

[00:00:00] <intro music>

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

But before we dive in, I want to take a moment and tell you about one of our amazing partners who y'all love so much, [She Reads Truth](#), and their Advent plans for this year. I know. We're all just starting to get excited about pumpkin spice lattes. But if I'm honest, I can't wait for Christmas.

This holiday season, I want to encourage you to prepare your heart for Christmas Day in a fresh way by reading with the She Reads Truth community for their 10th Advent Bible study. If you've never participated in a Bible study with She Reads Truth, this is the perfect year to do it and the perfect season.

This year's She Reads Truth Advent study is called the everlasting light: from creation to the incarnation to the coming eternal city, Scripture speaks of Jesus' life-giving presence and light in a dark world. This five-week study book provides daily scripture reading that traces this theme throughout the Bible.

Y'all know how important the Bible is to me, which is why I love She Reads Truth so much. Their study books are incredible and I especially love doing the Advent studies with them. Not only are they beautifully designed, they are full of Scripture. They also include some helpful extras to make understanding the Bible a little easier and some simple crafts like a cross stitch, you know I love that, and delicious recipes sprinkling a little fun.

Of course the girls will be back on talking about Advent in a couple of weeks. But if you want to ensure that Christ is the focus of your holiday season this year, I want you to head to shopshereadstruth.com right now to get your study book. Here's the pro tip and why we're talking about it today: they sell out every year.

So do not wait. Go ahead and do it now. Use the code ADVENTANNIE at checkout for 15% off your Advent order. They've created amazing Advent resources for the whole family. So head to shopshereadstruth.com right now and use the code ADVENTANNIE. And as always, the codes for any of our partners are in the show notes if you need to see it as well.

Intro: Today on the show, I get to talk with my old friend, Mac Powell. You probably already know and love Mac Powell, the former frontman of four-time Grammy

Award-winning band, Third Day. But you're going to love him a little more after hearing this conversation.

He's releasing his debut solo Christian album today. It's called *New Creation*. And y'all, it is so, so good. I love it when we get to hear the stories behind what our friends create the way they do. And that's why I can't wait for you to get this conversation with someone I've known for two decades. You guys, get ready to hear the history with me and my friend, Mac Powell.

[00:02:50] <music>

Annie: I said to Craig earlier, I was like, "I'm going to really almost call him Papa like 12 times, I'm sure."

Mac: Please, I hope you do. I like it when you call me Big Papa.

Annie: Okay, Mac, so first of all, we're going to go. We're going to start with the world needs to know we've known each other for 30 years? Probably 25 years?

Mac: Not 30. At least 25.

Annie: How long did Third Day start coming to summer camp? Mid-90s?

Mac: Probably 94. Yeah, something like that.

Annie: So 27 years?

Mac: Yeah. That math's not far off. I know.

Mac: But here's the deal. You look 27; I look 67.

Annie: Listen, that is not true. And I wouldn't go back and do 27 again if I had to. So I will take it. So for the friends listening, we've been friends for a long time. I lived with y'all and nannied for your kids for summer when I was in Atlanta.

Mac: Annie the nanny. Annie the nanny.

Annie: That's right. That's right. And so we are long, long friends. I'm shocked this is the first time you're on the podcast.

Mac: I know.

Annie: I'm sorry.

Mac: And it's all because I have terrible Wi-Fi. I'm so embarrassed. I'm embarrassed by it.

Annie: It's very sad you're not here in person. Why are you not in Nashville for this?

Mac: Actually, my wife Aimee, I have to say that... You know, Aimee. But for those who don't, Aimee like five minutes ago said, "Why aren't you doing this live?" I'm like, "I don't know. I have no idea. I just go where people tell me." And so... And the funny thing is I was in Nashville last week and had hours sitting around doing nothing. Why didn't we do this?

Annie: Mac, why didn't we do this when you were here? That makes me really sad.

Mac: Next time.

Annie: What were you in town for?

Mac: I was doing some interviews and also rehearsal with Mr. Chapman, so...

Annie: Oh, right. Because you're about to go back out on tour, right?

Mac: That's right.

Annie: Do you remember that you and Aimee are probably like the third people I told that I was moving to Nashville?

Mac: Yeah. I was hoping that you remembered. The way I remembered the reason that you're in Nashville and have the success you do is because I told you to go there.

Annie: You did.

Mac: I didn't know if-

Annie: You really did. Well, I was like, "I have this idea," and you were like, "You gotta go."

Mac: I don't know if you remember what I told you. And you're not the only one I've ever told this. But I remember telling you... and I remember we were right in front of the... the rock building. I forget what it's called.

Annie: Mobley Hall.

Mac: Mobley Hall. Exactly. And I remember you telling us and me going, "Why wouldn't you go? I mean, you can always move back."

Annie: That's what you said.

Mac: "You can always move back."

Annie: I mean, I might cry telling you about it. You were the first person who said, "It's okay. You can come back." Like, "Go and try and you can come back." And then you also said, "Move to Franklin." And I was like, "I can't move to Franklin, Mac. I'm going to move where there are single people. I can't move straight into family ville."

Mac: Right. Right.

Annie: But I am so thankful that you said all that to me when you did.

Mac: Well, you didn't need me, I know that, but it was cool to be a part of it. And I'm so, so proud of you. Because I love it when people follow their dreams and follow what God's placed on their hearts because most people don't and most people are afraid of it. Not that you weren't afraid-

Annie: How about that?

Mac: ...but you had the courage and the strength to move forward with it. And I'm so proud of you. Just not only that, but just that I... because so many people know who you are now from your books, from your speaking, from your podcasts is like I get to tell them yeah, "I knew Annie back in the day." Like I get to brag that we're friends.

Annie: That's very kind.

Mac: So thank you for that.

Annie: I do the same bragging. Yeah, I mean, the Sunday I left I remember hugging your kids and y'all at church before I drove away just being like, "What am I doing? Oh, yeah, Mac said I could come home. What am I doing? Mac said I could come home if I want to come back home."

Mac: There you go.

Annie: So thank you for being such an important voice in my life for so many years. I'm very thankful.

Mac: You're very welcome. Thank you for saying that. I have two things. I don't know what's on your agenda.

Annie: Okay, you go.

Mac: I have two things I wanted to say to you. One is, how 'bout them Dawgs?

Annie: How 'bout them Dawgs? Yeah. Okay. Let's talk about that first. I mean, you are through and through an Alabama fan.

Mac: Well, I mean, I went in front of this just for you. The Alabama Football, Bear Bryant-

Annie: Bear Bryant book.

Mac: Yeah. His book. Signed autograph book. I've got... let's see.

Annie: Were you at autographed book for Bear Bryant?

Mac: Yeah. Ain't that cool?

Annie: That is cool.

Mac: Given to me by Mrs. Tanner. She gave that to me.

Annie: Really?

Mac: Yeah, yeah, she got it when she was young.

Annie: Oh, my gosh.

- Mac:** Check this out. You're going to appreciate this being a Nashville person.
- Annie:** Yes.
- Mac:** This is a football signed by Mark Ingram who was our first Heisman Trophy winner, and the king Derrick Henry, who plays for the Titans.
- Annie:** Plays for the Titans now. Yeah, that's right.
- Mac:** There we go,.
- Annie:** He's awesome.
- Mac:** I set up here specifically for this interview.
- Annie:** Thank you. Thank you. I really appreciate that. I mean, are we just predicting another national championship rematch?
- Mac:** Yeah, I'm going for it right now. My hope is that... and we're going to lose a lot of listeners right now talking about college football.
- Annie:** No, no. We had Kirk Herbstreit on, we had Coach Richt on. We've had a football kind of fall. So we're good.
- Mac:** Good, good. My hope is that you guys get beat by Florida—and it's not going to happen—so that we don't have to play you. That's my hope.
- Annie:** I said the same thing this weekend. I said, "I hope they get beat by Ole Miss so we don't have to do this."
- Mac:** When I was at the championship game, and I've been to every Alabama championship game under Saban except for the last one because of COVID. I had a ticket and I was like, "You know what? I'm not going."
- Annie:** Right.
- Mac:** It was the only one I didn't. And I regret it because we won big so out of state. But I've been to every one of them. And a couple of them have been disappointing. But when I was at halftime at the game against Georgia, I told Aimee, I was like, "I'm leaving." Because you guys were up, and I was like, "I see what's the writing on the

wall. We're going to get killed in the second half. I'm leaving." And she's like, "No, no, no, let's just stay."

And I had Cash with me, my son. And the only reason I didn't leave is because he was there and he wanted to stay. So I said, "All right, we can leave after the third quarter." And it was the greatest moment in my sports history. And so I'm thankful that Aimee didn't listen to me and leave it up to me. But can you imagine if I had left what I'd miss out on?

Annie: Yeah. The regrets an Alabama person would feel. The joy a Georgia person would feel if they had left at halftime at that game and thought that's how it ended would have been a blissful life.

Mac: And this is where we segue into a spiritual message of don't give up.

Annie: Don't give up.

Mac: Don't give up.

Annie: Don't give up even in the tough times.

Mac: Hang in there. Don't leave at halftime.

Annie: Right. Don't leave at halftime. That's a good word. I mean, watching Georgia the last couple of weeks, you feel like, What is this team? Like, what is this team?

Mac: I want nothing out of it.

Annie: I also think Saban is creating coaches on his staff that are able to go out and build national championship teams.

Mac: No, just one. And that's Kirby. He's the only one. Everybody else is like... I don't know if you saw... you probably didn't watch any of Alabama Ole Miss. They put up the graphic of Saban and all the assistant coaches. I think there were nine guys. And I said to Aimee, I was like, "Look not one assistant coach of his has ever beat him. He's beat all nine of them. That's crazy."

She said, "No, that's not the crazy thing. Look how many games. It's like 25 games that he hasn't lost any of them." Because, you know, some of them had multiple times they play.

Annie: Right. Right. Yeah, we have.

Mac: I think Kirby's going to... we'll see what happens.

Annie: We'll give him a run. We'll give y'all a run either way at the SEC championship and then in the national champions.

Mac: Exactly. We'll see each other twice.

Annie: We'll see each other twice.

Mac: So let's get together and talk about it once it happens.

Annie: Oh, I would love that. I mean Kirk Herbstreit and I went hard on this. Because I was like, every time game day comes to Athens we lose. And a) I was a little bit wrong. My stats were a little bit wrong. And b) that game this weekend and we won. And so big I let him off the hook. Oh, man, I know. Okay, so that's the first thing you want to talk about the Dawgs. What's the second thing on your list?

Mac: No, that was a second thing that just presented all of this stuff for you. The Alabama stuff.

Annie: Both things are football-related which is my dream come true.

Mac: Yes. Yes.

Annie: I'm very here for that.

Mac: Oh, and I have my Braves hat on for you too.

Annie: You do. How about those Braves. They are looking so good.

Mac: Yeah, we'll see what happens.

Annie: It makes up for what's happening with the Falcons.

Mac: Oh, you had to bring it up.

Annie: I love them.

Mac: You had to bring it up. I don't watch them anymore.

Annie: When Deion Sanders said, "I can't do this anymore," that's when... I mean it's so hard. I know they're working hard, all those guys are working so hard.

Mac: Of course, they are.

Annie: And nothing falls in their favor. Nothing falls in their favor this season.

Mac: I watched the very first game of the season and then I was like, "I'm out." I'm an admitted fair weather Falcons fan. Because you know this, but most people don't know. I'm not from Atlanta originally. I moved over when I was in high school. But I've lived here more years than I lived in Alabama so this is home. But because I didn't grow up a Falcons fan, I am a fair weather fan. And I have to because I put so much into the Braves and so much in Alabama, I don't have heart left for the Falcon.

Annie: That's exactly right. And right now the weather is not fair. So it is not sticking around. Mac, when I think about Nashville, I mean, so many of our friends in Christian music live here. In Atlanta, it's really you and the Casting Crowns guy. Like everybody else is here. How come you and Aimee have never moved the family up here?

Mac: We can't afford it. It's terrible.

Annie: Get out of here.

Mac: We can't. I mean honestly it's like the house we have here would be double the price in Nashville. And it's always been more expensive in Nashville for some reason. But now it's crazy. So yeah, we don't go there because we can't afford it. It's ridiculous.

Annie: How is your view on Christian music different than you think the people who do you live here in it?

Mac: That's a great question.

Annie: Tom Downs love when people say that by the way. Dad's going to be so happy you said that.

Mac: That I said "that's a good question"?

Annie: Oh, he loves it.

Mac: It is a good question. I don't think there's probably as much of a difference. I always say I have a hate-love relationship with Nashville. I've got so many friends there and it's a great town. It really is. But it also is a little bit of like LA in the south.

One thing that I don't like about Nashville is that if you say, "Hey, let's meet at two o'clock," well it's probably going to be 2:30, 2:45 until people show up, you know. And it's like it's a good thing but it's just a little laid back. And it's like, "No, if I say two o'clock, let's meet at two o'clock." Coming from the guy who's always late. I say that.

But I don't know, I do love Nashville but I can handle it for about three or four days. I know there's great connect. I will say this. Back to your question. I've always wanted to stay away from Nashville because I always get caught up enough in the business side of things, I feel like if I was in Nashville I would even more that would kind of take over my thinking all the time. And so I don't want that to happen.

So that was one purpose for staying out of there is not getting caught up in the business side of things and also just trying to musically stay out of "this is the way it's done in Nashville. So therefore that's how it's done." I wanted to stay away from that.

Now, whether that's really a thing or not. There's probably some half truth to that. And I won't tell you what the thing was and I think you might have been there. But there was an event about two years ago and it was a sad gathering of people. Someone had passed—and I'm not even going to say who it was—but I went up for a memorial service.

And as I was looking around—I'm about to cry even thinking about it now—I just saw all these people that I knew, people that I've been on the road with, you know, who are other artists, people that I've worked with in the business, and for the first time ever I said, "Man, there's such a great community up here. Maybe I should consider it."

And so I called Aimee on the way home and I said, "You know, with me kind of starting a new career as a solo artist and wanting to write more and all those things, maybe we should move to Nashville." So there have been some thoughts about it. But then I'll look at the housing prices and...

Annie: You're like, "You know what? I'll just stay at a hotel. And when Annie is downtown, I'll stay there. I got places. I got places."

Mac: Right. Right.

Annie: Versus moving. Let's talk a little bit about the road since you mentioned it. That is one of my favorite things is when you tour with people, then you make this like new family feel. And then the next tour is a totally different group of people.

Mac: It's cool.

Annie: It's really interesting.

Mac: I remember in the spring you had interviewed Kane.

Annie: Oh, no, yeah, they're coming now. I met them this spring. Yeah.

Mac: Okay, okay. So you met them and so you didn't interview them yet. But they told me about y'all's conversation and they were like, "Oh, you know, Annie, she's awesome, blah, blah." That's a great example of... You know, we were out on the Zach Williams tour and I wasn't expecting to have some great new friends. And they're great people.

And so to be able to have that relationship with them. And it makes you... and you know this as well. When you know someone, you root for them even more. Like I'm rooting for them to do well and I'm so thankful that they're doing great right now and they're the new biggest thing in Christian music. So I'm looking at that girl and it's like my little sister and brother. And it's really, really cool.

Annie: I had an experience with a pastor from across the country where I had always seen him at a distance on social media or at events that I had all these ideas about what he was like. And all these reasons, I was like, "Not my guy. Don't want to be friends with this guy." And I ended up at one meal with him. And one conversation of actually knowing the person changed everything for me.

First of all, I had to repent to the Lord about like, man, I made so many assumptions about this guy that are not true. What made me think of it is you said once you know people you cheer for them harder. And it's one of the reasons I love doing the show is I get to go like, "Hey everybody, y'all know Mac Powell. But do you know Mac Powell? Let's talk about..."

Mac: I think the problem in my situation is when people sit down and have meals with me, they end up going, "You know, I don't want to know him. Never mind."

Annie: "My assumptions were right. He's the worst." No, no, that's not true.

[00:18:06] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, [Pendulum](#). There are so many aspects of seeking to be the healthiest version of ourselves, aren't there? How you eat plays a huge role in your microbiome, ready? Microbiome, which in turn impacts your mental and physical wellbeing.

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And now back to our conversation with Mac Powell.

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Annie: When you look back on 2020, did your decision to go from doing some of the country stuff to Christian solo artist, did that happen before 2020? Did that happen over 2020? How long ago did you make this decision?

Mac: Well, that's a great question too. It really happened at the very, very, very end, like very end of December, early January. And to be honest with you I made it because it was a decision I thought I had to make. And in a way I did. I thought, "Okay, I'm giving up on this dream that I had to do country music and I'm moving on from that thought and that dream and that idea."

And then I realized once I made the decision, I thought I was going to be walking around in a fog for months and just mad at myself and mad I'm not trying again and again. But I wasn't. It felt like, "Okay, you know what? That's my decision. That's my marching orders and I'm going to move forward."

I always knew I was going to make more Christian music, it was just sooner than I thought it was going to be. But I don't regret it at all. I'm thankful to be where I am. I'm thankful that I got another chance to make another record. This is my first solo Christian album. And just really had a great time.

I don't know if I mentioned this earlier because I've done so many interviews today. But in the past when making this record was so different, in the past I wrote the majority of the songs for Third Day. And of course the band we would talk through those songs and they would help me and they put their own parts. But for the most part it was me writing a song, playing the acoustic version of it, going, "All right, let's go record this."

So I never was a go to Nashville with songwriters kind of guy. I was never, you know, find me the best song and we'll record it kind of guy. To me, it's more important to be the songwriter than the artist's side of things.

And so when I started going to Nashville to write with these guys and a lot of them I think you probably know, I was like, "I'm going to do this a couple times and hate it and then I'll just do the rest myself." But to their credit, I had a great time doing it and really had a great experience.

I worked with probably four or five different producers on this record. I've never done that before. Usually, you get one guy who does the whole thing. And I had this fear that it was going to be very disjointed sound. This guy sounds like this and this guy. But it doesn't. It all comes together in a great way.

Also in the past, you know, going with the Third Day guys, we're in the room together, we're recording. It's the guys hanging out and making music together. It's cool, right? And this was nothing like that. This was we go in to write a song and most of the time... usually, it's me and two other guys. And at least one, if not the two guys, who are both producers.

So as we're writing the song, they're putting down tracks and they're putting down loops and stuff and making a really great demo right away. And so at the end of the day, I'd hear something, I go, "Man, that sounds like a record already."

And so whoever wrote the song with me, if they were a producer, went on to finish out the song and I wasn't in the studio ever at all. But the process in writing and recording was very different and yet I loved it. And who knows what the next one will be like, but we'll cross that bridge when we come to it.

Annie: Tell me more. You said it's more important to you to be a songwriter than an artist. Why is that?

Mac: I don't know. I don't know if that's completely true. But when I first started out, I remember signing... I talked with Terry Hemmings, who was the head of or still is the... what ends up being Provident. When we first started it was called Reunion Records.

Annie: I was going to say it's probably 50,000 names, right?

Mac: Yeah. Yeah, different names, but it was the same company and different mainstream owners of that company. But who we signed with is who we ended up being with for our whole careers with Third Day. And our very first show that they came out to see us, Reunion Records, came out there was two ANR guys and Terry who was the president. And I loved Reunion Records. They had Michael W. Smith, and Rich Mullins, and West King who's also from Georgia, all these artists that I loved and I was like, "That's where I want to be, Reunion. I love what they're doing."

So Terry comes out and we're playing for at Church of God event, these kids had never had music at their events. And they were scared because usually in Church of God, it was like you can only sing, there's no instruments. And we played and we're rocking it out and they're just standing there because they're like, "Are we going to get in trouble if we act like this?"

And so it was the worst show. We were in Murfreesboro, Tennessee and David, our drummer, was set up on this huge hearth with a fire behind him. He was burning up

sweating from this fire. It was like the worst show ever. I don't even know why I'm telling you this stuff.

Annie: I love it.

Mac: It has nothing to do with the answer. But I think the point was that what we thought, "Well, they're not going to sign us." But when Terry started talking with me, I told him, "Well, I love this band but really what I want to do is I want to be a writer." My dream was to be not the Dove Award Vocalist of the Year, Group of the year. It was like to be the Songwriter of the Year.

So that was really kind of my vision and what I wanted to do and yet somehow I ended up being in the successful band. And that's what I did. So I'm not complaining at all. But that's when I talked earlier about songwriting is almost more important to me, that's really where the foundation for me has always been as being a songwriter. And I just happened to be able to sing these songs.

Annie: You've won a billion Dove Awards. Have you won Songwriter of the Year yet?

Mac: Oh, no, no. Not even close. You know, you're not considered that... if you're not a guy that's kind of doing it all the time and that's what you do and you're just writing a few songs for your band, that's not going to happen. So that's okay.

Annie: I'm okay with that. I can lobby.

Mac: Please do.

Annie: Dear Dove Awards, dear K-Love Fan Awards, get back Powell on-

Mac: Well, somebody like me that writes 10 songs a year compared to some other guys who write 200 a year, it's not a fair fight.

Annie: But you write good one. So of their 200 a year, only six are getting cut.

Mac: We'll see.

Annie: Will you go back and talk a little bit...? Because you talked about leaving country music. So many of our friends listening are making decisions about whether to stay or whether to leave something. How did you know it was the right time? Did you know? Were you sure? Did you hear God? Did someone say something to you? Like how did you know?

Mac: Once again, I'll tell you, you can always go back as I've told you before. I think for me, I don't look at in those terms of leaving country music or leaving Christian music. Because I never really left Christian music. Even when I was doing my country stuff, thankfully, I would still get to do Christian festivals, go play at churches. You know, I was doing that while I was going to play in these little dive bars in the middle of Texas, you know, somewhere. So I was able to do both.

And my hope is that I can kind of still continue to do that because my heart really in all of it was to try to reach out to some people that wouldn't normally come to a Christian show or had never heard of Third Day. That's what I wanted to do. I don't even look at it that it was a failure because I did what I set out to do. I got music on Country radio. And I didn't have any big number one hit but there was a bunch of stations around the country playing my music. I got to play in a bunch of these clubs. I went on a couple of country tour. So it wasn't successful-

Annie: It was not a failure by any stretch. No.

Mac: ...but it wasn't a failure. So I did what I wanted to do. So it was kind of a best of both worlds. I never left one place and went to another. I just continue to make music.

Now, the focus was more on that side, but now the focus is in Christian music and I'm thankful. I'm thankful that I get to continue to have a lot of great fans, a lot of great friends. And I love it. I still listen to it every day. I mean that's what I'm playing for the kids in the car. I'm leading worship now at Church of the Apostles in Atlanta. And so I get to be part of worship and CCM and country. And it's like I don't have to pick one over the other.

Annie: I mean, I just think people struggle with making decisions about when to leave something. And so hearing that reminder of like, if you want to walk away from your teaching job like I did, people are always going to be having kids, you can go back.

Mac: Right, absolutely. There was a book that came out a few years ago and I wish I remember what it was. But basically, it was like we as humans it's a natural thing that we think about "Okay, I've got choices, and I've got to do A, B or C. And if it's supposed to be C and I choose B, then I've messed up." That's not really how most of life is like.

Don't get me wrong. We can make bad decisions and wrong decisions. But for the most part, I did this study about people who bought houses and it said, "Okay, these were the two options." And somebody chose house A over B, six months later, nine months later, they're like, "Oh, we're so glad we chose A." But if they had chosen B, it would have worked out there too.

So I think sometimes, not all the time, don't get me wrong, but sometimes we just feel like, I'm scared to death of making the wrong decision. And this is the way I was in moving forward with making Christian music. Sometimes you just got to make a decision. It almost doesn't matter sometimes what that decision is, just make a decision.

Annie: Right, right. Just get off the merry-go-round of what am I going to do next?

Mac: You put it in a nice way. Yes.

Annie: I mean, I said it to someone the other day, I said, "I hope after..." She went on this retreat, and I said, "I hope at the end of this huge note the next thing to do." Like we don't have to have the whole thing lined out for the next 40 years, but I hope you know the next thing to do."

Mac: Yeah. Not to over-spiritualize it but your word is a lamp unto my feet. That lamp is not shining 100 yards in front of us. It's the next few steps.

Annie: Right. Right. Okay, I'm glad you made it spiritual because here's what I want to ask you about the title of the new album. It's called *New Creation*.

Mac: Yeah.

Annie: I roll that verse around a lot in my head that the Lord is making all things new and that He made... But how do you make something new that already exists? I think it's fascinating. So why was that the right title for this album? That is really such a deep concept to me.

Mac: I liked the song a lot so I picked that one.

Annie: Of all the songs. I mean, that's what y'all do, right? Y'all just pick. We don't get to do that with books. We don't get to pick the favorite chapter title and make it the title of the book. We have to put them all together and title the book.

Mac: No, I'm half teasing, but part of it was I like that song a lot. But it also was the concept and the idea of new creation of "here's someone who's not new, has been around doing this for a long time." And yet at the same time, I have a second chance at doing it.

Also just the message in that song, I feel like there's quite a few songs in the record that are very autobiographical. And that is definitely one of them. In the sense that I've been for years talking about Jesus, talking about my faith. And it's not that none of it was not true, it was true. And I truly believed what I was sharing.

But when I went through COVID, there were some things that I was going through personally, some things I never thought I would go through before, made some decisions that I thought I would never make before. And then all of a sudden, I'm faced with really fully accepting God's strength and His grace and His mercy, not necessarily for the first time, but for one of the most major times in my life.

And there's something different about talking about it and actually knowing it and living through it, and something different about reading about it and knowing about God and knowing God. And it's not that I didn't ever know God, I knew it. But that grace that I'd always talked about was from our salvation, you know, which is a major thing.

But when it comes to everyday life, that's something that I just kind of talked about. And when I started really kind of understanding more of that through this time of COVID and things going on in my life, that's when... And that's what the song talks about really—when it hits you personally, it's something different.

Annie: Does it feel really vulnerable to have so many of these songs be autobiographical, and it's not Third Day? Because I'm sure Third Day songs are autobiographical, but they were five of y'all or whatever. Does this feel different?

Mac: I think so. Yeah, it does. I never really looked at it that in the time, you know, that I was doing Third Day stuff. But yeah. It's almost like I had to bring in other people to make sure that this was kind of true for them as well. And with this album, it's like, "No, I'm just..."

And there are some things. I don't even know how this is... I'm early in the process of talking about this record. You're the writer, maybe you can help me come up with a better way of saying this. But it's interesting because as a writer and even as a performer, in a way you're almost like acting. It's not that it's not true but...

For example, when I'm on stage, and even doing this interview, one end of the spectrum of my personality comes out. And I think there are times if somebody meets me not on stage or doing an interview, you've seen me in times where I'm much more quiet, much more reflective. I think they're probably people who are surprised to experience that side of the spectrum of my personality. But when you're on stage, you can't be like that. You have to like bring it to people's attention.

And so I think even as with songs and songwriting, there are times where there's something true but maybe you're writing a story and like... For example, there's a song called *Love is the Reason*. And it starts off saying, "Mama dragged us to church every Sunday and Heaven knows I didn't want to go." And so there's truth to that. That's autobiographical. But the second verse talks about my brother going off to join the military. Well, I don't have a brother.

Annie: You don't have a brother.

Mac: There's truth in the song but there's also the storytelling of it as well.

Annie: Right.

Mac: Hopefully people know that and understand that, but I feel a little like I wasn't trying to trick anyone. I'm just telling a story. And that's what I'm talking about the acting and being on stage and all that stuff. So I know that's not coming out right but hopefully people will love it.

Annie: No. I mean, we have to think about it. You and I have to think about it with social media and with every stage we're on, and this like I can be having a really bad day or something going really sideways and I still need to go on a stage and talk about the thing God's put in front of me.

Mac: Right.

Annie: And it's not appropriate for me to process all my personal sadness when I'm supposed to be doing a sermon on joy. Like it's just not appropriate.

Mac: People don't do that when they go to their work. If you're a teacher and you go to teach class, all that junk is not going to come out necessarily. So it's not wrong. It's just that there's so much more depth to us as people and what we do. And sometimes that gets to come out and sometimes it's in a different way.

Annie: Yeah. I think about it because the thing I don't want to be—and you have modeled this for me for a long time—the thing I don't want to be is fake. I've watched you, a lot of our friends do this for a long time and I'm like, "That's who they really are." And yet the whole world doesn't need to know this thing went sideways today and I was crying and now I can do an Insta story. That's just how we have to do our job.

Mac: Yes, you're right. But not to take away from being... you know, because there are times in your books where you share those struggles and you share those things. And there are times in my songs where I share... it's not like you're always only putting on the good face.

Annie: Right.

Mac: We're able to share those things in a different way. I can do it in a song. You're going to hear some of that and those struggles that I've had in this record. But I'm not going to sit here and just go through all that stuff. You can go into more in-depth with your books and records and all that stuff.

[00:36:14] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Olive & June](#). Y'all know this about me. I am a nails painted kind of girl. Having a fresh mani just feels like it completes an outfit. I mean that and lipstick, of course.

The challenge is that I'm not exactly the best at doing my own nails. I try but at the end they end up looking pretty amateur and not in the good way that I write about in *That Sounds Fun*. They chip easily or they're not smooth. But the alternative is spending a lot of money and time I don't have getting regular salon manicures. But do not fear. All of Olive & June Mani System is here to save the day. Do yourself mani's that look salon-perfect and last over seven days. This is actually possible, my friends.

Olive & June Mani System comes with everything you need for an impeccable DIY mani. And it's all in one box and only five steps. It comes with a poppy, they're easy to grip brush handle that fits on any of their bottles. And since it's so easy to hold, it steadies your hands and makes it so easy to paint with both of them. That means both hands end up with smooth perfectly manicured nails instead of one looking great and one looking less than great.

The Mani System with six polishes breaks down to only \$2 per mani. I mean, y'all, I used to spend more than \$35 just to get one gel manicure. And the Olive & June polish is amazing. I love the variety of color options, a shade for every mood. The Polish especially with their signature top coat is so shiny, it looks just like gel. And it does not chip, you guys. It lasts a week. I know. That never happened.

Like y'all in the office have been taking turns, taking our kit home and are coming back with gorgeous long-lasting, did it themselves nails. The Olive in June Mani System is the secret behind salon-perfect nails at home. All in one, no guessing, no messy nails, no salon price tag.

And as one of my friends you can get 20% off your first Mani System at oliveandjune.com with my code THATSOUNDSFUN. Your new nail life is here. Get 20% off your first Mani System when you use the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN at OliveandJune.com. We are done with expensive bad manicures. Okay? This is the newest, you guys.

And now back to our conversation with Mac.

[00:38:23] <music>

Annie: My October tour got postponed because of a lot of COVID problems. You are getting to tour this fall. So let me live vicariously through you.

Mac: So far.

Annie: Right, right. As of today, as of today. I hate to tell you how quickly that decision can change. It was about 28 minutes from ordering things for the bus on Amazon and the whole thing being postponed. It was awful but you're going out with Steven Curtis Chapman this fall? Is that the plan?

Mac: That's correct.

Annie: And then Christmas with KLove?

Mac: Yeah, KLove, Christmas tour with Casting Crowns and Kane and Dante Bowe and Jordan St. Cyr.

Annie: Oh my gosh. That's so fun.

Annie: How many shows are you and Steven Curtis doing?

Mac: I think it's close to 20 shows. Something like that.

Annie: Okay. Now tell me. When you're as seasoned as the two of you are in touring-

Mac: Ah, that's a great way to put it. Seasoned in my beard.

Annie: When you're so seasoned, do y'all share a bus? Do y'all have your own buses? Do y'all fly everywhere? How's it different when you've been doing it for 30 years?

Mac: Well, it's always different. But with this tour we'll share a bus. The last tour we did together we had a bus but I drove a lot of it. The tour before that that we did together was right at the first time anybody can even try to. We were doing drive-in theater tours and everybody was driving separate to stay away from each other.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Mac: Which was so dumb because we get on stage and go wrap our arms around each other and yet they wouldn't allow us to get any of us down but that's where we were.

Annie: Right.

Mac: Even to this day, you know, I'm not afraid to tell you, I'm 48. I'll be 49 in December and I've known these guys, Michael and Steven, for 20 plus years. And I still, even to this day, even though we're close brothers and we've shared a lot of miles and a lot of heart with each other on those buses and stuff, I still to this day go, "There's Steven Curtis Chapman!" And I feel like this little kid that was at a concert and Steve said, "Hey, kid, come on up. I want you to sing this song with me." And I went up and I never left. That's who I am.

Annie: How did those shows work? Are y'all both on stage the whole time?

Mac: Not on this tour. The last one, me, Michael and Steven were all on stage the whole time together, playing on each other's songs and singing each other's songs. This one's a little bit more I am on stage with Steven's song, but it's a little bit more like I come out and open up, and then he does his thing.

Annie: At this point in your life with as much touring as you've done with Third Day and as a country artists, all these tours, Christian artists, do you have favorite cities? Do

you have places where you're always like, "Man, every time we go to the city, it's like one of my favorites"? Do you have places you love?

Mac: I really don't. I don't because there are certain venues like you... I love playing the Fox in Atlanta. We'll be doing that on the Kaleb Christmas tour. I don't know what it's called now but in Dallas it's called Grand Prairie which is outside of Dallas. And you can't go wrong... Texas is very much like—you've done this before I'm sure—if people are from Fort Worth, you better not say Dallas.

Annie: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

Mac: Because it is not Dallas, it's Fort Worth.

Annie: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I made that statement.

Mac: And it's like you have to say specifically where you are. It's funny. I saw Paul McCartney here and he played at Gwinnett Arena, which is in Duluth. And he comes out, he says, "Hello Duluth." And everyone's like, "Duluth? It's Atlanta. Just say Atlanta."

Annie: Like, unless you're coming over to Cobb County, just call it Atlanta.

Mac: Right, right. That's a rabbit trail. What are we talking about?

Annie: We're talking about touring favorite cities. That's great. Because the other thing is, do you go out? Do you leave the venue?

Mac: I used to not. I grew up in a little town and it's like, before I moved here, I was scared to death of moving to Atlanta. Before I was about to start officially driving and turned 16, I was like, "I'm not driving in Atlanta." So I was scared to death. And so I kind of always for years...

Like I remember with Third Day, we'd go on the road, we got to San Francisco and I'm going, "Nope, staying in a hotel." Everybody's out having a blast, it's a great city, eating at great restaurants and I'm walking down the street to McDonald's and getting back in my hotel room. But now a lot more. I'll get out a lot more.

Annie: Oh, yeah, you and Cash went and saw museums.

Mac: Yeah, yeah. I love going to art museums now. It's one of my favorite things to do. Peter Furler from the Newsboys started me on that. I love doing that.

Annie: Yeah, because that's going to be like 90 minutes or something. That's not hard to do. That didn't take away your whole day. You just get it with a runner and they drop you off at a museum and pick you back up.

Mac: It's so much fun. I love it. There's so many great art museums across the US. And I think of all those years I've traveled and it was going to the movies and that was it, you know, going back to the venues, I'm trying to do better about getting now.

Annie: Local coffee shops are my thing. Even though I just drink tea, I like seeing where the locals go. I'm at venue a lot. I like staying at the venue too because I have such a rhythm for my whole day. But by the mid-afternoon when the crew guys are done and everybody's got like 90-minute, two-hour window that they can do something, I'm like, "Let's go to a coffee shop and just see it." But art museum.

Mac: That's wise.

Annie: That would make me smarter. So you're probably right. I should adjust that for our future touring.

Mac: No, you're not really smart. You're just walking around doing this-

Annie: Just staring and tap in your face.

Mac: I get to do it and you've got some listeners who have no idea. I'm just like you just put your chin in your hand and stare off into the-

Annie: Okay, speaking of Cash, three of your kids are college age.

Mac: Yes.

Annie: And the younger two are Middle School?

Mac: Yes. They're seventh and sixth grade. And my three oldest are going... So Scout, Cash, Camie are the ones that you know, all go to Liberty now.

Annie: Yeah. That's kind of fun, they're all there together.

Mac: Yeah. Which you spoke there not too long ago, and Scott was freaking out that you got to be there.

Annie: It was really fun. I think she brought Cash around. I saw Cash and Scout. But it was before Camie got there. It was last spring, so...

Mac: In the spring, right.

Annie: I mean, three college-age kids. Can you believe that? Does that feel strange?

Mac: It's very strange and yet at the same time, it's very cool. The little ones were in fall break last week and so we drove up to Virginia and got to... you know, they still had schools, the big kids, but we had lunch with them and dinner and went and did a few things. I don't know, it's a really cool thing.

Annie: How do you maintain the relationship between the big kids and the little kids when the big kids are off at college? Do you all manage that? Or is that on to Scout and Cash and Camie to manage having relationship with all the younger ones?

Mac: The big kids are really good at calling them and then little ones want to call them. And then we see each other... Like Aimee said the other day... I had seen them. I'd gone and did a show and so they came out and saw it and then... Like I get to see them every once while traveling. But Aimee had told me the other day... She's like getting out of the car to run to Cash and give him a hug, I'm like, "Why are you freaking out?" She said, "I hadn't seen him in two months."

Annie: Oh wow.

Mac: And I'd never thought about that because I probably see him at least every couple of weeks or more. So they do a good job of kind of calling and FaceTime and stuff like that.

Annie: And the younger two, I mean, do you feel like you're just cycling back through like, "Oh, here we go to high school again. Here we go again."

Mac: Yeah, we started over. Once Camie, my middle, went to college this fall, we're like, Man, if we had not adopted those two, we would be like, "We can just go do whatever we want to do."

Annie: But the little two are so wonderful. So well done.

Mac: They are wonderful. Of course, I wouldn't change a thing. But you still think about and go, "Hmm,"

Annie: Yeah, of course. Of course.

Mac: That would be cool but life would not be the same without them. So I'm thankful.

Annie: The other fun part about our story is one of my sisters homeschooled all your kids, right?

Mac: Yeah, yeah. So she has such great stories about the little ones and how much she adores them.

Mac: I know.

Mac: She was so good to us. I think we actually kind of wore her out.

Annie: Have you employed all of us? Did my youngest sisters do anything?

Mac: No. No.

Annie: So two out of three. So you got two out of three.

Mac: No. She's the one that I know the least. She's probably the most sane of-

Annie: We do say she's the best of us. I mean, she's by far the best of us.

Mac: There you go.

Annie: Okay, Mac, is there anything we didn't say about the album that you want to make sure we say?

Mac: It comes out October 15.

Annie: Same day as the episode.

Mac: Okay, there you go.

Annie: Dropping the same day. Happy album release day.

Mac: Thank you very much. Thank you.

Annie: So people can get it anywhere albums are right now.

Mac: Yes.

Annie: People ask me all the time. They say, "What is the best way for us to support an artist?" Spotify? Apple? What is the best?

Mac: I don't know if there is the best. I would say, whatever you do to go stream or buy music. For the short term is best to buy the record to go to whatever but it also if you just kind of listen to it a lot and stream it, go tell your friends. That's the best way. Just go tell your friends about it, tell everybody to listen to it once. And if you tell everybody to listen to it one time that you know and that spreads, that's so much better than buying a record now. I'm not saying don't buy the record. That'd be great too.

Annie: When you're listening this weekend, take a screenshot of your phone as you're listening, put it on your Insta story, tell your friends.

Mac: Absolutely.

Annie: Exactly right. I say that a lot to people, Mac. I just said to a girl that works with us. She was like, "Can I buy a copy of your kid's book?" And I was like, "No, you work here, for starters." And I said, "The better thing you can do is let me sign this one for your kid and post it on Instagram." Because you're going to reach people I can't reach that are looking for this." And so our friends listening in are going to reach people you and I can't reach about *New Creation*.

Mac: I very much appreciate all of them. Thank you, guys, for what you're going to do to get the word out.

Annie: That's right. Listen, they are a rabid group. They will be about it. Okay, the last question we always ask, Mac, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

Mac: Doing a podcast.

Annie: Well, well done. Are you going to start your own any day?

Mac: You know, I had one for a little while. It was entertainment podcast with a local radio guy here in Atlanta. And I loved doing it. And I loved it because it had nothing to do with Christian music.

Annie: I was going to say I didn't know this at all. What did you talk about? What do you mean? Entertainment? Like movies?

Mac: Yeah, we talked about movies and TV and all kinds of stuff, music, sports. I loved it but it was so much more work than I wanted it to be. So that sounds fun would be... I don't know. I don't know. There's a lot of stuff that I... I don't know. Give me some answers that other people have told you.

Annie: Oh, man, I mean it's every kind of thing sounds fun to people. From going on a trip to... someone said they want to go to whitewater the waterpark in Atlanta. People were like, "That sounds fun to me going to White Water." I was like, "I would meet you there in a heartbeat. I went there every day of eighth grade summer, so..."

Mac: And then you became an adult and... I'm not going to say anything like it.

Annie: It's gross. I mean, we wish everyone well.

Mac: I didn't say that.

Annie: I mean, people say all sorts of stuff.

Mac: I will say this, and this is off subject, I'm writing a book with a friend right now. I swore I would never write a book.

Annie: I know you said you're never going to write a book.

Mac: Yeah. Because it's like even when people like yourself and friends send me a note and say, "Hey, will you write two or three sentences about this book, a recommendation?" It takes me 30 minutes to write three lines about somebody's book. And it's like, "I will never write a book if it takes me 30 minutes to write three lines."

But I'm writing a book with a friend about famous artists, painters, and their spiritual lives and how being brought up in the church kind of affected them. Andy Warhol is one example. People would be surprised. Andy Warhol went to mass every Sunday.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Mac: And then people like Van Gogh. Van Gogh wanted to be... he was a missionary. He went to seminary. He wanted to be a pastor. I think people will be surprised by that. So we tell some of those stories in the book.

Annie: How long till that comes out? Do you have any idea?

Mac: My hope is it'll be... I've been working on for five years, and it's like coffee table small book. I know. It's my fault. I've got a busy day job.

Annie: That's right.

Mac: Hopefully next year.

Annie: And a lot of kids.

Mac: Yeah, I just got a call from the guy that I'm writing with and we're almost finished with the very last chapter. So of course.

Annie: Okay, great. Will y'all come back on when it comes out?

Mac: Absolutely, please.

Annie: That'd be so fun. Thank you for making time to do this. I love you and your family. It feels like a real honor to get to do this today. So thank you.

Mac: Annie Downs, once again I'm so proud of you. I'm just very, very pleased with how things are working out in your life and you following your dreams. So inspired by you. And thank you for what you do and what you'll continue to do. And I find it just such an honor to be called your friend.

Annie: Ain't that fun! We are really lucky. The Lord ties up everything.

Mac: Absolutely.

Annie: He loops up everything. It is so fun. I'm so grateful.

[00:51:55] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, don't just love him? Me too. Me too. Gosh, I'm so thankful for him and his voice in my life and his voice and our ears as we now get to hear his new album that is out today, *New Creation*. Make sure you're following Mack on

Instagram, tell him thanks for being on the show, how much his work has mattered to you. And make sure you grab that album.

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. I will do the same. And today what sounds fun to me, oh man, after Mac and I talking so much about football, I think watching Georgia play football sounds really fun to me. We get to do that this weekend.

Have a great weekend. And we'll see you back here on Monday with, you guys, a really special episode celebrating the release of my new kid's book, *What Sounds Fun to You?* You're going to love this episode. It might just contain a lot of MiniBFFs. It's the most fun. You're going to love it. We'll see you guys then. Have a great weekend.

[00:53:03] <music>