasting and continuing to improve in the work that we do. And that's why we are so glad to learn about Anchor. If you haven't heard about Anchor, it's seriously the easiest way to make a podcast.

Let me explain not only is it free, yeah, that means you paid zero dollars for it, but it has simple-to-use creation tools that allow you to record and edit your podcast right from your phone or computer. And Anchor will distribute your podcast for you. So people be able to hear your content on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and all the other platforms that they love listening on.

Anchor even has ways that you can monetize your podcast with no minimum number of listeners. It's everything you need to create a podcast in one place. We hear from people all the time, who have great ideas and are looking for how to get their podcast started. Well Anchor is what we use all across the That Sounds Fun Network, and we are just huge fans of how easy they make it to create a great podcast. So just download the free Anchor app or go to anchor.fm to get started. Again, that's anchor.fm, or you could download the free Anchor app.

[00:22:13] <Music>

Annie: You mentioned that earlier talking about now that you understand your brain a little bit better. I mean, you've been so open, Beth, in the last couple of months that I've been paying the most attention. About saying like, "I am walking through," I mean, you lost your dad last year, I'm so sorry. And so you've been walking through grief and your own like depression season. Will talk a little bit about, A, why are you talking about it with people? Why did you feel like you needed to share that with us versus keep it private? Like why did you give us that gift of sharing through the hard?

Bethany: I didn't want to when I first was diagnosed with severe depression and severe OCD last summer, in the wake of my dad dying. And then there were like four or five other things that happened, that caused me to crash and get those diagnoses.

Annie: Because before maybe if it was one thing, you could just like, pull yourself up by your bootstraps. Because you're a mom and a wife, and like, but all these things happen.

Bethany: Right. And the interesting thing with OCD, it largely is functional until it's not.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Bethany: So it's like obsessive compulsive disorder. The compulsions you're doing, which are not all hand washing, it's so fascinating, the more I've been educated through therapy. That the compulsions that are there are not because you love doing that thing, it's because it neutralizes the distress that you feel over the thing you obsess over. And so compulsions are there to help you function and cope.

Annie: Wow.

Bethany: So it's not someone just wheels off all the time.

Annie: Right. It's actually the helper in the moment.

Bethany: It's actually, yeah, it's a sign of suffering disorder, like, again, until you just cannot anymore. So when I first got those diagnoses, and just was really not okay. And I'm sure that I have been depressed at other times in my life, and I've just like over spiritualized that.

Annie: Mh-hmm. Say that.

Bethany: Yeah, it's a part of my family history.

Annie: It's a part of everyone's history that was a Christian in 1990s and 2000s.

Bethany: You're such, that's so true.

Annie: Right.

Bethany: But anyway, it just felt so embarrassing. Like, OCD, and like, just obviously, I didn't really know what that meant, or what that looked like for me. And so it felt like just this can of paint got poured over me and I'm just all what color of OCD it's like. This is who I really am, and I've been a fake all along, so I had zero, zero, zero plans. Let's just talk about the providence of God again, because I had no like, in that moment, like "You know what I'm going to do, I'm going to use this-"

Annie: For the glory of God.

Bethany: Yeah, I love that, you know, "I'm not going to waste my OCD." So, like, I didn't tell my own kids for months. And they were, I'm a stay-at-home mom, and they were witness to me sleeping a lot, and staring at walls, and then watching TV all day, and yet I felt the shame.

And I think, I know that was just like God's grace, and the grace of Shane and dear friends, just like leaning into the helps. And just trusting help, whether that was medicine, or therapy or whatever, it started to not feel as tumbleweeds flying everywhere, and more like this is the path that God said yes to for me. And some things are starting to make sense, and I can grow, and oh, I'm seeing victory in that area, and that was super counterintuitive.

But I did it and wow, now I feel some freedom I've never felt and step by step by step. And then as I got freed up more and more, and started sharing with people just in my life, or my neighborhood, people that don't know Jesus in my neighborhood, about like, even the word therapy.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Bethany: Like, "Yeah, I have to go because I have a therapy session." It's like the words that feel so shameful for you to say out of your mouth, gives permission to whoever you're talking to. And it's like, there's so many people in the last year that stepped up for me. I had a seizure at one-point last year, because of different meds I was trying out and anyway, and I couldn't drive and I have four kids.

People are showing up at my house and I'm just a wreck, our house is a wreck, I'm not okay. I'm trying to just get to the end of the day. And it's like, somehow, even though that was super humbling for me, and hard for me to receive help, it strengthens the people who were at my doors seeing me not be okay.

Annie: Wow.

Bethany: Helping meet needs, and it gave permission then, as a season of hardship came for one or two of them or whatever, to just reach out and be like, "Hey, like, I think I might be dealing with depression." Or, "Where do you go to therapy? Can you send me the link too?" So believers and non-believers alike, there's just such a pressure to be okay. And I functionally have believed that my whole life, and now it's like seeing the power of going, this is what I have going on, and this is what I'm learning. This is where I need help, and I'm just seeing doors open for the gospel, and seeing doors open for deeper relationship, and doors open for freedom for myself. And then also for people that I love around me. And it's like why wouldn't I then? Why wouldn't I talk about OCD? Because now I actually have things that, I am no clinician, but like, I have things that I would love to share that I think it would be helpful, and God can use it. He can see to it in someone else's life.

Annie: Yes.

Bethany: So that's helpful. Anyway, so I think it's just the like, I have fused struggle and identity for so long. And it's like those things are now not the same to me, and who I am. And the struggles God has allowed, and I believe in some ways, authored into my life, they don't have anything to do with my identity, but they have to do with Him conforming me to the image of Christ.

Annie: Yes.

Bethany: There's been a lot of times that I don't feel like that's happening, but that doesn't mean that it wasn't happening.

Annie: Man, how do you balance that authorship of His, like, because I agree with you, but sometimes that hurts my feelings, That He's like, authored this into my life, whatever the "this" is.

Bethany: It feels mean.

Annie: It feels mean, yeah.

Bethany: Yes. I just don't like I think there's that, there's just such a separation between like what we see in the Bible. People who knew/ know God, and the way that they interacted with Him in real relationship, and then the things that I feel like are off limits. Like, okay, I love reading in my Bible real things where people I think, Jeremiah said, "You're like a bear lying and wait for me."

Annie: Right. Right.

Bethany: ...to God. Job is like, "Your arrows are in me and I'm filled with the poison of them." Oh, like, okay, Job wasn't swallowed up.

Annie: And it made it in the Bible.

Bethany: And it made it in the Bible. Because every relationship I have that's worth anything, I'm real with that person. And eventually there is conflict, and eventually there is hate, that hurt my feelings, that doesn't make sense. God is holy, but He created us in His image, and I feel like, man, I've missed out so much on the heart of God, Who He is in those moments where I'm like "This was mean," by not saying that Him.

[00:30:37] <Music>

Annie: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, HumanN. As busy as we all are, it can be tough to make sure you're getting all the nutrients you need throughout your day. Work

obligations, family, friends, hobbies, I hope you have hobbies. All these things really matter, but they can also keep you so focused, that you forget some of the essential self-care things that make you the best parent, or spouse, or friend, and an employee, you can be.

That's why SuperBeets Heart Chews are an essential part of my daily routine. These chews taste so great and I love knowing that with SuperBeets, I'm doing what I can to keep my heart healthy and my energy sustained. SuperBeets Heart Chews combine non-GMO beets, I love beets with a special ingredient grapeseed extract, that's really unique and unique and SuperBeets Heart Chews. Grapeseed extract has been the focus of scientific research for years, y'all, due to its high concentration of antioxidants, which supports cardiovascular health and overall wellness.

The grapeseed extract used in SuperBeets Heart Chews has been clinically shown to be two times more effective at supporting normal blood pressure than a healthy lifestyle alone. So here's the thing, y'all, you can't find this quality of grapeseed extract in just any product. The grapeseed extract is clinically studied, quality tested, traceable to source, and scientifically shown to support blood flow and healthy blood pressure.

Healthy blood flow means more energy in the way nature intended it, without the jittery caffeine or stimulants. So just two delicious Chews a day, gives the blood pressure support you need and the energy you want. Do what I did and support your heart health with delicious SuperBeets Heart Chews. Get your SuperBeets Heart Chews today at superbeets.com/thatsoundsfun, and when you buy two bags, they'll throw in a third for free. Again, that's superbeets.com/thatsoundsfun. And now back to our conversation with Bethany.

[00:32:32] <Music>

Annie: It is insane you're using that word, because for the first time in my entire life, this week, I said that to God, "I feel like you're being mean, I feel like you're being mean." And I've never said that, I've never used that word before. I've used a lot of like, I mean, I've shared my feelings before, but I've never said not even unkind, "This feels mean, and I know you're not mean. But I'm bringing my..."

We say around here a lot, "Your feelings can ride but they can't drive." So I'm like "I'm bringing my feelings along. I know what the truth is, I don't have to preach to myself." But there was something really, and the funny thing is that at the end of the conversation, I felt like I knew God better. Because I had said that even though that isn't His character, and that isn't true. But I felt like there was some sort of deepening connection, because I said, "This feels like you're being mean."

Bethany: Yes.

Annie: It was wild.

Bethany: You have got to, well, one, He loves you. That He, just as, I love that when there's just multiple hits on the same thing, that He's wanting to impress on us. But there's this book called *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy* by a pastor in Indiana and called Mark Vroegop, I don't know how to pronounce his last name, anyway, it's a book about just the power of lament.

And in such a practical way he lays that out, and just the permission that we have to bring that to the Lord. And as a pastor his testimony of doing that in staff prayer, and then corporately as a body, having nights with just lamenting before God. And the end result not being like a bunch of Eeyores with like, sticks on everywhere, it's like wait "Worship came out of that?"

Annie: Yes.

Bethany: And like a deeper sense of His presence and His move, and again, there's not this like, "Well, it's because whatever..." it is a mystery.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Bethany: And yet it's like, "Oh, actually this is relationship."

Annie: Yeah, the deepening of connection shocked me. That is not where I thought the conversation was going to go the other night.

Bethany: That's so encouraging.

Annie: It was wild. So thank you for telling your story. Because even in telling yours I'm connecting with mine, and with what I'm walking through, I wish we were like sitting at the same table. I know we virtually are, but okay... So that the new album comes out on Friday, but you've been kind enough to let me listen to it. And it is this conversation, you've written this album, when we were playing in the office, everyone got quiet, and everyone kind of settled in. And people started saying things like, "This feels so good, like, I feel so at peace." Even though the album is a lamenting kind of album, right?

Bethany: Mh-hmm. Yeah, thank you.

Annie: How did you start writing these? How did you decide to take all this that was going on in you and turn them into this album?

Bethany: Well, I had not written for years. And interestingly enough, before things started to crash and burn, I felt from a few directions, that the Lord was telling me like, "It's time to start writing again." And so I would get a babysitter and I would go somewhere inspiring, and I would bang my head against a wall and be like, "Aaah!"

Annie: Right.

Bethany: Next time I'm just going to go to Target." So, then, some time went by, and last year, my dad was, after battling cancer for the second time. He was like in March of 2020, when COVID really hit, and all of that got the news that, we were kind of at the end of the road for treatment for him. And so pretty quickly, he started to decline, and was put on hospice, and I flew up to Ohio to my parents' house by myself for the first couple weeks of that.

And so, just as a sidebar, watching someone die, being there as someone's body is fighting to not die but there is just the daily decline going on. It's one of those things that even if I think somebody has said things to me in other times in my life, it doesn't stick until you're in it, it's horrifying. And so just being in the house with dad, and with mom caring for him, and then my siblings, and we're all around the clock helping with meds or whatever.

Annie: And it's COVID, it's like the height of COVID.

Bethany: And it's COVID.

Annie: Oh, gosh.

Bethany: And my parents live on the same country road that I grew up on, it's just cornfields. And I would, a couple times a day, just go for a long walk. And I wouldn't pray because I just, I really couldn't pray. I didn't talk, didn't want to call anybody. And I think there's, for sure, like trauma going on but then just grief, then it's just it feels like you're going to wake up and it's all not real. I'm on those walks, I started to sing, and that's not super normal for me. That's just not how I'm built, I do love to sing, but-

Annie: You're like, "I mean, I have a career but I don't naturally sing."

Bethany: I used to, isn't that sad? But I'm just like I love silence so much, and I love getting...

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Bethany: So I don't sit around and like play my guitar. And so just to walk and literally opening my mouth, and these lines from a song that's on the record came out of, "Does it all fall through the cracks? Will it all get lost? I'm starting to lose track, when did the bad news start?" It really did feel like it was just like spilling out. And it did serve as conversation with God, for me, even though I was mad at Him.

And the context of, the details around everything felt so mean, and felt so much like abandonment or something. That singing to Him provided like a moment of this is actually like getting behind all these locked doors, these are my questions. And so every day like the song just started to grow. And then my dad passed away, and within that week after he died, I had a finished song, Shane flew out to Ohio with the girls and I just one night, played it for him. And I didn't know if it was good or whatever, I just played it for him and he was very much like, "Hey, this is really, I wonder what this is? I wonder what this is for?"

Fast forward a couple of weeks and we're at home back in Texas, after the memorial and all that. And then life is just really hauntingly normal or trying to get back to normal, a song about my mom happened like that on my back porch. Just thinking about her and being on the phone with her, and she's like, "He wasn't okay." But just remembering how beautiful it was to see her covenant keep at three in the morning, as dad retched and nothing came up, and he's fading.

And she's totally denying herself; not sleeping, forgetting to eat, and just there. And the beauty there, that wasn't like them being in retirement on some exotic vacation, and she's in the best shape of her life. And dad is like, it's a better beauty that we got to behold and my mom. It's still there when I think about it, and so just a song just spilled out.

And so that was what, that was May, June. And from then until August, it was about once a week that there would be a moment that really felt like a sacred moment. Usually when I was so not okay, the song happens when the depression was just-

Annie: It's an unbelievable song.

Bethany: Oh, thank you. I just remember walking downstairs, our girls' rooms are upstairs. I was trying to tuck them in, and I felt like I am about to fall completely apart, and I am ruining them. And I don't even know what I did today, and all I want to do is go back to sleep or have a glass of wine. And I'm sure both of those mean that I'm not okay, and just like anger, and sadness, and fear, and all these things were just like, "Aaaahw!" Up in my throat. And Shane got home, and he came up and just took over for me.

And I'm walking down our stairs, and the sun was setting, and it was all golden and pretty by our front door, which I usually like but instead I was mad about that. And I went and sat on our front porch and I'm just saying, "Holy Spirit, you're bigger than depression. You raised the Lord Jesus from the grave. Holy Spirit, you're making intercession, man, I have nothing to say." And just like a conversation spilled out.

And so anyway, by the end of the summer, there were 11,12 songs, and it had become apparent at that point, not because it had been decided again, like, "I think this would really minister." Not that that would even be wrong, but I just, I did not want to let anybody else in. Like I was still in a real hard place of like not reading my Bible, not praying, mad most days, in therapy once or twice a week.

And it just became apparent as I shared them with mom, as I shared them with community, as I shared them with Shane, it became apparent that these weren't only for me, but that they could be vehicles of grace that give permission. And that because I couldn't listen to worship music, I mean, I could, I keep saying can't and all that, but I think you know what I mean? It's like-

Annie: Yes, yes, yes.

Bethany: You know, Shane was listening to a Nav City record that had come out around the time that dad died or something, we were in the car, and he's listening to something for the first time. And it was so joyful that I was like, I literally wanted to get a sledgehammer and break the radio, because I'm like, "This isn't true."

Annie: Sure.

Bethany: Because I'm like, "No."

Annie: Right.

Bethany: Again, it wasn't because I'm like, "There needs to be more lament song." But I think because they existed, and were there, it became clearer like, "Oh, this would be helpful. It would be helpful to have a song about anger at God, when you're angry at God."

Annie: Yes.

Bethany: So that you remember, actually, like corporately, and biblically we don't just sing victory songs. We sing how-long songs. We sing, have you forsaken me songs, that's kind of how this came to be. And I really just see God's kindness and His patience, and His generous heart towards me, in giving me songs to sing and

giving me the privilege to hear really vulnerable things from people that I know and I don't know.

Because I know that He's at work in them, and freeing them, and I can have confidence in the same way that he has done for me. It's a privilege, and it's super overwhelming sometimes. But I am excited, I'm excited to share this, to have this record shared. And just being confident that He's going to use it the way He wants, that I hope it meets people on those walks down their hometown road when their dad is dying.

Annie: Right. I mean, Beth, when you talk about the album, all my questions, what I'm imagining is that there are some of our friends who are listening to this either waiting in the carpool line, or at the grocery store, or while they're on the treadmill. And they are moms or they are friends, or they are dads, or anything, married, single parent, non-parent, and they are thinking, "I thought no one knew how dark it could get?"

Bethany: Yeah.

Annie: And you're saying you do know. So what's the, for someone who is in there, what they've experienced to-date is their darkest day? What is the hope on the darkest day?

Bethany: The hope is that you don't have to pull yourself out of it. The hope is that this is where the Good News becomes good news, not because it changes the feels, and not because it changes the circumstances. But I have been so motivated the more I look at John 11, where Jesus is by the grave side with His friends, Mary and Martha, as they ask Him questions, and He doesn't answer them. He doesn't answer them because He's present and grieves with them, about their brother dying.

And we see in John 1, "No one has seen God." But He explained Him, Jesus came to show us the image of the invisible God. When we fast-forward to John 11, and John 11:35, says "Jesus wept." So I just would say, Man, it's one of Satan's probably best lies, and such a lie of our culture, that our strength is what needs to be in the spotlight. And that church and moving towards God in prayer, and all of that looks this way, it looks like the warm glowy end-of-the-day light, that's shining through your dining room or your Instagram.

But I would just encourage you to like examine closer the Gospels, examine the Bible. Sit in carline, or get off the treadmill, or stop with your grocery cart, and think about He created you, and He did not say no to the season that you're in.

But what if He didn't because He wants you to know Him, He wants you to know what He's like. Just like you said, you're saying to God, "This feels mean, I feel like you're mean." And somehow mysteriously on the other side of that conversation, that prayer, that conversation, you feel deeper, like in affection, and safety, and security with God. That's nothing that you did.

Annie: No.

Bethany: You didn't apologize or like go look at "Mean" and what that means in logos. Like, it's because He does what He promises for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. Like, He's not going to leave us, He's not going to let go of us, He's not going to forget and He's with us, grieving with us, interceding for us, and so the hope is that this is what the good news is for.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Bethany: It's for these moments-

Annie: That's right.

Bethany: Like Jesus, very much applies to depression, and addiction, and divorce, and singleness, and trauma, very much applies to those things,

Annie: Man, I've never thought about that phrase the way you said it, that like, these are the days The Good News is for, not the easy days. I mean, of course it plays for the easy days too, but these are the days The Good news is for.

Bethany: Yes.

Annie: Beth, I cannot wait for people to hear this album, I can't wait for them to hear it this week. And just like download it, buy it, give it to all your friends. This feels like one of those that you go to Spotify, and you pull the whole album, and you just send the link to everybody and go, "Do this, this weekend. Just do this this weekend."

Bethany: Thank you.

Annie: I hope this is the beginning of us getting to chat like this. I just am so thankful for you, this is such a helpful conversation.

Bethany: Mh-hmm. Thank you.

Annie: It's such a gift. And I did really good, but here's what I didn't do that I promised you I would do and I apologize. I didn't go so hard on like your old albums and

how I know all of them, I mean, all of them. So I mean, if you need me to sing some of the stuff-

Bethany: Oh, my gosh.

Annie: ...let me just pull up, I'm just going to pull up my actual favorite, *Imagination* is my favorite album.

Bethany: Oh, it is?

Annie: It is. And "My Love Hasn't Grown Cold" is my all-time favorite Bethany Dillon song.

Bethany: Ah, okay, thank you. I was proud of that song and loved it.

Annie: Tell me why, please let us make time for you to tell me why you're so proud of "My Love Hasn't Grown Cold" because I love that song.

Bethany: Because it's like stinking six-minutes long or something, and it's the songs that I like writing. So I think back in Bethany Dillon days, there was such a push for like, we only have one slot for a song like that on a record kind of thing. And I'm like, "I just want to make the whole record with all those songs." And now I get to!

Annie: That's right, welcome to 2021, we get to make the things we want to make. No one is the boss of us. It's the best. Okay, is there anything we didn't talk about that you want to make sure we cover?"

Bethany: Just how awesome I am at technology, and planning, and making sure my children don't interrupt, so I will talk about my tips and tricks another time.

Annie: Okay, next time, all those tips and tricks will be the thing. Hey, the last question we always ask, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

Bethany: Silence. A nap. Alone. Chocolate. Silence.

Annie: Listen, by the way, our friend Shane B has all your daughters out in an RV in your backyard?

Bethany: We do, listen, our last name is a verb with most people that we know like, "You guys Barnarded that real hard." and we did Barnard our backyard.

Annie: Yeah, explain how we use Bernard as a verb.

Bethany: Well, you see, we have a humongous RV in our backyard. And Shane, and I almost ended our marriage over it, when he tried to park and I was trying to help him get it into our tiny driveway into my backyard without scraping the house. And he was chain-sawing trees, he was on top of the RV with a chainsaw chopping away. And then like that very night someone was here to hook up plumbing and electricity to it, and it's a whole thing, our RV is now a whole thing. Children have been trapped in it with water gushing, the septic has overflowed.

Annie: Why is anyone pooping out there, when you have a house right next to it? There should be no septic situation.

Bethany: I don't know. I don't know-

Annie: I don't understand.

Bethany: ...pooping, and this is my role in our dynamic, Shane is fun, and crazy, and spontaneous, he's like "Let's have an RV." And I'm like, "I'm going to stay in my house, you guys enjoy that." So I'm here when they need me. But that's kind of his office when he wants to office in there. It's a thing, it's a thing, he loves that RV.

Annie: Okay, I'm going to get really good at using Barnard as a verb, that will be one of my goals for the rest of 2021.

Bethany: Oh do that, I love that.

Annie: Thank you so much for making time for this, and for the way that you have made music for so many of us, for decades, truly, Beth. So thank you for being my friend long before you knew it, I'm really grateful to you and your music.

Bethany: Thank you. Thank you so much for having me. I've really looked forward to this and just love what you do and who you are, so thank you.

[00:53:47] <Music>

Annie: Oh, you guys, don't you love her? My gracious, so honest and kind, oh, that was that was more than I hoped for, it was just amazing. Be sure to grab a copy of Bethany's new album, *All My Questions*, I think you're really going to love the heart of these songs. And make sure you're following her, so you can tell her thanks for being on the show.

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 where 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, and we'll see you back here on Friday, with one of our favorite pastor, favorite dude Jon Tyson. See you then.

[00:54:35] <Music>