

[00:00:00] <intro music>

Sponsor: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs and I'm really happy to be here with you today. We have got a great show in store with one of our favorite guys.

But before we jump into today's conversation, I want to take a moment to tell you about one of our amazing partners BetterHelp. I don't know about you, but when I have major decisions to make or things going on that are causing me to feel stuck, I find it so helpful to have someone qualified to process with. If that's you too, just like so many of our friends who found them helpful, BetterHelp is here for you.

BetterHelp will evaluate what you've got going on 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 a message anytime and you'll receive timely and thoughtful responses. You can start communicating within 24 hours and you can schedule weekly video or phone sessions too. They really make it so convenient, y'all.

BetterHelp wants you to have a great therapeutic match with your counselor so they make it easy and free to change if you need to. And they offer services worldwide with licensed professional therapists who specialize in a wide variety of disciplines like depression or family troubles, stress or grief or anxiety or self-esteem, and more.

I think it's so important that they have such varied expertise because it means they can connect with you right where you are with the help that you need for what you're walking through. This is not self-help, and it's not a crisis hotline. It's convenient, professional, affordable counseling that is always confidential.

I want you to start living a healthier life today, friends. So as one of our friends, you get 10% off your first month by visiting betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun. Join over a million people and so many of our friends who've taken charge of their mental health. Again that's betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun.

Intro: Today on the show, I get to talk to my friend and often quoted Sabbath Guy, John Mark Comer. John Mark is the founding pastor of Bridgetown Church in Portland, Oregon, the director and teacher of Practicing The Way, and the best-selling author of *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, and four previous books. You know how much I love all of them, particularly *Garden City*.

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A lot of his writing is focused on the work of spiritual formation in post-Christian culture. He's such a valuable and trusted voice in my life. And here on the pod, you'll remember him from Episode 31 and Episode 180 and the January 2018 rhythms episode about Sabbath.

His new book, *Live No Lies: Recognize and Resist the Three Enemies That Sabotage Your Peace* is such an important message for us right now, y'all. He's going to teach us and pastor us through what those enemies look like in our lives, and how we can fight against them. We talk a lot about prayer, we talked about fasting. You guys, I just love this dude. I'm so grateful to have him back. I can't wait for y'all to read his new book.

And here's my conversation with John Mark Comer.

[00:03:03] <music>

Annie: Welcome back to That Sounds Fun. I think you're one of the most guests who's been on. How many times have you been on now? Like four or five?

John Mark: No, like one, right?

Annie: No.

John Mark: Have I been more than once? Twice maybe.

Annie: I think so.

John Mark: There was the Christmas thing?

Annie: Yeah, it's been a-

John Mark: We're up to a bad start already. Editor, edit that out.

Annie: Edit out that neither of us know how many times we've done this.

John Mark: I've been on three times and each time I remember the date.

Annie: Thank you so much. As you, I clearly am like, "Have you been on like five times?"

John Mark: What's happened? Since the last time I was on, you've had like Matthew McConaughey, who by the way I could not put his memoir down, then my high

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school boy read it, then my wife read it. Like went through our house in like three days. And you've had like... who else? It was Jennifer Garner.

Annie: Jennifer Garner.

John Mark: I mean, what in the world? Why do you have me on? Goodness. Things are moving up in the That Sounds Fun world.

Annie: You're the highlight. You're the highlight. No, no, no. I mean-

John Mark: I'm like the spiritual discipline of hiddenness for you at That Sounds Fun.

Annie: Yeah. Oh, my gosh, you're killing me.

John Mark: Oh, that's so sweet that Annie is just blessing this random person.

Annie: Yeah, I'm sure that's how everyone feels. You're right. I mean, you know that everybody listening, our crowd is such big fans of the work you do. So don't even act like... you're more interesting to them than Matthew McConaughey. Very similar haircuts.

John Mark: Stop, stop. He's almost as good looking as me too and as talented and creative and-

Annie: All those things. Rich.

John Mark: I'm kidding.

Annie: All the things. Yeah.

John Mark: Yeah, yeah. You know, generous, you know, all the things.

Annie: Right, right, right. Okay, so catch everybody up on Bridgetown news. You've got big transition with Bridgetown staff, huh?

John Mark: Yeah. Just as we are recording this a week ago today, I finished an 18 year run as the Pastor for teaching and vision in our church. We planted the church 18 years ago with a number of other beautiful people. We were there almost two decades and kind of passed the baton to a dear friend of mine, Tyler Staton. Do you know Tyler?

Annie: Ish. I know of him. I'm a big stalker, I think highly of him.

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John Mark: He's extraordinary from Brooklyn, New York. He was kind of John Tyson's protégé. Fun fact. He was in Nashville as a kid and was in John Tyson's middle school group when John Tyson was a middle school pastor in his early 20s when he just moved here from Australia.

His faith came alive when John Tyson challenged him in sixth grade. He wasn't kind of almost a Christian Tyler was. He challenged him to prayer walk his middle school somewhere here in Nashville every single morning for seven days straight with his yearbook and pray for every single one of his students. And he started leading a Bible study for 80 kids.

Annie: Oh, my god.

John Mark: So that was his introduction to following Jesus and right into some kind of spiritual leadership. So passed the baton to him. He is extraordinary, will lead the church better than I ever did.

I am releasing a book and then I'm going on a long sabbatical where I will be MIA from all things internet and anywhere else for a very long time. And then God willing, I'm going to come back and start this new nonprofit called Practicing the Way. And I want to devote the next chunk of my life to creating discipleship and formation resources for the church.

Annie: 18 years! I mean, you literally raised a church. That's an adult.

John Mark: I'm one of many, but yeah, it does feel a little bit like... I know this is not a theological statement, because if it was, it would be heresy. So disclaimer for the Christians listening.

Annie: Right.

John Mark: But it feels like what I imagine it will feel like to give my daughter away in marriage.

Annie: Wow.

John Mark: Just meaning I know that the church is not mine and she's the bride of Christ, not me. But it feels what I imagine that will feel like where you just invest your blood, sweat, and tears over 18 years of your life. You just give everything you have into the growth of this person that has its own agency, and you're not in control of but you are at some point responsible for, and then you release them into the wild. And

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they're not yours, and they go off to whatever is next. And you are no longer responsible for them, thank God, but you are always responsible to them. I have not been down. My daughter is not that old yet, but I imagine that's what it feels like.

Annie: One of the things we're talking about a lot around here is the "yes and" of life. That we can hold joy and sadness at the same time. That we can hold frustration and gifts at the same time. So what are the "yes ands" of moving on from Bridgetown?

John Mark: Oh, I mean, so many emotions. I am feeling all of the feels right now. People keep asking me, "How are you feeling?" And it's a hard question to answer because there's not a short one. And so it's the Yes, I feel a high level of humble confidence that I am walking in God's will over my life and our church as best as myself and our community can discern. No neuroticism, no second thoughts.

At the same time, I feel full of hope and joy over Bridgetown's future, love for Tyler. And I feel grief and I feel exhausted, and I feel uncertain of my own future. I'm more aware now of just how much of my identity and sense of self and of security was based in my job. And now, as that's kind of being taken away,... not like I'm unemployed, we have a generic plan, but there's still a lot of questions about what exactly our post-sabbatical life will look like. Feeling all of that uncertainty over the future.

And I'm like the opposite of a high P on the Myers Briggs. I'm a J. I am a planner, obsessive-compulsive, long-range thinker. I make all the plans for all the things. So even though we have a generic kind of plan for the next season of our life, there's still a lot of kind of discernment process we have to go through with our community over the next kind of season of sabbatical to really get clear on what to give ourselves to and exactly how and when and where all that kind of stuff.

So that uncertainty is really hard, I think for anybody but especially for my personality to live with. So I've been thinking a lot about the mystic idea of holy uncertainty, and just trying to let God kind of grow that muscle in my soul.

Annie: I feel that a lot as well with my fall changing so drastically.

John Mark: Yes, yes.

Annie: We're having some turnover on staff, and it is all these things where I said to the Lord, "In June I understood everything. In October I understand nothing." So that holy uncertainty, I've never heard that unless you've said that to me before. But it feels very important. When I think about that, when I think about the muscle of

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faith, when I think about the muscle of prayer, will you talk about the importance of investing and building up some of those muscles in ourselves spiritually?

John Mark: Well, one way to think about it, they're all different ways to frame the human condition: what's broke in us and what's beautiful in us. Of course, Genesis 1, 2, and 3 are what I find to be the most compelling way to do that. But one way to frame it is that the root of the human problem is self will and our kind of grasping for control.

I read this great study a couple of years ago by a secular psychologist that said the average Western person has 15% of the control over their life that they think they do.

Annie: Jeez.

John Mark: Which is why we're all so neurotic. So we think we're in control of our career, of our health, of our fall schedule, and our tour, of our book, of our ministry, of our family, of our marriage, of our love life, of our prayer life, of our relationship with God. And there's just enough truth in that to keep us believing in the illusion. We have some control, we have a modicum of kind of control, but most of our life is actually outside of our control.

In the Western world, it's amazon.com and it's safe kind of suburban life, and it's airbags in the SUVs just can lull us into believing this illusion about reality that we're masters of the universe, we're captain of our own destiny, we're in control of our life. And the reality is we're in control of a little bit of our life, but a ton of our life is out of our control.

That's where COVID, though very few of us have the maturity to receive it, myself included, was this extraordinary invitation from God to face reality. Because for the first time, Western people were experiencing what most of the world is used to. Remember when COVID first hit and we were all trying to plan out our year, and it was just an exercise in futility?

Annie: It was laughable.

John Mark: Because planning is a function of predictability. You can't plan if you can't predict. And so how do you plan for your fall schedule if you can't predict Delta or Lambda, or whatever the next one is? So all of the sudden, now there's an uncertain future, which means we can't plan, which means all of a sudden, we actually feel

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anxiety and bewilderment and confusion, and not at peace because we don't feel in control. But the reality is we weren't in control. That was an illusion.

And control is at the root of so much that's wrong in our spiritual formation and in our interpersonal relationships because it's antithetical and love. The logic there is as long as I need my life to go a certain way in order for me to feel safe and happy, I will, no matter my best intentions, manipulate, bully and harm other people to get what I feel that I need to be safe.

Annie: Wow.

John Mark: And so control is deeply damaging to relationships and to our formation. So one way of thinking about the spiritual journey in the way of Jesus is growing in our capacity to trust in God as we release our dependence upon the illusion of control. And a great way to grow that muscle is just by praying through COVID-19 or to transition from your church, or whatever it is.

Annie: Or lose the things you thought you had control over, and suddenly, you get to stretch that muscle.

John Mark: Yeah, that's the kind of muscle you can't podcast your way toward, you can't read a book toward. Obviously, we're for both of those things. But Westerners, we just want to think our way into maturity. And there's obviously a key player. I'm a teacher. I have a high value for preaching, teaching, and writing books, and reading books, and we're on podcasts. I'm for all of that.

But you can't think or read or lecture or podcast your way into maturity. That can give you a roadmap, but you still have to walk the journey with your body. And a roadmap is beyond helpful. Like I'm driving around Nashville right now and I have my maps because I don't know my way around. You know what I mean? So I'm very grateful for roadmap. I would be very lost without it.

But I just have to get in the car or walk out the door and walk. I have to go somewhere. I think it was Charlie Dates in Chicago, who FYI has got to be one of the best creatures in the world right now, who said we don't think our way into maturity, who's teaching through James 1, we persevere our way into maturity.

Annie: Wow.

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John Mark: So the way you grow faith is by being faithful, not necessarily by reading books about faith. That can be a great bolster to keep you faithful with your body. But the way you grow faith is you stay faithful.

Annie: That feels really helpful. Because even when you think about your prayer life or your relationship life, you think... it's something that I struggle with in counseling, John Mark, is I think I want to gather up all the tools I need to be healthy and all these relationships. But sometimes you have to get in the thing and get your body in the thing and the tool comes.

John Mark: Yes. And that's the great threat to whether therapy, which I'm so for, have been in for 10 years, or spiritual formation, which I'm literally giving my life to as far as work is if, again, back to the root of our problem is human self will, kind of will turned in on itself, love turned in on itself, then we kind of taint and corrupt, in fact, everything that we touch and with self will.

And so often we can bring to our prayer life, bring to our discipleship, to Jesus, bring to our therapy self will. And it just as easily goes from how do I become a person of love in Jesus to how do I get myself looking and feeling better?

Annie: Yes. Yes.

John Mark: It becomes project self. It becomes self-help with a Christian spin. It becomes... you know, these aren't bad things per se, but they're getting us back to the problem, not to the solution. So that's not an anti-therapy statement anymore. It's an anti-discipleship statement. It's a be aware of the human self.

Annie: Yeah. The thing I think, so I won't speak for all of us... I almost said, "The thing we think." But I don't know, John Mark. The thing I think is-

John Mark: No, no. I'm sure I think what you think.

Annie: ...it is significantly less vulnerable for me to get all the practice in before I'm actually in the thing

John Mark: Yes.

Annie: So to actually show up and to love like Jesus is very risky. But if I can build all these tools in all these ways, and read all these books before, then I've actually built up walls that protect me from the vulnerability of actually just loving like Jesus in a way that may cost me.

John Mark: Yeah.

Annie: Am I reading that correctly?

John Mark: No, I think you are, too. I think we all feel that if you have any kind of public, for lack of a better word, role, you feel it even more acute that pressure to perform virtue rather than to grow in virtue. You know?

Annie: Yeah, yeah.

John Mark: And I just feel that tug in my own heart. I want the people listening to the podcasts to think that I am such a good person.

Annie: Sure.

John Mark: And I'm okay. I got some good... Yes, and. What was it? Yes. There's great stuff about me.

Annie: Not "yes but." We're getting rid of the "but". It's "yes and."

John Mark: We're getting rid of the "yes but." Yes and. Yes, I'm a good person, and I am dot, dot, dot. And I won't fill in the blank. But I will-

Annie: I always say "I'm a monster." I'm like, "I live with me every day. It's not great. It's not great."

John Mark: You're the farthest thing from a monster. But man, it's one of the reasons I read literary fiction at night. It's one of the reasons I love to just walk around the city and pay attention. It's one of the reasons I love chatting to people like you. It's just coming to peace with the reality of who we actually are until we can face...

M. Scott Peck is a psychologist, dead now that I love, who define mental health as dedication to reality at all costs.

Annie: At all costs.

John Mark: And ironically accepting how broken you are is actually the first step toward changing. Because until you accept what's wrong with you, you can't face reality and actually begin to go on the journey toward healing.

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Annie: I think that's one of the things you do so beautifully. And your new book *Live No Lies* is such a... I mean, when I read it, John Mark, one of the things I thought is, well I thought, "John Mark is not playing. John Mark is not playing. He is here with some things to say. He's not messing around."

John Mark: What happened to the Sabbath guy?

Annie: Yeah, what happened to the Sabbath guy who told us, like, quit hurry? But I think the reason I tie that to what you're just saying is *Live no Lies* is a very reality-based book. Your others have been as well but you're like, "Hey, y'all need to see these three places where you're being lied to pretty consistently."

John Mark: Yeah.

Annie: Why is that the right next thing to write? Why is that what you had to get out of your body?

John Mark: Well, I'm not sure it was the right next thing to write.

Annie: It was. It was. Let me confirm.

John Mark: Well, we'll see what happens in the coming weeks and months. Well, yes. Okay, so for those of you who have not read my work, I've written a number of books. My last book is kind of the most well-known. It's called *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*. The new one is called *Live No Lies*.

Annie: You think it's more better known than *Garden City*?

John Mark: Hurry?

Annie: I mean, I guess you actually know numbers. So you probably know, but yeah.

John Mark: Yes, significantly more. Yeah.

Annie: Oh, great.

John Mark: Yes, which is great. My point is if you happen to read these two books, at first, they're kind of almost jarring in difference. I would imagine. I don't know. But they're very different. Hurry is basically an intro to spiritual formation book that is sneaking in through the Trojan horse of the felt need of hurry to your heart.

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But really my agenda there is one, is to open your heart to really following Jesus with a serious, intentional, beautiful heart. And my new one, *Live No Lies*, is basically a tour... It's kind of built around this wireframe of this paradigm from the ancient kind of from the desert fathers and mothers in the third and fourth century based on their reading of the New Testament and the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness—we can talk about this later if you want—of what they call the three enemies of the soul, which they identified as the world, the flesh, and the devil.

This was a paradigm used by kind of Christian teachers and the Saints for well over 1,000 years as kind of the dominant paradigm. They thought of the three enemies of the soul almost as a counter Trinity to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit that were at war with the Father, the Son of the Spirit, and with the kingdom of God and with you, and your soul on our society.

And they had this whole paradigm of a spirituality of struggle that I think we... My basic case is we've lost that. Most people don't think about it. If we hear the language of the devil, we think of it as a pre-modern kind of myth. That it's like, Well, now we know better. We have science. We don't believe in Santa Claus or the devil anymore.

The flesh, we scratch our head, that's not even language from our culture anymore. We live in essential culture, all about hedonism, all about dopamine and feeling good in the moment rather than becoming a good person over a long period of time.

And the world even for Christians, we don't really call the world the world anymore. We call it the arts and entertainment, or politics or economics, or systemic injustice. We don't really call it what Jesus calls it—the world—which is this whole thing in the New Testament, major theme in Jesus' teachings in the New Testament writers.

So at a surface level, these books are about wildly disparate subject matters. But actually, in my evil genius plan, they are joined at the hip. And that's because my life call, what I feel put on earth to do, at least for the second half of my life is all around formation and discipleship, the healing and the growth and the expansion of the soul into a person who is pervaded by love through union with Jesus. That is what I want from my life. And that is what I want to help other people discover in their own life.

I'm a pastor, but what gets me out of bed in the morning is not putting on Sunday gatherings, or organizing church events, or even the very important justice work that we do as a church. These are all great things that I believe in 120%. But what

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gets me out of bed in the morning is my own pain, my own ache to become a person of love and who is formed in the image of Jesus, and my desire to see that become normative across the church. That's what I'm starting this nonprofit for blah, blah, blah.

All that to say, when I think about how do I take somebody on a journey from baptism or saying yes to Jesus to maturity in Jesus over years or decades of time, there are two primary obstacles that I see that keep people from even going on the journey in the first place. Ever basically even getting any-

Annie: After they've said yes.

John Mark: Yes. That keeps people from really ever following Jesus in the New Testament sense and ever getting any kind of traction in their formation and growth and maturity. The first one is hurry, busyness. To quote my therapist, people are just too busy to live emotionally healthy and spiritually rich lives. Like people can't become emotionally healthy or spiritually mature because their lifestyle is literally so fast. They literally are moving too fast to actually follow Jesus. They can be a Christian, they can believe in God, they can even go to church, but they're not actually abiding as Jesus said. So that's obstacle number one. That was my last book.

Obstacle number two, and that I've just discovered through living and then pastoring in a city like Portland, is people are living with these deeply ingrained, often unconscious, secular assumptions about what is good and what is beautiful and what is true. Or in very blatant New Testament language, people are living by lies.

And if you live by lies about what is good, which this is the Genesis story, what is beautiful and what is true, and this is Genesis 3, the para dogmatic temptation. Meaning that temptation behind all temptations. That, however you read Genesis 3, as history or mythology or some mix of the two, this is the story. This is our story. We're reading it thousands of years later.

And what's the temptation? Like to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The temptation is not to eat bad fruit? What's the temptation? The temptation is to separate yourself from God, and secondly, to redefine good and evil for yourself based on the voice in your own head, the desire in your own heart rather than in trusting in the love and the wisdom of God's word to you. That is that temptation below all the temptations.

And it's a deception. Eve is deceived, Adam is deceived by a lie about you could say what will make them happy. Ignatius of Loyola, I quote him, the book *The Founder of the Jesuit Order* defines sin as unwillingness to trust that what God wants for me is only my deepest happiness.

So people think of sin as this breaking the speed limit or God making some arbitrary law about sexuality or something that doesn't make sense. No. Sin is unwillingness to trust that what God wants for me is only deepest happiness. And that's the serpent's lie that God doesn't want you to be happy, He actually is holding back from you.

There's a good thing that God's saying no to that if you will reject God's word to you, you will become a happier person. That could be anything. You know, we could give Legion examples out of our culture, some of which would fit into the culture wars, most of which would just be everyday life.

So the second major obstacle that in my pastoral experience is keeping people from going on the journey of spiritual formation into the image of Jesus and through a freedom and peace, joy, maturity, contentment, all of that is people are living with these secular assumptions or lies about what is good and what is beautiful and what is true that caused them to look at Jesus definition of the good and the beautiful and the true, and all of a sudden good news is starting to now sound like bad news. Because we've been co-opted by the narratives of the world and we're living by the narratives of the world rather than the narratives of Jesus.

So in the book, what I'm trying to do through that wireframe of the world, the flesh, and the devil is exposed in hopefully a loving and gentle way, but a firm way, the lies that a lot of us have come to believe that are holding us back from following Jesus into maturity.

[00:28:06] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, Zocdoc. Okay, so tell me if this has ever happened to you. You've got something going on and you realize you need to see a doctor. So you do some searching and find one that looks good and you wait on hold to book an appointment, you rearrange your schedule. And when you finally go in, you find out the doctor doesn't even take your insurance. No Bueno! How annoying!

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And now back to our conversation with John Mark.

[00:29:44] <music>

Annie: Here's one of my thoughts when I finished reading the book, John Mark. I thought on a Tuesday, how do I know the difference when it's the devil, the world, or flesh that's lying to me? Or how do I know what to battle?

John Mark: Well, what I do is I just follow influencers on Instagram and I just believe what they say I should believe.

Annie: You just open your phone as soon as you wake up, you don't even get out of bed, you just open your phone and get started. I know.

John Mark: I get out of bed, I open my phone, I pull up Annie F. Downs first, IG story, so it's just really fresh and I think... I'm kidding. You're really wise.

Annie: Listen, John Tyson already exposed y'all and said that y'all's whole group doesn't look at your phone for two hours after you wake up. So we already know you're lying to us.

John Mark: Yeah, that's true. That's very true. All the rumors are true. We have a rule of life we live by. Part of me wants to try to give you a really sophisticated answer that will

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impress you. But let me just give you an honest answer. You read Scripture, you pray, you daily die to your flesh, and you live in community.

And through Scripture and Christian tradition, prayer, that is a kind of prayer where you are letting go of self will, and community and discernment, you together discern the will of God with a lot of humility, knowing that we're not inerrant, we get it wrong. There are areas where scripture and church tradition, and prayer and community are all crystal clear.

There are lots of areas we don't need to pray about. Should I have an affair? You don't need to pray about that one. Don't need to ask my therapist if I should be true to myself. The will of God is plain. What do I do in this next season in my life or whatever, those are much, much more tricky.

And so yeah, I mean, the Spirit of God will never contradict the Word of God in Scripture. And when you actually pray, not when you do Christian mindfulness or whatever, which I'm actually all for, but when you actually pray to the Father and the Son and the Spirit, you will feel the undercurrent of the Spirit moving you toward surrender and moving you to death to self, which is a beautiful feeling. It's a death feeling, but it's good, it's a freedom feeling.

And community, you have to be careful because lots of Christian community will actually draw you down, not draw you up; will call you down, not call you up into holiness. So what kind of Christian community you discern with is very important. Because there can be people that claim to be Christians but are just more of the echo chamber of the world in your mind and just reinforce your own delusional thinking because they want to justify their own sin. And if they justify your sin, then they can justify their sin. I don't mean that in a cynical way, just an honest way.

So you really need a Christian community that are devoted to Jesus and the New Testament and will call you up into holiness, into greater levels of maturity and self-giving love. But yeah, the honest answer, Annie, just get up in the morning, don't look at your phone, read your Bible, and pray, die to self, and have some great Christian friends that call you up into holiness and make decisions with them.

Annie: That's beautiful.

John Mark: With 2,000 years of Christian tradition, there's a bunch of things we don't have a Christian... you know, like vaccines and masks. Well, the Christian tradition isn't really helpful on that one because we haven't been here before, in the past. We just

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all died and suffered together. So, vaccines and masks are not an option. So we can't learn from the ancestors of the way of Jesus about that one, but most things we can.

Annie: I had a friend recently, this is probably three weeks ago, John mark. I was talking to a friend about something I was praying for. And I was saying to her, "I don't know if I'm supposed to fight for this in prayer." Like, I can't tell if I'm supposed to go after this or just let it be.

John Mark: Yes, I know that feeling.

Annie: And she said, "Who told you this wasn't going to be work?" And I was like, "Oh, oh, I just thought... Oh, okay." And she started kind of challenging me and how I prayed. And I'm not kidding you, John Mark, in 10 days the entire situation shifted. Because one Christian friend of mine said, "Start battling. There's a battle here. You're not praying correctly." She was like, "You need to start." So I have this hallway that I was just like, every morning when I make my tea... I know, I'm sorry, it's not coffee. I know. Tyson gets on to me too.

John Mark: No, bless you. That's better for your health.

Annie: Thank you.

John Mark: Well done.

Annie: Thank you.

John Mark: Coffee is horrible for you.

Annie: So every morning when I'm doing my tea, I'm just pacing and in 10 days the whole thing shifted. And I said to the Lord, "This won't happen every time but thank you that the first time you're giving me a quick response so that I see what happens." But I'm just actively seeing that our prayer lives are meant to shift the reality we live in.

John Mark: Mm-hmm. Oh, man, you're preaching my language. What a great example that was. Because you likely already knew a biblical theology of prayer as conflict, as work, as intercession. I'm guessing that was not a new theology to you.

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

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John Mark: But you needed a reminder from the Spirit that came through your friend to move you to prayer. So I'm thinking about those three... Have you had my friend A.J. Swoboda on the show before?

Annie: No, I want to, so bad. Will you make us friends?

John Mark: Sure. I mean, he's freaking brilliant. He's funny. You would get on with him so well. He's a great writer. In one of his books—he writes about discernment, meaning just how do we know God's will—he calls it spiritual triangulation. If you think of an excavator, there's three points. Point one is scripture. Point two is community. And point three is prayer.

And so your story is a great example of spiritual triangulation. You know what I mean? Scripture, community, this word coming to you through your friend, and prayer. And those three things together, it's like we triangulate God's will for our life.

Annie: I mean, that's what I was getting when I was reading *Live No Lies*, going like, oh, even the lie the enemy was feeding was like, "Hey, sit back, sit back." And so my friend had to say, "When in Scripture..." I mean, even we were talking about Jacob, we were talking about in the New Testament when Jesus tells the story of the persistent widow, and he says, "This is why you should pray and never give up." She just kept taking me back to going like, "Why would you give up? Who ever told you this wouldn't be work in prayer?"

So I bring this to you to say probably some of it was my flesh wanting to be lazy. Probably some of it was my existing in a world that says everything should be microwaved and this was not being microwaved. And part of it is the enemy not wanting me to advance the kingdom of God on this planet.

John Mark: So setting that lie in your mind, like it should be easy. Which is a great example. Because if you read the temptation narrative in Matthew 4, where Jesus is in the desert with Satan, the temptations are these really subtle things. I mean, "Turn stones to bread." Last time I chatted, "turning stones to bread was not sinful."

Annie: Right. Right.

John Mark: There's not a command in Ephesians, like, "If you ever get really strong in the Spirit of God, make sure you never turn a rock into a sourdough loaf of bread."

Annie: "Don't you dare."

John Mark: Don't you think about it. So what's the temptation. I mean, that's a bizarre one. And the temptation was not actually to turn a stone into bread, it was to go the way of Zeus, not the way of Jesus. It was to, as my theology professor said, for Jesus to take up His God powers and to try to accomplish God's end, the kingdom, through the world means, power, dramatic control, impressing people, celebrity, as opposed to the way of Jesus, which is the way of suffering sacrificial love. So that's a subtle temptation. And we often can spot the enemy's temptation coming to us when it's something blatant, but we'll often miss it when it's something benign.

Annie: Yes. I mean, that is the exact teaching around my most recent experience. Okay, John Mark, for our people listening, they want a prayer life that advances a kingdom. So what do we do today? What's the prayer life move today that advances the kingdom?

John Mark: I love what you just said, and I'm discovering this in my own life. Two thoughts. One is I'm discovering the power of what ancient Christians called synergy, which is a great word of kind of partnership with the Spirit of God, where we work in tandem with God. It's almost like surfing a wave or sailing in a boat, you know, where there's effort on our part, but really we're following the move of the Spirit.

So synergy. We work, God works; God works, we work. I love that kind of prayer. When you feel that the Spirit has put a specific prayer in your heart, it's almost like God has impregnated you with this dream or this vision or this desire. And now through prayer, you are laboring to kind of birth that, or maybe a more theological metaphor would be midwife it with God into reality.

I've been thinking a lot about that line. As I'm praying now about kind of my next chapter of life, I've been thinking about that line in Thessalonians where Paul writes, "May God bring to fruition your every deed prompted by faith and your every desire for goodness."

Annie: Ahh, that's beautiful.

John Mark: I thought, "Wow, a deed prompted by faith, a desire for goodness." So there's lots of good things that should happen in the world. But sometimes there's a specific burden on our heart of a specific good thing that we feel a strong desire to happen in the world and we want to be a part of. And we figure we might even be in some small way, not the solution to that problem, but make a contribution and some healing way toward it. That could be our... Do you follow Ignatian spirituality at all? No worries if you don't at all.

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Annie: Through you. Like this stuff you teach us. Yes.

John Mark: Okay, that's it.

Annie: The St. Teresa count?

John Mark: She was actually a Carmelite but she's genius. She's amazing. And I love her.

Annie: Okay, keep going.

John Mark: Close. So for those of you that are new to it, gosh, there's a little paperback you can read in 30 or 45 minutes. I think it's called "*What Is Ignatian Spirituality?*". It has a spiral picture on the front. Great little overview.

But one key idea to Ignatian spirituality, that actually ties in a lot to my book, though I didn't get to put this into the book, is that the heart is this mixed bag of desire. And I write about this a lot in the book, you know, where to follow your heart is just hopelessly unhelpful advice. Because my heart is... It's like a... this is such not a cool urban analogy. But did you see the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie where Jack Sparrow has the broken compass?

Annie: Yeah, yeah.

John Mark: You know what I'm talking about? As I remember the movie, it's like the compass is supposed to point to what he most deeply desires. But it's like wiggly now and it goes right and left, and it goes in all these different directions. And the whole point of the movie—and this is such a good picture of a Christian theology of desire—is that he doesn't actually know what he most deeply wants. Is it money? Is it fame? Is it freedom? Is it this person? Is it this...?

He keeps looking down at the compass, and it's like pointing right, and then he goes right. And it points left, and then he goes left. And then he is just like zigzagging around. It's chaotic. That's basically the postmodern world right now.

Annie: Yeah.

John Mark: Because so many people are living "follow your heart." They look at the compass of their heart, and it's wiggling out. Or it's going right and they go right and then it's a disaster. That's often this chaotic kind of jumbled bag of desire at both a humorous level and at a very serious level.

Part of prayer, Ignatius would say, is what he and many other Christians have called discernment... Actually, this word has lost its positive meaning. They actually use the word discrimination in a positive sense. Discriminating between these different desires. Just meaning separating one from the other and the good from the bad.

And discerning, how is God coming to me? And realizing that our heart is this mixed bag of the desires of what the New Testament calls our flesh, which I write a whole section about in the book, what that is and theology of it, the practice of it. And then below that, the desires of the Spirit.

And what Ignatius would say is that, once you get below the flesh level... I have this line in the book, that is a rip-off of my theology professor, thank you, Dr. Gerry Breshears, that our strongest desires are not always our deepest desires.

So in a moment of temptation, my strongest desire that I feel in my body might be—forgive this crass analogy—but to lust and objectify a woman walking past me on the street. Or it might be to gossip about another pastor when I'm with another pastor to somehow bolster up my ego and make myself feel better. Or it might be to buy another thing that I don't need. Or it might be to have another glass of wine when I should be done.

That might be the strongest desire that I feel in my body. But that sure as heck is not the deepest desire in my heart. When I'm actually rested and on Sabbath or I'm quiet with myself and I'm before God, the deepest desire of my heart is not to be a lustful person and use some other person's body for... like, oh my gosh, no. It's to be free of that, to be faithful to my wife, to delight in her, to find my wholeness in God Himself.

It's to be content with what I have and be generous, not to buy another thing. It's to speak well of other people and be a man of honor and have my identity in Christ, not in where I fall in the hierarchy of pastor morality or whatever. Not to gossip about other people. My deepest desires are just below those kind of flesh-level raging storms on the surface of the ocean desires.

And so Ignatius would say, if you can get through prayer and discernment and community and scripture down kind of below the storm on the surface of the ocean to the deep desires in your heart, those desires are often the Spirit of God desiring through your desire.

Annie: Wow.

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John Mark: So that's what Paul is writing about. And that's the truth to follow your heart, which overall is terrible advice. But if you nuanced the heck out of it through a Christian worldview, it's okay advice.

Annie: Right.

John Mark: There are desires way down there in the subterranean kind of part of your soul that are actually the Spirit of God desiring through your desires. I think that's what Paul's writing about when he says, "May God bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. Those desires for goodness are actually put into your heart and mind by the Spirit of God Himself.

So I think in prayer, when we can tap into... it's not wrong to pray for just good things in the world. We're praying for Afghanistan right now and against the Taliban. These are just things that we need to give prayer to. But there is a power when a synergy, when the Spirit of God is wanting to pray something through you. And it's like he's impregnated you with this desire. And now through your prayer, through your work, through your life, through your faith, and risk and obedience, now we get to labor with God to bring this thing to birth in the world. That's a powerful word to pray.

Annie: To me, that is one of the ways we fight against the lies, right, is just if we're more actively praying for the things God is birthing with us and through us, the lies just don't have the opportunity.

John Mark: Yeah. And I think a lot of it is just that discernment thing. Because a lot of lies, they're not just... they're narratives in our head, but they're also desires in our heart. And those two things go together. There's all this neuroscience that basically says, at a neurobiological level, the difference between a thought and an emotion is basically non-existent.

Annie: I believe that.

John Mark: So this whole concept of pre-verbal thoughts, and... Yeah, exactly. So all sorts of rabbit trails there. Point being, some of the enemy's lies come to us as desires in our own heart that are like the feeling base for some kind of narrative that we've bought into. And so that process of discernment, this is where all the spiritual disciplines that you and I love to talk about, you know, Sabbath and silence and prayer, contemplative prayer, are just crucial because they allow your soul...

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I mean, our soul is constantly being programmed by the internet and by the narrative of the world, and by the city we live in, and the people we're around. So when we get away, when we unplug from all of those inputs, both literally by getting away from our phone and our internet and going somewhere quiet, and rest, Sabbath, all of that, and metaphorically, when we unplug from that and we just set our heart before God, before scripture, then often these lies that we've come to believe they can kind of float to the surface of our heart, and we can get a little bit more kind of objective perspective on them.

And we can start to realize, "Oh, maybe I've just been programmed by this ideology," or "somebody has been actually manipulating my fear through this other narrative or thing or whatever." And it's not the formula. So I could go do this in three minutes later, you're like, "Oh, these three things are lies, and this is the truth." Most of humanity is a lot more—I just put on radio voice. I don't know why...

Annie: You did great.

John Mark: ...is a lot more complex than that. But I think these practices enable us to get clarity around God, but they also enable us to get clarity around our own soul. And those two things really go together.

[00:49:30] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, Prose. Several of you kind souls have recently reached out to me saying that you could tell a difference in my hair. Well, I can tell you exactly what's causing that difference. It's Prose.

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Here's how it's working for me. First, I took their online quiz, it's really quick, just answering a few simple questions about my life and my concerns about my hair. By analyzing over 85 personal factors, Prose determines a unique blend of ingredients to treat your exact concerns. So then they sent me a personalized formula of both shampoo and conditioner from Prose. And it's been absolutely amazing for my hair. It's making it fuller and so shiny and smooth. And as an added bonus, they smell awesome.

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And now back to our conversation with John Mark.

[00:51:29] <music>

Annie: So I've gotten some questions.... We have people who submit questions through our AFD Weekend Review and people have been asking questions about the practice of fasting.

John Mark: Beautiful.

Annie: I know. I think that's great. You and I talk about fasting a lot.

John Mark: That's incredible that people are asking questions about that.

Annie: I know. I think it's rad. So what's the big overview? I mean, whenever people ask us, I send them to your teaching on fasting because it massively impacted my life and changed some big things for me. But can you do kind of an overview of importance of fasting? Is it always food? Can it be other things? What is the discipline of fasting?

John Mark: Okay, let's talk a little bit about its history. So prior to very recently, fasting was considered basically one of the core practices or spiritual disciplines for following Jesus. So most people don't even realize this. But for example, for over 1,000 years,

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if you were a Christian, you would fast every Wednesday and every Friday until sundown. That was just like going to church in the south. I mean, it's just what you did.

Annie: It's what you did.

John Mark: For those of you that follow the church calendar, a lot of people don't realize that originally Lent was similar to Ramadan and that it was a 40 day fast until sundown. Most Catholics now it's like you don't eat meat on Fridays or something like that. But in the original version, you would actually fast until sundown for 40 days in the build-up to Easter.

So my point is when Jesus teaches on spiritual disciplines, He only names three in the Sermon on the Mount, one of which is fasting. And He says, "When you fast" not "if you fast." My point there is that fasting was basically an assumption about following Jesus, kind of like church attendance was until pretty recently in America for Christians, that's been lost in very recent years and decades, in particular, in the western church. Part of that is because the West is—not to nerd out on philosophy, but to nerd out on philosophy-

Annie: Come on.

John Mark: ...is so deeply shaped by René Descartes, whose famous line "I think, therefore I am." They call that Cartesian, as in René Descartes, Cartesian kind of worldview, which is our whole educational system is built around this, much of the church is built around this worldview. And it's this kind of idea that you are kind of a brain on legs. That you're just this thinking thing is what the Enlightenment thinkers kind of called us. And it's just not true.

And what that translates into is it's very hard for Western Christians, and I mean Western in the broadest sense, whether you're in Portland or Nashville or Huntsville Alabama, it's very hard for Western Christians to conceive of a way that we grow and mature into the image of Jesus not through our mind but through our stomach.

So if you ask, "Hey, how do I grow to be more mature in this, that area or the other?" it'd make perfect sense to you if I was like, "Okay, read these three books, listen to this podcast series by Annie Downs, go listen to this sermon series by John Tyson, and memorize these nine scriptures." You'll be like, "Great, got it."

Annie: Done."

John Mark: But if I just said, "Okay, try not eating every Wednesday," people will be like, "What?" Because we can't conceive of a way that is getting at our spiritual formation, not through our prefrontal cortex, not through our brain, but through our stomach. We can't conceive of it. Which is tragic because Christian theology is what one beautiful theologian calls the theology of the body. Theologians call it embodied spirituality.

Your body, contrary to all the theology that I grew up with is a part of who you are, it's part of your soul. Like we could nerd out on the theology here. I love that movie *Soul*, the Pixar movie, which was made by a Christian, by the way, or either written by one. Love that movie. It's one of my favorite movies of the year. I even cried.

But that image of the soul as this kind of immaterial, invisible part, that's the real you, that when your body dies, kind of it goes... that's like the western platonic view of the soul. It's not a biblical view of the soul. And that doesn't mean you don't have some part of you that's immaterial, and invisible, and will live on in some place at death. It just means that's not what your soul is.

In biblical theology, your soul is a way of saying your whole person. It's a way of saying all of you, the integrant center, including your body. At a scientific level, your mind and your body are not really separate things. They're one entity. All that to say, whatever our discipleship to Jesus is, it must be an embodied spirituality. It must involve our body, not just our mind.

That's one of the many reasons I call them practices. I don't call them spiritual disciplines, because people hear spiritual and they think, well, unembodied. Most of the spiritual disciplines are things you do with your body. Going to church and singing is something you do with your body. Fasting is something you do with your body. The Lord's Supper is something you do with your body.

So fasting is this embodied spiritual discipline, where you are literally giving the deepest part of your body over to God. There are basic three as I can understand it, and this is not like test against a theologian. There are three basic reasons or motivations that you fast as a follower of Jesus.

One is to feed your spirit and starve your flesh. Flesh, not meaning your body, but meaning this broken part of your body, this animal primal part of you.

Annie: Which you talk about a lot in the book, so people can know you dig into that a lot in that section.

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John Mark: Yeah. Two is to amplify your prayers. And three is to stand in solidarity with the poor and to share that money. Both to understand what it feels like to be poor and to share the money that you would have spent on food with those who don't have it.

So those are the three as I see. If you had to put the biblical theology of why do you fast into categories, those three reasons. Do you want to grow the spirit, kind of feed the spirit, because you're feeding on the energy of God and starve your flesh? Not your body, which is not bad, your flesh, this broken, primal appetite kind of animal in you. And you want to amplify your prayer life. You know what I mean? You want to somehow put a little into that prayer.

Annie: It works, dude. It is no joke.

John Mark: It does. It does. Not a transactional way, but it really does amplify the power in your prayers. So that's basic. And one of the things I love about fasting... I think it was Willard who had this the first time I read this insight. But fasting is a way to train yourself to not get what you want and still be happy. So that when someone else doesn't give you what you want, or life doesn't give you what you want, or COVID doesn't give you what you want, or God doesn't give you what you want, you can still be happy.

I saw this a lot in COVID, where a lot of Christians freaked out because of the disruption of this pandemic. And they found often spiritual language to cover up their anxiety and anger. And really what they were doing is they were grieving and they were trying to put it into this like, "Well, we should have more faith. We needed to whatever." Well, maybe.

But maybe you're just grieving because you just realize that you're not in control of your life and all of your plans went out, and all these things you wanted so badly aren't happening, and this desire that was in you just got crushed and you don't have any good reason for it. There's no silver lining, it just sucks. And you're just really sad and angry about it. Because anybody would be sad and angry about it. Welcome to being human.

But often you can tell when people... it's like the stereotype of a spoiled child who doesn't get what they want so they scream. All of us have that little inner child in us at some level. And so fasting is a great way to regularly train ourselves... John Tyson and I and our friends, all of us, part of our rule of life is one day a week on the same day, we all fast. And it's such a gift because it's training me to be happy without what I want, which is breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

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Annie: Yes. Yes.

John Mark: And I'm training myself, Hey, I can actually be in a good mood today. I can be joyful today. I can be content today. I don't need this thing that my body wants to be happy and at peace. And so then when all of a sudden I don't get the book sales I want, or I don't get the answer to the requests I want, or I don't get this thing that I want, or this circumstance doesn't work out the way I want it to, or my child doesn't perform in the way that I want them to at school or whatever, I'm okay. Because I'm increasingly free of my desire.

And that's one of the great lies of Western culture is that the way to sate desire is by always fulfilling it. And people don't realize desire is infinite because we were made by God, made for God, made to run on God and nothing less than God will ever satisfy you.

So if you try to sate your desire by fulfilling your desire, you will end up an addict, not a satisfied person. You will end up giving yourself over to the dopamine, hit over and over and over again. And you will chase a finite thing like sex or romance or money or career or experience or travel or you fill our church or you fill in the blank down an infinite road. And you will end up in slavery to addiction not in freedom in God. And so at some point, our spiritual formation must stand against our desire in order to actually satisfy our desire.

Annie: Mmm, that's good. It's what we've been talking about this whole episode is a strengthening of another muscle spiritually to fast.

John Mark: Yeah.

Annie: It matters deeply. It is. I say a lot to people: it is my favorite and my least favorite discipline. I have never seen-

John Mark: Yeah, it's not my favorite. It's just my least favorite.

Annie: I'm hungry four minutes after I decided to fast. I mean it is immediate.

John Mark: The funny thing is when I'm not fasting, if I accidentally skip a meal because I'm busy I don't even think about it. But on days I'm fasting, is like 10 minutes into my morning coffee I feel a stomach grumble.

Annie: That's it. I think someone taught me this in college but every time my stomach growls I will say out loud, "More than I want food, I want you. More than I want

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food, I want..." Because I have to say it out loud. Otherwise, the desire in me gets louder than what I actually desire.

John Mark: And so you're saying that you use those hunger pangs almost as like a little trigger in a positive sense to bring you back to God, bring you back to prayer, bring you back to why you're fasting.

Annie: Yeah.

John Mark: "God because I want you more than I want food."

Annie: Yeah. And it is either "more than I want food, I want you God" or "more than I want food today, I want you to change the situation. More than I want food today, I want you to move. More than I want food today, I want to see Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven."

John Mark: I want freedom from... Yes. So, Annie, what advice do you have to people that are new to fasting based on your own journey, and obviously you've thought through this real thoroughly? For somebody who has no paradigm for fasting, or if they do... Like I had a little bit of a paradigm growing up. I remember my parents used to fast whenever they were making a major decision. Like, "Do we move?" or something like that. They'd fast for a day or something like that. But I had no paradigm for like we fast every Wednesday. I had no paradigm for that. What advice do you have to somebody who's... I think as most western Christians are totally new to it?

Annie: To me, the thing I want to say because I want it to be easy to say skip a meal and instead of... But the truth is we accidentally miss meals all the time, we never miss a whole day of food on accident. So what I actually would say to someone listening is if you want to see if fasting matters and if fasting moves God's heart, do it for a whole day. Miss breakfast, lunch, and dinner and feel hungry all day and pray every time your stomach pangs and pay attention.

I mean your eyes have to be open to the spiritual that day. You have to be saying to God, "Make me attentive to whatever you might be saying or doing today." Because I often say to the Lord on seasons that I'm fasting, "You have to give me your eyes to pay attention because all my other senses are heightened anyway. My emotions are heightened when I'm not eating. Everything is heightened when I'm fasting. And therefore, God I need you to heighten my spiritual sensitivity because I need to notice if there's someone in the grocery store that is supposed to catch my

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attention." I shouldn't be in a grocery store when I'm fasting. Fantastic. But you know what I mean. I need to be paying more attention.

John Mark: Wow, you are just like glutton for punishment right there. And that was the right metaphor.

Annie: I walk and pray in grocery stores.

John Mark: I fast on the day I do my grocery shopping.

Annie: That's right. Watch me, God. So that's what I would tell people to do is do a whole day.

John Mark: Yeah, the heightened sensitivity. I will often both write my sermons and deliver my sermons, and I'll fast on those days often because there's a power in weakness and there is an increased sensitivity. My mind is sharper, my spirit is more in tune. You know, I don't feel as good, but there's some kind of a power that you're tapping into beyond yourself. And it's not just the power of intermittent fasting. It's the power of the Spirit.

Annie: At Crosspoint, we did a little test between all of us that teach on the team did a fast before the last time we taught and just kind of had this conversation about how different was it that we were fasting before we taught versus a normal Sunday?

John Mark: Wow.

Annie: I'm telling you, you know my personality, you think I'm lit teaching when I'm eating? You should see me teaching when I'm fasting.

John Mark: Oh, come on.

Annie: I am unstoppable when I'm hungry and I'm teaching. I mean, I don't hold back anything, you know, because I'm like, "What do we have to lose? I'm already starving." I have found it to be such a powerful discipline.

John Mark: And for those listening, if that sounds too overwhelming, the traditional, like the early church fast where they'd fast every Wednesday and Friday was just till sundown. So that would just mean have dinner one night, but make sure you just have an earlier dinner, and then just wake up the next morning. And all that time that you would have spent eating and prepping food, just pray, and then just wait till the sun goes down and then have a late dinner.

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Annie: This is a great time of year to start that, because the days are getting shorter. So, sundown is coming at 4:30, everybody.

John Mark: Don't do it in July. Do it in November. Exactly. It's much easier to start. This is the right time to start.

Annie: That's right.

John Mark: Oh, goodness.

Annie: John Mark, I have two more questions for you, then we'll be done. For our friends listening who love you as I do, how can we pray for you walking into this book launch and walking into this sabbatical? What do you want? I don't want to know what you need. I want to know what you want. What do you want us to pray for God to give you?

John Mark: Oh, you're so kind. I'd love just to pray for peace just as I go through this next month of kind of book launch and some travel and conversations. This book is literally a book about fighting Satan. So it's already come at a cost to my soul to write it. It's hard to measure spiritual opposition because it's hard to quantify. But oh, man, do I feel it! So I would just love-

Annie: That's it. It's hard to measure a wave in the ocean, but you know when you get knocked over by it.

John Mark: Yeah, exactly. And then for our sabbatical, I mean, just all the things you do into it. Just deep healing. Last year and a half our church was beautiful through it, but it was so hard to pastor through COVID-19 and all the riots in Portland, and all the political stuff and all the chaos. So we're good, we're grateful, but we're wiped.

So just praying for deep rest and healing even so that we can really come back and serve humbly but faithfully for a long time. I look at some of my heroes, Tim Keller and some of these others who were... he's ill. He has cancer. But who are 70 or something, and are just still incredibly helpful. And I know Tim Keller, but I would love to be 70 and still be helpful. That's a long time from now still for me.

Annie: We're entering the second half. This is it.

John Mark: I know. It feels great. I love it. It's a good feeling. Rolheiser has written better than anybody about second half of life. He talks about how first you're trying to just get

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your life together. Then the second half, you're trying to give your life away. And at first, it's about channeling your energies. And then in the second half, it's about maintaining your energies.

Annie: That's it.

John Mark: There's just a different... you know, I spent the last 18 years really working hard to build something. And now I want to rest and I just want to come back and hopefully make my best contribution. Just what all of us want to do.

Annie: If your best is yet to come, we are lucky to be on the planet at the same time as you, my friend. So you've done good work for us already.

John Mark: Same to you, Annie. I feel like we should do this once a month just so I can hang out with you.

Annie: Oh, listen, don't think I haven't been over here-

John Mark: I want to hear you sometime. These are such one-sided conversations. I want to flip the tables on you. Maybe when your next book comes out or something.

Annie: Done.

John Mark: I just don't have a podcast. I don't have some best-selling podcast still.

Annie: Best Selling.

John Mark: And it's free. Just to clarify.

Annie: It's free, man. I offer everybody their money-back guarantee for every episode. The last question we always ask, because the show is called That sounds fun, John Mark Comer, tell me what sounds fun to you.

John Mark: Oh, what sounds fun to me. I haven't seen a movie in forever in a movie theater. The first week of my sabbatical, I am doing, to kick it off, an eight-day primal path road trip with my 13-year-old second boy, Moses. We're going to come down Highway one because you can do that in California in October and in San Francisco where I grew up, and we're going to go... they have the best movie theater in the world. It's called the Alamo. It's this indie converted old theater. Incredible, organic Sriracha popcorn, all the things. And we're going to see Dune. My son wants to be a movie director, and Dune is our favorite novel. So we're going to go see the

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movie Dune. So that sounds fun to me, going to see a movie with my son in San Francisco on my sabbatical from one of my favorite books. That sounds fun.

Annie: That's high level, dude. That's a really good one. That's a great answer.

John Mark: You're like, "I was just thinking like is there a nut bar that you like right now or something?" But no.

Annie: No. That's a great answer. You nailed it. Thanks for doing this, John Mark. I can't wait for people to read *Live no Lies*. I'm so thankful.

John Mark: Thanks, Annie.

[01:11:45] <outro music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, don't you love him? What sounds fun to him sounds so fun. What a great answer. And what a great conversation. I'm just so, so grateful. Again, we'll link it in the show notes, but you can go back and listen to John Mark teaching about fasting at Bridgetown, particularly in... I think it's January of 2018. But it's very easy to Google and find. It was really helpful series for me.

And be sure you pick up a copy of *Live no Lies* and follow John Mark, tell him thanks so much for being on the show. I'm telling you that book is so good, y'all. It is so good.

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 couple of days. We'll see you back here on Wednesday with the hilarious and wise and so lovely Kate Bowler. See you guys then.

[01:12:42] <music>