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**Annie:** Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your Host Annie F. Downs. It's a really special week here at That Sounds Fun. We have got a great show in store.

But before we jump into today's conversation, I want to take a moment and tell you about one of our amazing partners, [BetterHelp Online Therapy](#). It's not uncommon in our communication at work for there to be a message from any one of our team members saying something along the lines of "I've got counseling this morning, and then I'll be in the office." That's just how much a normal part of our rhythms it is for our staff to go to therapy.

Just like working out and eating lunch and going to church, these are all things that help keep us healthy as whole people. And BetterHelp is an awesome resource for anyone interested in connecting with a therapist.

BetterHelp is customized online therapy that offers video, phone, and even live chat sessions with your therapist. So you don't have to see anyone on camera if you don't want to. It's much more affordable than in-person therapy. And you can start communicating with your therapist in under 48 hours. Why invest in everything else and not your mind?

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We are less than a week away from the That Sounds Fun live stream. Yes, I'm so excited. No, Eddie and I haven't decided if we're wearing gala-level attire. And yes, there's a VIP experience that includes a Q&A with me before the show when you sponsor a child with Compassion. No, I can't think of a single reason why you wouldn't buy your ticket yet. Go to [compassionlive.com](https://compassionlive.com). That's where all the details are. And be sure to give that a visit today and grab your ticket.

**Intro:** This week on the show. I'm passing the microphone over to my good buddy, Pastor Mike Kelsey. Y'all know him. He's been on the show. He and his wife Ashley were a part of our live events in June. And he hosted the show before in 2020.

He's a trusted voice in leading and teaching me about the gospel and friendship and marriage and racial justice and how that looks. And I have loved how much I've

learned and grown from hearing conversations between Mike and his friends without me in the room or on a microphone.

And so I called Mike, and I was like, "Can we please hire you to do another week of shows?" And he said yes very kindly, and has gathered these friends of his and organized these shows for this week. It has been so fun to hear back from y'all about how y'all love the Jason Reynolds episode from Monday.

And today Mike talks with Mika and Christina Edmondson. They lead an amazing multicultural church here in Nashville, and she works in mental health and higher education. They are brilliant, wise, bold. I'm just so grateful to get to listen in on these three.

And just a reminder, I am not on the show. You will just hear Mike hosting with the guests every day this week. And it makes for such an awesome conversation to hear these friends together. So here is Pastor Mike Kelsey, Dr. Christina Edmondson, and the Rev. Dr. Mika Edmonson.

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**Mike:** All right, well, it is great to be back on the podcast and I am genuinely excited. I got two people on that I low-key stalk, for real, if we're honest. I got Mika and Christina Edmondson on. Y'all are some accomplished people. We won't get into all y'all's bio. People can go look at y'all's bio. But thank you all for being on with me today.

**Mika:** Yeah, thanks so much for having us.

**Christina:** Yeah. Thank you, Mike. It is great to meet you today

**Mike:** First of all, y'all love school. Y'all got a whole bunch of degrees.

**Mika:** You're right about that, my brother.

**Mike:** And we're going to get into some of the work that y'all have done and writing and speaking and leading and podcast hosting, and all kinds of stuff. But y'all are married. So the first thing is, because I don't know this, and I'm assuming a lot of listeners today don't know this, how did y'all meet?

**Christina:** You want to start, Mika, or do you want me to start? What do you want to do?

**Mike:** Every time you ask that question to America, that is how I always go. That awkward pause, like, which version of the story are we going to tell?

**Christina:** Your vantage point or my vantage point?

**Mika:** I tell you what, I'll give the story. She will clean it up.

**Christina:** I like that. Go ahead. Go ahead.

**Mika:** She'll clean it up. So we met at Hampton University, which is a historically black college in Virginia. We actually met freshman year. It was interesting. So, first week of freshman year, I was in the barbershop kind of getting a fresh cut, and there was a guy that was in that barbershop. And at the time when I was there, he seemed super old. But as I think back on it, he was probably like 42.

**Mike:** That's us now.

**Mika:** You're right.

**Christina:** So they're young men. Very vibrant young men.

**Mika:** Yeah, vibrant young man.

**Christina:** 42 is vibrant.

**Mika:** And so it was just he and I in the shop. And he was getting his haircut, and he looked at me, and he could tell I was a freshman, and he was just kind of striking up conversation and asked me a little bit about myself. And then he started to kind of just drop some wisdom on me.

He was like, "Hey, man, make sure you don't take this time for granted at Hampton universities. These are going to be some of the best years of your life." And then he looked at me, he said, "You know, you're going to meet your wife at this school." And I was like, "What?" I'm like, "Ah."

I was too immature to appreciate that because it was my first semester at Hampton University. The thing about Hampton, that one of the things that sort of attracted me before... so I came to faith my junior year of college. So I was not thinking that all in a kingdom-type way. But I was like, it's like three women to every man. I'm like, "Come on, man. What are you saying?"

**Mike:** That's why I didn't go to Hampton. I got accepted to Hampton, I was like, "It's not going to be good."

**Mika:** Too was temptation. So I was like, "Hey, man, don't put this on me." So check this out. Like two weeks later, I walk into the cafeteria of Virginia Cleveland Hall with a couple of my dorm mates. And as we walk in, there's probably 150 students in there or more, so it's a big crowd of students. And I kind of look out on this crowd, and my eye lands on Christina. She was with a friend.

And there was a kind of intuition, a kind of almost like an internal voice. And I don't get these often. And it was like, "There she is. That's your wife."

**Mike:** That's it.

**Mika:** And I was like trying to shrug that off. Like, "Ah, no, this guy put this thing on me and now..." And what ended up happening was I hung back, I was with my dorm mates, and I'm like, "I'm going to sit where they sit." And so they walk around, we get a little tray, we go get our food, go to the little salad bar. And then I'm following them, and who did they happen to sit next to out of all the 200 people in there? They sat-

**Mike:** The providence of God.

**Mika:** The Providence. So we strike up a conversation, we get to know each other, sort of our friendship network. And we kind of saw each other and we would hang out here in there just as a group. I was a physics major in undergrad, and so I kind of helped tutor her in physics, and we developed a friendship. And then the Lord worked it in such a way that that friendship sort of blossomed into romance. And we ended up dating throughout college and we got married a week after graduation.

**Mike:** Oh, wow. Okay. All right. Is that so? Fact-check.

**Mika:** Clean it up.

**Mike:** Is this the official verified version?

**Christina:** Listen, I cannot account for the internal voice or any of those parts of the story. I will say that I do remember very clearly meeting Mika in the big cafe and just enjoying him. I just thought he was...

I grew up in Baltimore, and I grew up in a chocolate city of black city. I did not have a lot of understanding of Nashville. That's where he was born and raised. I completely thought that everyone in Nashville certainly was white, and had cowboy hats. I've lived in Nashville for a number of years on and off and you hardly see anybody with a cowboy hat, unless they're a tourist in downtown Nashville. But that's what I was expecting.

So I just found that interesting that this was a black guy from Nashville. And I just enjoyed his personality. He's really, really smart. Mika has a background in physics. But also just winsome and funny and kind, and quirky.

**Mike:** Y'all can't see Mika right now. He's like, "This is true. That's true."

**Christina:** This is true. And these are good qualities to be. Yeah, the quiriness of him. That's better than being slick.

**Mike:** Right, right. Exactly. Exactly.

**Christina:** Better than being slick. Better than being slick.

**Mike:** Shout out to all the quirky dudes.

**Christina:** People want to know quirky men. Hold on.

**Mika:** Right.

**Christina:** So I think most of that story is true. And I think, yeah, we've always seen kind of our vocation and calling and connection working together. And we've had different moments in times throughout our professional life and ministry life where we work together, but certainly, we try to support each other even if we're in different places or different directions.

**Mike:** That's awesome. I love it. I love those stories. And I love just hearing more about how y'all came together. Y'all have been able to do... Like I said, I've been following your work for a long time. Y'all do a lot of work together, and we'll talk about that a little bit, just the church that you are now leading there in Nashville. But you also do a ton of work on your own, just separately. We're just going to dive right into the deep end of the pool. This is what the people are here for.

Christina, you and Chad Brennan have a book coming out next year with InterVarsity Press called *Faithful Antiracism*. And the subtitle is *Moving Past Talk*

*to Systemic Change*. Now, let me say, the purpose kind of for this episode is really, we want to help people answer the question. Because a lot of people ask this, how do I grow my understanding of race and racism even when there isn't a national headline? When there's not a whole bunch of noise, how do I continue personally to make progress and to grow, and to contribute to change?

And so when I saw the title of your book, Christina, I just thought it was perfect. But I didn't want to say, y'all decided to push all the buttons just from the title. Do you know what I'm saying? Y'all didn't even want to wait for people to open the book. I mean, the words "antiracism," right? People will go nuts. The worst "systemic." And so what are you trying to accomplish in the book? Other than just get everybody upset, what are you trying to accomplish in the book?

**Christina:** What's funny about that is that I don't think that my colleague and friend Chad Brennan, I don't think either one of us are enlivened by like, "Let's make the people upset." I feel like my background in psychology I can get to maybe a core issue that somebody has, and if I wanted to... we could pick that. I actually think that that's not what we're called to do. I think we are to be truthful and gentleness is on the agenda of truthfulness.

And so one of the reasons why the words are there is because we think that a part of being kind is being clear and being honest. And I do think that for some people who enter into conversations about culture, about diversity, but really what they ought to be talking about is racism, we don't name the thing fast enough.

And again, as somebody with a background in intercultural development, absolutely, sometimes we are talking about culture, broadly speaking, but we really wanted to talk about racism. So we were like, "We're going to say that." And the book is for who the book is for. I think we have to be honest about the entry point that we're inviting people to.

If someone looks at that title and the word "antiracism," they have already been shaped in such a way that the phrase antiracism is beyond what they can't even sit with. It just rattles them so much. It has what I would call—this is my bias—kind of manipulated associations that are negative. So you can't... this is not good. Then this isn't the entry book for them anyway.

I think that title is being fair to them saying that "there's something else for you." And I know loving, kind, and brilliant colleagues and practitioners who are creating books and materials to meet people wherever they are. This is for the people who, for the most part, they don't understand all the ins and outs are people who are like,

"Yeah, racism is a thing. I may not understand all the dynamics of it but I know it's a thing. And I also know that there is a way to pursue it that honors God." That's the faithful antiracism. "And I want to understand it more and I want to do something about it. I want to go past kind of theory and rhetoric into what does it look like to actually build something or to take something apart as motivated by my faith and filled and formed by Scripture and the power of the Holy Spirit. That's who the book is for.

And so if it makes people upset, it may not be for you. Although I would still say, give it a go. Pray and ask the Lord, "What is that about?" What's happening there for you that's causing you to already be defensive to a book in which you haven't even read a page?"

**Mike:** Because the reality is some people will be defensive. I was reading the book description. So it starts like this. And, Mika, I'd love to get your thoughts on this, too. Here's how the book description starts. "It's time to move past talk. It's no longer news to most of us that our society has a deep seated racism problem."

So let me push back on that a little bit. Because some people are going to disagree. They're going to say, "Well, we got the Civil Rights Act. We got equal protection under the law. We got affirmative action. We got multimillionaire athletes and entertainers and entrepreneurs. We had a black president." So why do y'all think we have a deep-seated racism problem?

**Christina:** So I think there's some different ways. I'd love to hear what Mika has to say. I think that most people in this country's context believe that there is disparity. Now, how they account for disparity, well, that's... now we can have a conversation, right?

So they can account for the disparities that they see in which one group seems to have more access than another, one group seems to have higher rates of certain forms of prosecution at sentencing, shorter lifespans, all of these things, right?

Even someone who's like, "I don't know what y'all talking about," I think they would probably still admit that there are differences amongst groups. Not individual people, but groups in the United States presently, but certainly historically.

I think that also people who are Christians, I think would also admit that sin has a very long arm. Even if they don't want to reckon with it, I think will admit that as people who hold to a kind of an old-school orthodox interpretation of the beginning

of Genesis, that the sin that is represented in that text that enters into our reality is still manifesting today.

Christians believe that the sins of the past impact today. Now, they may act like, "We don't have racism," but that's one of the sins that still impacts today.

So I think that most people, even if they don't have all the language, the in-group and out-group language of it, I think, realize that there are differences between access and opportunity and thriving among groups.

Now, how they make sense of it. It could be that they think, oh, well, some cultures are just more deficient than others. And we would talk about the roots of that and the ideology that's there. Where does that even come from? Because that also has a starting point in the American narrative for us, too. So that's why I feel like we can come out and we can start with that statement.

And for people who would push back, I would begin to talk to them about that and ask them, when did racism end in the United States?

**Mike:** Hmm.

**Mika:** I mean, that's an amazing answer. I think that I was just coming from a theological standpoint. I would just ask, from a theological and ecclesial standpoint, that's how we talk about God and how we live together as God's people within the context of a covenant community. You know, we're called to bear one another's burdens and we're called to weep with those who weep.

And so we have a unique opportunity as the people of God to actually hear some voices that society says that we might not otherwise be able to hear because we have this connection in Christ, we have this calling. We have a calling, a unique calling within the context of the covenant community to actually bear one another's burdens.

Although our societal contract, our kind of worldly association with one another, outside of the context of the church, might not necessarily call us to that. They might not necessarily call us to the common good that includes everybody. But within the church, within the context of the church, we have a unique calling and a unique kind of obligation to love one another as Christ has loved us, to bear one another's burdens, to weep with one another, to put one another's interest before our own.



And what that does is it calls us to really listen to one another's experiences. And so as you have brothers and sisters, as we have brothers and sisters that sort of bear witness to the unequal outcomes that they have, the disparities that we see around us, that should be enough for us to ask the question, you know, what has led to that disparity? Why does my brother or sister has such a different experience than I do?

Again, as Christina has mentioned, people have various sort of working assumptions about why that is. And they may not say those outright. But they may have those assumptions. That's the area where we need to sort of interrogate, and use that theology there, too.

**Mike:** Sometimes people won't say it out loud, but sometimes they will.

**Mika:** Sometimes they will.

**Mike:** A lot of times people will say: nobody is saying that black people are inferior, or black culture is inferior. But I had a friend who's legit, a good friend. Not a white friend. He's Latino guy. And I'll never forget I was having a conversation—this was several years ago—and he was talking about his family's kind of story of immigration and coming here and picking ourselves up by the bootstraps and where they are today. And I'll never forget him saying... I remember where I was on the phone when he said this. He says, "I just don't understand what's wrong with your people." This is literally what he said.

And I threw the question back to him, and I said, "What do you think is wrong with my people?" And there was a pause. And I think that might have been the first time he was consciously aware, you know what I mean, of what he just said out loud, which is something that was kind of the assumptions, like you talked about, that were at work. And several years later, I remember him texting me and just saying, "Hey, man, I get it now." You know what I mean?

So there is debate, legitimate debate about the source and the scope of the disparity. But I love what you said, Christina, even about the title of your book. If even the notion of a disparity being attributed in any way to any percentage of racism causes you to immediately shut down or cause you to immediately stiff-arm the conversation, then I do think that's something to interrogate and to think about. I think that's helpful.

Now, Michael, you talked about just our love for one another, especially in the context of the church. Because you guys are talking about this broader context and this broader, to be honest kind of conflict that we're in as a country right now over

these issues. And then you decide to start a church in Nashville, as Christina said, the land of cowboy hats and cowboy boots. You decide-

**Christina:** Only downtown.

**Mika:** Only downtown.

**Mike:** Only downtown.

**Mika:** We're not downtown.

**Mike:** Y'all decide to start a church in Nashville. So tell us a little bit about the church that y'all have started. Y'all have been going for like a year now. Right?

**Mika:** That's exactly right. Thanks for asking about that. The church that we're part of is called Koinonia. It's the fourth site of Christ Presbyterian Church, which is a multi-site church that has been in Nashville for about 40 years. And we are the fourth sight out to celebrate our first year anniversary.

What that means is that we got going in the midst of the pandemic. But it was also in the midst of the lead up to the last presidential election, it was in the wake of the George Floyd murder. So there was a lot of conversation, consideration, introspection around cultural and racial polarization and political polarization in our country.

And we thought that it was an amazing opportunity to actually launch a cross-cultural church during that time to show that Jesus actually has something to say to this cultural moment. He has something to say to the injustice and the suffering that we see all around us. And that he's created the church as a refuge and a safe place to be able to receive healing and also began to process those issues together.

And I thought Nashville is one of the fastest-growing cities in the country right now, increasingly kind of cosmopolitan type place. And so this was a really a perfect city to be doing this. And we had the opportunity to come in a community called Bordeaux, which is in Northwest Nashville, which has been a historically African American community. It's about 83% black, but there have been black folks in Bordeaux since the 1700s.

**Mike:** Wow.

**Mika:** Yeah. Nashville is home to three HBCUs historically black colleges. We've got Meharry Medical College, we've got Fisk, and we've also got Tennessee State University. And a lot of the faculty and staff from those institutions have lived in Bordeaux. So Bordeaux is home to a lot of black businesses, a lot of sort of black intellectuals. But it's a very diverse community socio-economically. But it is about 83% black.

We thought that was a perfect place to come as a Presbyterian Church in the Presbyterian Church in America. The denomination is overwhelmingly white, but we thought if we're going to be planting a church in the PCEA, what better place to go to try to be accessible to diverse people than a place like Bordeaux?

**Mike:** That raises a lot of questions, but one that comes to my mind. So I watched one of the live streams of one of y'all's worship services. There was a black woman. She was singing. She sounds like she was from the UK somewhere. I don't know if that's true. But she's singing. There was an older Asian man who was saying. He had like a cul de sac, like bald with gray around it. It was a white dude playing keys.

And you mentioned your church is a part of a predominantly white denomination. Why have y'all chosen to stay in a multi-ethnic church? Why have you chosen to continue to work toward a cross-cultural church environment and to do it in the context of a predominantly white denomination?

**Mika:** That's a great question. I'm sure my wife is eager to hear what I'm going to say now.

**Christina:** Well, yeah.

**Mike:** She's like, "Why? Why Mika?"

**Christina:** We may have different answers. We may have different answers because we both have different vocational identities. So we might have a slightly different way to understand this. Go for it, Mika.

**Mika:** I don't think they'll be contradictory answers, they just might be hitting on different things. They'll be certainly complementary answers.

So here's the thing. As I talk about the name of the church is Koinonia, I often will lift up the book of Philemon, which is a New Testament epistle. And Philemon tells a story of this escaped slave named Onesimus who escaped from a household of enslaved him in the ancient city of Colossi. And he makes it about 1300 miles away

to the city of Rome, where he meets the apostle Paul. He hears the gospel, comes to faith in Christ. He sort of attends to the Apostle Paul and kind of assist him while he's imprisoned.

And at some point, the apostle Paul decides to send Onesimus back to the household that had enslaved him. And as I think about that, I think about what that must have been like for Onesimus. So slavery in ancient Rome was actually the backbone of the Roman economy, and very much helped to define the Roman caste system.

So, it wasn't like slavery was this kind of marginal kind of institution that they kind of had on the side. This was at the heart of the Roman economy. So an escaped slave, a person who escaped could be tortured, they could be killed, they could be crucified. It was very dangerous prospect to go back to the household that enslaved you.

So Onesimus, in going back to Philemon's household, was taking a huge risk. It took a lot of faith for this person to do this. And it was a huge risk for the Apostle Paul to send Onesimus back.

**Mike:** Right.

**Mika:** But he does it. And he puts his letter in his hand, what we know now as the epistle to Philemon. And in this letter, Paul makes this appeal to not just Philemon the slaveholder, but to the whole household that were Christians. Basically he appeals to this reality called Koinonia. And Koinonia is this redemptive connection that creates common ground and common cause.

And basically what he tells Philemon is that Koinonia has made and should make Onesimus be received back, not as a slave, but as a beloved brother. And I think it's really interesting that what Paul does is he sort of... in our theological imagination, we sort of think that that sort of mixing categories. He has a social category slave and a spiritual category brother. Right?

And what he's telling these folks is that because this person is now a brother in Christ, because this person is now a co-heir in Christ, he can no longer have this social relationship with you. His social relationship has to change. The disparities between you all can no longer exist. You have to accept him as a beloved brother.

**Mike:** Which was a big risk. Because I'm going to be honest, if I got that letter from Paul, I'm going to take the letter, but I'm going to end up in Antioch or somewhere else. But I'm not going back there.

**Mika:** Right. Somewhere between 1,300 miles or 200, I don't know. "I got lost, Paul."

**Mike:** I'm going to turn off my GPS.

**Mika:** Right, right, right.

**Mike:** You're not finding me.

**Mika:** You're not going to find me. And that gets into the issue of why Paul would have sent Onesimus back to Philemon rather than to another church full of escaped slaves or full of enslaved or, you know, people like Onesimus. Why would he send him back to the household that enslaved him?

I mean, why that household in particular? There are other Christian churches around and there were other households. But I believe that the answer is because there is some unique glory that comes to Christ as Onesimus and Philemon come together in the same church. There's a certain kind of thing that pushes back against.

So if Onesimus had been in the same church with other Onesimuses, the Roman Empire wouldn't have blinked. I mean, that's what Caesar would have expected. And if Philemon just stayed in the same churches with all Philemons, no one would have blinked.

But for a slaveholder to now receive a former slave as a brother, to now find themselves submitting to their slave's authority in certain contexts, you know, to now have the gospel and the redemptive reality of Christ actually erase that social relationship and erase those disparities.

Now, that is a threat to the Roman world. That's something that the Romans had to pay attention to. Because what that does is it undermines the social caste system. It actually is a witness against the sinful disparities that were all around the Roman world.

[00:32:25] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about one of our incredible partners, [She Reads Truth](#). I know, y'all love them. We love them and we are smack in the middle of the fall season, but it is never too early for me to share something that I believe has the potential to make this Christmas season the best one you've ever had.

You know how important my faith is to me, which is why I wholeheartedly recommend She Reads Truth Bible study books. Not only are they beautiful, they're full of Scripture. They also include some helpful extras to make understanding the Bible a little easier and some simple crafts and easy recipes to sprinkle in a little fun.

This season, prepare your hearts for Christmas day in a fresh way by reading with the She Reads Truth community for their tenth Advent Bible study. 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. If you've never participated in a Bible study with She Reads Truth, this is the perfect year to do it. Don't let the noise of the Christmas season cause you to lose sight of what Advent is really about — the coming of our Savior.

If you want to ensure that Christ is the focus of your holiday season this year, I want you to head to [shopshereadstruth.com](http://shopshereadstruth.com) right now and get your study book. They sell out every year, you guys. So do not wait. And you can use the code ADVENTANNIE at checkout for 15% off your Advent order. They've created resources for the whole family that I know you're going to love. So head to [shopshereadstruth.com](http://shopshereadstruth.com) right now, and remember the code is ADVENTANNIE, altogether, one word for 15% off your advent order.

And now back to our conversation between Mike and Mika and Christina.

**[00:34:13]** <music>

**Mike:** So you think in your mind—I'm curious what Christina has to say from her vantage point—that's the heart of what you want to see kind of God do and reveal they're in Nashville? Like that kind of church community that challenges or breaks down some of those barriers and disparities?

**Mika:** Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, you think about the *I Have a Dream* speech. So Dr. King kind of sets his vision sort of before America of the sons and daughters of former slaves coming together with the sons and daughters of former slave masters at the table of brotherhood. This community in which it's not just sort of unification, but it is the equity and justice, where folks are actually coming together on common ground no longer as a slave but as a beloved brother.

And it's the erasure of the disparity that is really the witness against the simple social caste system all around us. And so I think that that's the kind of thing that is a real witness in our particular social moment. Right.

**Mike:** So you think it's still worth it?

**Mika:** Oh, yeah, I think it's still worth it. And I would say this. I would say that is not for everybody all the time. I think ultimately the kingdom of God is a cross-cultural kingdom. I think ultimately the Lord has a way of bringing people together from every tribe, nation, and tongue.

I think even on the day of Pentecost, even amongst the Jewish people, they're speaking all these different languages and the church that 3,000 come to faith is a cross-cultural, multi-lingual church that the Lord assembles even right there in Jerusalem amongst His people before... So that's a sort of precursor kind of preview of coming attractions of what will happen amongst the nations and the Lord turning back what happened at the Tower of Babel at the day of Pentecost.

And so I think that part of what the kingdom is about, part of what was on God's agenda is actually destroying the works of the devil. Part of that being the sinful disparities and divisions at work in the world. And doing in the kingdom of Christ what has not been able to be achieved in the kingdoms of this world.

That it sought to do that. Because many ancient leaders have sought to do that. Pharaoh sought to get the world beneath his banner. Nebuchadnezzar tried to get the world beneath his banner. You know, you've had all these kingdoms se... You had Caesar, you've had even Hitler tried to do...

You know, you have these world leaders that tried to sort of get world domination. They tried to get every people group assembled beneath their common ideology, their common banner. And none of them have been able to do it. Only one. And that King is King Jesus.

And so I think part of what God is doing is He wants the world to see Him do for His Son what no other king has been able to achieve.

**Mike:** And a lot of people, a lot of black people in particular, give it up on this whole effort, at least here on Earth. And Christina, what are you thinking?

**Christina:** As Mika was opening up that particular book, I was thinking about what it means to be received now as a beloved brother. That's a term of equity. And I think one of the reasons why, amongst many, including racial trauma, spiritual abuse, there's all kinds of good, legit reasons why people are like, "No, thank you." But that beloved brother to be received that way, that's not a throwaway phrase. That's a position of equity. And I think that's a multi-ethnic church distinction that just has to be made.

And I think when people are often talking about multi-ethnic or really multiracial churches in the American context, they are not contending with equity. They're talking about diversity. And then sometimes that you're very good at being honest about that, and really measuring it either. But they're certainly not talking about equity.

Equity acknowledges that there is power, an all power. All power ultimately has to give an account to God. And so the power that is used in the church by leaders and people in the pews and people who write their letters in secret, you know, all kinds of church people, okay, they have to give an account for how we use it and we didn't use it. And that beloved brother is about making sure that power, power is properly distributed and honored.

That's the difference between one who was once enslaved and in bondage in this system, and one now who has to be received not just as a brother, but a beloved brother, a beloved brother who receives deference, who is given due respect.

And I wouldn't even make the case, as Mika was laying that text out so beautifully. I would add that another reason if I was to use my, you know, Holy Ghost inspired imagination that he went back, is because there was some things that were due to him. There were some things that were due to him in order for him to go from being the enslaved to the beloved brother.

What then does it mean for the one who was complicit or overtly engaged in a system of domination, who now has been changed by the power of the Holy Ghost, who has now been baptized as the body of Christ? What then does it mean for you, for us, and all of our privileges, or whatever it may look like for us at the individual level, what did it mean to now make right?



We have been saved, we've been set free to repent and to repair. And so when that person who I used to mistreat or I have been complicit in where they are in this system of stratification, I've been given rewards and benefits because of where they are in the system of stratification, now that I received them as a beloved sister or a beloved brother, what that have I empowered by the Holy Spirit to now give to them, to now offer them?

And so that return back home is not... this is not just a photo app. And this is not an opportunity for more racial trauma to say, "Go back to your abuser to be re-abused." It is an opportunity to say, "No, you're a beloved brother, which means you're an equal, you're an equal, and you have just as much access to all the gifts, all that the Holy Spirit is pouring out, and the way in which your voice is now represented in this local congregation."

Which is another issue that we find in many multiethnic churches is the distribution of power. And so when black people are like, "I'm done with that," oftentimes, what they're done with are churches that are a reinforcement of white dominance, even if there are a lot of people of color in it. That's ultimately what they're done with. They're done with not being protected. They're done with a lack of church discipline to protect and to care for them. I think that's really what they're walking away from.

And we cannot get to that scene of community and equity apart from discipline and apart from the distribution of power.

**Mika:** If I could-

**Mike:** Yeah.

**Mika:** ...I think they're dealing with the racial caste system. And when the church reinforces the racial caste system, it's an especially deep injury, right? Because the church represents Christ. So as Christina was just noting so well, I mean, what we're talking about here... So Paul, in that book of Philemon, the key theological term, the key word in that entire epistle is the word "Koinonia." And it is this communion that he appeals to.

But the word Koinonia also actually factors in the book of Acts. And so the early church, when they had devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, and to the breaking of bread, and to prayer, and to the fellowship, the word there's actually

Koinonia. It says they had all things in common. The word Koinonia figures there again as well.

And it actually talks about how this union that they had in Christ with one another actually created... it had tangible reality. It wasn't just an idea that was in their mind. It was that you have no connection in Christ apart from sharing your possessions with each other. This all just shows up in how you actually use your possessions to express this brotherhood that we have in Christ or sisterhood that we have in Christ, this communion that we have in Christ.

And so that's what Paul was actually calling for. He's calling for that household to love the fact that this person is a brother. I think "beloved brother" means not only do we kind of love him, but we love the fact that he is a brother. So like we're not begrudging about the fact that now we've got to treat him as an equal. And that's super important.

I think sometimes the resistance to the notion of antiracism is the fear of having to actually sort of give up something to somebody that we think might not deserve it.

**Mike:** Yeah, yeah. And I think there's people who are listening who probably have questions, as all of that lands, they're trying to sort through it all. But I know Annie has done a lot of work and has been committed to trying, one, for her to personally grow and continue in her understanding of these issues but also using her platform, you know, stewarding her platform in a way that helps bring awareness and change along these lines.

So a lot of people listening would say, "I'm with that?" You know what I mean? To the extent that I understand what that means, like I want to work towards that kind of not just unity, but that kind of equity that you all talk about. I want to play my role in that. But they say, but how do I grow in that when there's not the national headline?

And I want you guys to share some tips for people, because I think a lot of people who are listening would say, "I do feel a sense of urgency and motivation." Like, "I was broken over George Floyd murder. I was broken over as I heard about the history in our country related to racism and the ongoing effects of that. I have more understanding of that now than I did last year. But then when the headlines go away, I don't feel necessarily that same sense of urgency," or "the books aren't trending in the same way."

So how do I get access to resources? Where do I go? How do I grow when there's not the pressure of the constant national headlines? How would you coach somebody who wants to grow like that?

**Christina:** Do you want to take it?

**Mika:** Maybe we can just kind of go back and forth. It'll be antiphonal. I'll start on this side and you hit it back and I'll hit it back. I would say this. I mentioned I'm really big about the local church. I really feel like the local church is a unique resource for us. And part of that is I am a local church pastor.

The gospel is announced to Abraham beforehand as "In you shall all the nations be blessed." Right? So the church itself, God has envisioned it, designed it to be cross-cultural. He's intentionally done it that way. And he's announced the gospel in such a way that the gospel is a cross-cultural gospel.

It's a gospel that part of it, part of the essence of it, part of the essential components of it is that it does reach people from every tribe, nation, and tongue. If it didn't, it wouldn't be the gospel. Right? So that's part of the good news that the Lord announces, you know, For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

That's part of what He's doing through the Gospel. And so what He does is that He actually, as the Gospel goes forth and does its work, and actually unites different kinds of people, what that does is it causes us to rub shoulders with, to be united with people that have different experiences than we do, people who are in different places within the social order than we are. And it gives us access to their world in a way that other people outside the context of the church don't have access to. We have this calling, and we have this access in a way that other people don't.

So we are actually called to hang in there and listen to people where other people might not necessarily do that, if it's not in their economic interest, so their social interest. We're called to actually hang on in there. So I think that's actually a huge resource. And I think that will cause us to kind of keep at it even when the new cycle is on to something else.

**Mike:** Right. So you're saying being in a local church with people who are different from you and persevering in that, and listening, you're saying that the church itself is a resource in that growth?

**Mika:** That's a huge resource. I'll quickly just lift up this example and then I'll turn it over to Christina to volley it on back. There's a woman named Juliette Hampton Morgan. I often will lift up her example. She was the public librarian at Montgomery, Alabama in the 1940s.

And Juliette Hampton Morgan was a descendant of a Confederate General. She was a southern aristocracy type person. She grew up very much benefiting from the social order and from segregation benefiting socially from that. And so, Juliette Hampton Morgan was not the kind of person that you'd ever expect would be a champion for civil rights, because that wasn't her exposure, that wasn't her upbringing. That weren't part of her social imagination.

And what happened was Juliette Hampton Morgan was invited to an interracial women's prayer meeting in Montgomery, Alabama in the 1940s.

**Mike:** Wow.

**Mika:** And they had to meet in churches because it was illegal to have an interracial meeting in a public facility. So they had to meet in churches. And so she went there. And it was through these prayer meetings that she actually began to get a heart for the sufferings of her black sisters, and she began to become exposed to what they were going through in their lot in life. And she and she began to get a testimony kind of in her heart in her experience that she would have never otherwise gotten unless she got it in the church in this prayer meeting.

And what ended up happening was Juliette Hampton Morgan ended up writing a series of Op-Ed pieces that began to sort of call out the evils of segregation. And she would stage one-woman protests on the buses. When she saw an African-American mistreated by bus driver, she would stand up and pull the emergency cord. Now, this is in the 1940s. This is 15 years before the Montgomery bus boycott.

I only lifted that up to say that it was in this prayer meeting and it was through a better understanding of the gospel in the Lord's people, in the Lord's church, that she began to have her social imagination stretched beyond the bounds of her kind of social limitations, her historical moment.

We confess that in one of the articles of the Apostles Creed is that we believe in the Catholic Church. That catholic Church, little c catholic means universal. That the church is essentially comprised of different kinds of people. So I'll stop there.

[00:51:34] <music>

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And now back to our conversation between Mike and Christina, and Mika.

[00:54:22] <music>

**Mike:** Well, let me just add a note, and I want to hear what you say Christina because we got some people who are Christians who don't do church or maybe did church at some point and they're like, "I don't really want to deal with the church at all." If that's you, I hope folks are hearing that true gospel-driven churches are not environments that reinforce racism and oppression and inequity.

The Christianity itself, not just in the history, but at the very root of it, in the Gospel, in the theology of Christian teaching has the resources. In fact, it demands that we be a people, as we love our neighbor, who challenge those practices and values and systems and structures, right, that reinforce that kind of racism and oppression.

And so a lot of people are like, "No, this is the type of thing that makes me not want to go to church." And I hear you saying, No, actually, if you really find a good church, a solid church is going to be a community that helps you actually grow toward becoming a more just person. And I love that man. Christina, what would you add? What tip would you give somebody who wants to grow?

**Christina:** I think when you started the question, you were talking about this idea that there are people who got really inspired, aggrieved, or eventful after George Floyd's murder. And what does it mean to stay engaged even if there's not a headline? I just want to

spend some time, just a moment interrogating why that moment pull people in and other moments don't.

Most people in a racialized context America, I mean, it was built on an economic system based on chattel slavery, race-based chattel slavery. These are just the facts. The history of the wealth of the nation came because of free labor and an enforced breeding system of people as a product for generations, for hundreds of years. This is the roots. This is the economic roots of the nation.

And it demands an ideology, it demands even a theology, taking God's name in vain to keep in place that type of system. So what we are uprooting and exposing and talking about, it's got some long, long roots in the ground. So it takes work. It takes back-breaking work. It is hard. It is exhausting. And so I just want to say that out loud.

When people were, and by people, I think we're primarily talking about white folks, right? When white people learned about George Floyd's murder and maybe even witness pieces of it, they saw pieces of that excruciatingly painful over eight-minute video recording, I believe that what it did is that it forced people to go to a place in which, particularly white people, would never have found themselves.

Typically white people who are overtly the "I'm not racist white people." Not your minority population amongst whites like your clan members, people with real strong, got a racist vitriol, but like your everyday average white person and certainly white evangelical Christian person. That is the group that is least likely to see themselves as holding racial bias.

So what that did was it took an entire population of people who disproportionately believe that they are not racist, and it puts them in the front row of a lynching. A place that they would never put themselves. And they experienced all the pain and the sadness and the helplessness of what that moment demands. And it was ugly, and it was vicious, and it was unrelenting, and it was traumatizing for all people, but specifically, we're talking about white people and white Christians, it was traumatizing.

And in response to that, you had people who protested for the first time in their lives. They never protested racial injustice in their lives, and they were like, "I can't have this feeling anymore. I've got to move forward."

What I would say to them is, I don't want it to take that. I don't want it to have to be someone else's son or brother or father, for us to believe what the data I already

showed, what the testimony already said, what pages and pages of history attest to, what policies and laws and even Supreme Court ruling has affirmed.

I don't want it to have to take the blood literally crying out for us to stay engaged, for us to say, "Oh, Christina, yeah, I believe you. I think this thing is real." And so we have to kind of self-examine about what is it? Why did we need that? Why do we need that blood sacrifice in order to now believe what is already been well documented? And if we would just look a little bit we would see the evidence there.

So I just want to say that out loud. That's not to shame people but to really to shake people to say, let's hear each other so that we don't have to have some of the worst-case examples to believe each other moving forward.

And I would say on some practical next steps for people to be engaged. I invite my students to read history, primary sources. I know this is real old school. We learned it back in the day. You know, this is the teacher in me.

**Mike:** By primary source, what you're saying is Wikipedia is not... Is that not a primary source?

**Christina:** Listen, Mike, I can name all the things that I would tell people to stop listening to and stay away from. But I don't want to be a distraction to your podcast. I don't want to be a distraction. But they can probably feel it right now in their spirit what I'm about to say.

But yeah, primary sources. So why would you want to hear an interpretation of something when you can actually hear the person in their own voice describe something. If you got an opinion about Critical race theory, before you get up in arms, I suggest you read actual Critical race theorists who talk about themselves using that language.

Otherwise, it is absolutely true that we can slander people that we don't understand and who are unbelievers. And God does wholeness account for the slandering of people in disciplines that we don't understand. As people who are called to be salt and light and witnesses, we have to be careful about the name-calling that we propagate about people when we don't understand the ideas that they're bringing for it.

**Mike:** One of the commands is bearing false witness. You know what I mean?



**Christina:** Absolutely. And it's not just bearing false witness against the Christians that we like. We are called not to bear false witness against any and everybody, everybody made the image of God. And so we have to hold ourselves to account communally and individually about that.

And then I would say, you know, those firsthand primary sources, that means actually reading the Constitution. I remember hearing these debates about Confederate statues and people passionately, passionately saying, "Well, this is heritage. This is not a symbol of oppression."

And I would say, well, when was the statue erected? Oh, during the Civil Rights Movement. Let's unpack that. And have you read the actual words of this Confederate soldier as to why they were fighting? Well, no. Maybe you could.

And then as people begin to read people, Confederate soldiers would tell you exactly why they were fighting if we would actually read their words. But we have to examine why is it that we don't want to actually hear the truth? Why do we not want to hear? Why would we rather hear someone be talked about versus talking to them or hearing them in their first-hand information?

That is the invitation that I have for believers who were inspired around the issues of the painful death of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, and it goes on and on. I would invite them to primary sources and reading people in their own words and resisting listening to people interpret people first. Start with a primary source, and then, then you can consider different interpretations. I think that is only fair and respectful to people.

**Mike:** That's good. That's good. Anything else you would add to that, Mika?

**Mika:** Yeah. Again, just that I think what part of the issue right now that we have going on is that we all have our different news sources, like our sources of information and sources of authority. And part of the problem is that we're sort of siloed about what we're willing to even engage.

We're kind of like, "Look, I've got my couple of sources over here, my media sources, and those are the people that I believe. And they're going to kind of do the hard work for me." And it is true that we are limited in how much we can actually engage around things.

You're not going to be an expert in all the things. So you're going to have to depend on some experts to be able to know some things that you don't know, and you're

going to have to be able to submit to some information and some expertise that you don't have yourself. So we are not all able to be experts in everything. We're going to have to trust some folks.

So that's part of the issue is that we are kind of very much I've got my sources, they've got their sources; I got my data, they got their data; I got my studies, they got their studies-

**Mike:** That's so real. How do we cut through that though, man? Because we don't even engage the substance. It's the source. If it comes from this particular network or if it comes from this left leaning or right leaning camp, we don't even give it any time, any credibility. It's like we can't even talk to each other because off the top I'm just not willing to engage it at all. So how do we cut through what is right now it seems like two different worlds?

**Mika:** Exactly.

**Christina:** That's polarization.

**Mika:** And even if you have a video that's right there in front of you, what people will do is they'll say, "Well, you know, you're not seeing what you think you're seeing. This is how you need to interpret." So not just George Floyd. But think about Eric Garner, right?

So we've got videos of people's murders and yet, we can't even decide what is happening in front of us because we are so committed to the source that's telling us what it means, that's interpreting for us what it mean.

**Christina:** That's incredibly traumatizing too. That's the gaslighting effect in the racial trauma. And at some point, people make a decision to no longer negotiate to help the other side to understand, because it's doing so much harm to make the case to say, "Can you not see what I can see?"

And honestly, that's not everyone's work to continually invest themselves and being able to do. It is indeed traumatizing. It's a form of gaslighting when people are like, "But you know, maybe he deserved it. Maybe he deserved it. Was he really running?"

These are some of the techniques that are in place that cause racism to persist. So racism does require denial. It requires people who don't want to see it. So as a teacher, the question that I would ask people is, what does it cost you to believe this

information if it is true? If it is true, and I'm not saying that it is, but if it is true, what does it cost you? What does it mean for your identity? What does it mean for what you've been taught, people who you respect and admire?

And there are some people, and I think this is where we can just start at a place of honesty, that to believe the truth about racism in America rocks them. It says something about family of origin. It says something about their sense of American exceptionalism. It says something about the religious traditions that's been passed on to them. They have a lot to reconcile.

And that's why there's a large x evangelical kind of white young movement away from the church, because their way of reconciling was, "Well, all of this must be bad. I'm done."

And I think for us who have our roots particularly in a different church tradition, for example, Mika and I are both products. I consider the grandmother who raised me, the mother who raised me as the black church not perfect and imperfect in many ways, but yet has held together this proclamation of the gospel and embodied living of justice and mercy for hundreds of years as a living testament against oppression in the United States.

So one of the reasons why I'm like, "Well, let's throw out the baby with the bathwater, forget all this stuff," is because I can look beyond the prescribed safe, white evangelical places and say, "Oh, no, no, God has been at work amongst all kinds of people all around the world, in the underground church right now. The pain that I'm experiencing, or the disappointment I'm seeing in this local church or in this denomination does not speak for all of God's church. There is an underground church, there's a global church.

And oftentimes we can be so insular, kind of cultural narcissism, even in the way we think about God's Church, that we have to kind of lift up our gaze so that we can see beyond just this present moment.

**Mike:** You don't have to walk away from Christianity in order to pursue justice and mercy.

**Mika:** Amen.

**Mike:** And in fact, you can go deeper into the Christian faith in the breadth of Christian tradition in order to grow as a person of justice and mercy.

**Mika:** Absolutely.

**Christina:** Amen. Amen.

**Mika:** I think what I'm saying, my argument would be that Christianity can give you an imagination that goes beyond even what is available to others. Romans 12 tells us to never be wise in our own eyes. Which means that the Christian community always has something to learn from what God has shown other people that are not Christians. That's a huge thing. We have something to learn from them. And in fact, we have to always be in a position of not being wise in our own eyes.

In fact, when Paul says that to the Christians, he's telling them how to relate to outsiders. And he says, "Remember never be wise in your own eyes," which means those pagans that "don't know Jesus," quote-unquote, the Lord has, in His common mercies, showing them things about compassion and justice that you need to learn.

That's part of the staying of the Good Samaritan parable. Is that the Samaritan, the Good Samaritan is a syncretistic Samaritan. Jesus never says this Samaritan was a God-fearer, pure religious person. He just says he knew more about justice than the Levite and the priest. Which is scandalous because it's a person that was not religiously quote-unquote "pure." Right?

So they're having to learn something from the outsider who knows more about God's justice and treatment of other people with compassion than they did. So we have to be in a position of humility when it comes to that. But I do think that there's something about the gospel and about the church that does give us resources to begin to cut through the stalemate around the impasse around media sources.

Because as I've kind of been lifted up over and over again, if you're like, "Look, I don't trust that media source," or "I don't trust this media source," you still have got your brothers and sisters in Christ that are experiencing this, that are saying they're in a different place on the caste system. And they're saying, "Look, this is the feeling of the pressure down here where I'm at. And I don't care if it didn't make the news media."

So when you think about this, man, so George Floyd wasn't the first African American man to be murdered by a police officer. This has been an ongoing scourge in the black community ever since there have been police. And black folks have been talking about this for a long time. Right? And if our white brothers and sisters had been listening to us talk about it, then they would have been way ahead of the curve. They wouldn't have had to wait it hit the news.

I think part of why Christina is saying, "Hey, it shouldn't have to take somebody's child to be murdered, and it to go viral on and for NBC News to pick it up for you to pay attention. If you had only paid attention to the sister in the pew right next to you.

**Christina:** If she's in the pew. So the church tends to be even more segregated than public schools, which are hyper-segregated in the United States context. And so the question becomes, what are we choosing to avoid? Thinking of folks with more power in a social context. Because we can create a life. Some of us can, not all of us. But some of us can create a life where we don't hear the stories, and we don't get to hear those stories, because we insulate our world to not have to hear it.

And then we can do some mental gymnastics to demote people's Christianity, to consider it deficient so that they're not fully a brother or a sister. They're kind of confused and lost. That's why they think racism is a problem, because they've been led astray. And so we can do all of those mental gymnastics so that we do not have to hear people, but yet God hears them.

This is what I really think I would love for people just to sit with. We can plug our ears, but God hears. God hears the cries of God's people. And God has a long track record, a long track record. When Pharaohs of society get intimidated by the people who've been put on the bottom, God hears their cries, and God brings forth justice. And it is a justice that cleans up the house.

I don't mean to sound apocalyptic and scary. But I do think there's not enough sobriety about the thrice holiness of God and the purity of God's justice and the fact that God does not plug God's ears, and God hears the cries of the mother whose son's blood is still on the street. God hears these cries from generation to generation. And God is giving us grace.

Every time we have a messenger that comes by that says, Look at this person who was hurting that I've called you to see, God is extending a hand of grace. And when we ignore, we are slapping the hand of God in a way. It is such a serious matter.

We're not appealing to people to say, "Oh, I need you to like me, because I'm a black person." I actually don't need white people to tell me that I'm a good person. I'm definitely looking to Jesus to define me and to and to tell me who I am and to sustain me. So that's not what it's about. It's not like, Oh, we're not a real church unless white people think that we're some. Nope, don't believe that either.

What I'm saying is that these cries are going before the thrice holy God's ears, and God is still giving out grace upon grace upon grace upon grace. But just because God is long suffering does not mean that God will not discipline God's Church and get it into order.

**Mike:** I just appreciate you guys sharing so transparently and clearly. What I hope people hear in this is, even as you all are talking, that there is a lane, there is a Christian tradition that includes all kinds of people that have stood, that have not just pursued justice in spite of Christian Orthodoxy in the gospel, but have pursued justice and mercy because of-

**Christina:** Oh, absolutely.

**Mike:** ...and on the foundation of Christian orthodoxy and theology. And so for the person that's wondering, like, how do I grow? I mean, you guys have said some things that are so helpful.

Number one, to be plugged into a church of people that are different than you. Mika, you said over and over again, hang in there, keep listening, keep learning. To not wait for some tragic headline in order to believe the stories of very real people and to lean in and to take initiative to learn. To read some primary sources.

And I would even add to that, put a little asterisk and it's just true for me too, to read some primary sources from people who represent camps that you are instinctively resistant to.

**Christina:** Absolutely.

**Mike:** You know what I mean?

**Christina:** Absolutely.

**Mike:** You've heard about them and you've heard them demonized. Actually read them in their own words.

**Christina:** Your Ninevites. Whoever your Ninevites are.

**Mike:** Absolutely.

**Mika:** And especially people on the bottom. I should say that God preferences people on the bottom. He just does this. He announces Himself as the God of the widow, the sojourner, the orphan, these socially vulnerable people.

And because those who weren't widows, weren't orphans, weren't sojourners, those who were financially well off, they assume that God was their God. But God had to deliberately say, "No, no, I am in a unique way, the God of these people on the bottom, and I'm going to provide a special kind..."

Because, you know, we want God to treat everybody the same. And God loves us equally. But because we were in different social relations, He treats us in connection to our social relation. So what He does is He goes to the people on the bottom, shows that they are safe so that everybody else knows that they're safe as well.

So I think, as church folk, what we have to do is we have to especially lean into the voices of the people on the bottom. We have to demonstrate especially humility around them and say, maybe they're able to see something about suffering that I'm not able to see.

**Mike:** And that's broader than race.

**Mika:** That's right.

**Mike:** That's for victims of all forms of abuse, that's for vulnerable children, that's for... and that's a part of the challenge that we see, I think, in the church broadly is, unfortunately, the church is developing a reputation of being an unsafe place for people at the bottom, for people who are abused, for people who are oppressed, for people who are taken advantage of.

I think that's why, Mika, you mentioned this, just breaking out of your silo and listening to paying attention to truth, right? Truth. We're not talking about just believe everything. But we're saying pay attention to truth or at least the prospect that truth could be coming from somebody that's not in your camp.

**Christina:** The point that Mika just raised, as I was listening to it, I was already thinking about the pushback. And I'm thinking about it analytically, not because I'm like, "Oh, something was wrong with it." Because there are people who have a form of Christianity where that is a radical idea to them. Even though scripture announces this repeatedly, that God's intentional eye on the weak, on the unseen. You can

think about examples where Jesus sees her. Jesus specifically eyes is pointed towards those that we choose to ignore.

And there are people who resent that. They get angry at that. They're like, "Well, that's special knowledge that you're saying that poor people or marginalized people have." And I would just point them to the story of the rich young ruler.

And I would say that in that story, Jesus gives grace with specificity to that person's unique social location. And for them, grace was to recognize you actually have not obeyed all the law since you were a child. "And you know what, since you say that you have, give up what's most precious to you and give it to the poor who I have my eye on."

And so you read the text, and that's not some fancy, "Yes, to the poor." Didn't say "give it to the church." Didn't say "give it to my apostles." He say "give it to the poor." And that's not some fancy new age hermeneutical strategy. That's what's in the text.

And so I think we have to start looking at Scripture with fresh eyes. And even as we're reading about these primary sources, even as we read the Bible, we need to read Scripture with a great deal more humility and recognize that we need the catholicity of the church even to understand the Scripture. Because it is no doubt that my Western, modern capitalistic mental... all of that, that is projected into the passage when I read it.

And so I need the Holy Spirit and I need my brothers and sisters in Christ around the world to help me to understand what's in the text as well.

**Mike:** Yeah. And that's what God has us in a community.

**Christina:** We need a community. That's right.

**Mike:** Yeah, we need community. Man, I could talk to you, I promise, forever. But I really do thank you for taking this time. And I hope people will just follow your ministry of the church there at Koinonia there in Nashville, of the writing that you all have done. Truth Table podcast, Christina, that you get the privilege and the honor of co-hosting and that we all enjoy and learn from. Thank you y'all for taking the time.

I got to ask this before we wrap up. Because the podcast is called That Sounds Fun, y'all are super smart. If people can't tell, y'all read a lot. I could just tell already. But what do y'all do for fun? How do y'all kickback? What do y'all do for fun?



**Christina:** We really believe in fun, y'all.

**Mike:** What do y'all do for fun?

**Mika:** It takes fun to balance out all of this.

**Christina:** Listen. Listen.

**Mika:** We play hard. I'm a big Marvel... I love watching all the Marvel things. I'm the guy that like I will watch the show and then I'll listen to the podcast about the show. I'm like-

**Mike:** You in deep.

**Mika:** I'm in deep, man. I'm into it.

**Christina:** It's a way of life, Mike. It's a way of life.

**Mike:** It's just quirky.

**Mika:** Yeah, it's quirky. You know, Marvel type of stuff. I love them. I love stand-up comedy. I love Ted Lasso. I've been watching that. Just different things. Black Love, we're watching that. I love hanging out with the kids. I love just laughing and having a good time, going out to eat.

**Christina:** When it's safe, I love live theater, live musical performance, art performance. Anything where I am seeing someone. I'm just enlivened and to see people doing their thing.

**Mike:** What's been your favorite live performance?

**Christina:** Oh, I've had quite a few. So in terms of musical concerts, I'm going to say... What did we see in Michigan, Mika?

**Mika:** It's a lot of them. I mean, it could be New Edition. That was amazing.

**Christina:** That was a lot of fun?

**Mike:** Legend.

**Christina:** No, no.

**Mika:** Bobby Brown went there but you know, it was amazing.

**Christina:** I'm drawing a blank away on the names.

**Mika:** We've seen New Edition. We saw Les Mis, Les Miserables.

**Christina:** Yeah, Les Mis was great. Hamilton of course was really great. Hamilton was great. They're so many people who I just love to see live. But the one that's coming to my mind, Mika, is the group that sings like Tennessee.

**Mike:** Arrested Development? Arrested Development.

**Christina:** Arrested Development was one of my favorite concerts in the last five years.

**Mike:** Wow. Wow.

**Christina:** Just because you had dancers, you had poets, you had artists all on the stage together. And it was a flashback to my adolescence and youth. So it was a lot of fun. We were 90s teenagers so we love a good hip hop, R&B throwback concert is what we love to go.

**Mike:** I love it.

**Christina:** Which we are trying to go to-

**Mike:** Real music.

**Christina:** ...safely in January. And I'm also a foodie. I really love to go out to eat. In Nashville, if anybody comes and checks out, Nashville has great places to eat. And there's also the new National Museum of African American Music. That's completely interactive and is a great place to visit. So when y'all come to Nashville, check it out.

**Mike:** I love it. Seems like y'all got a bunch of places you got to take me when I come to Nashville.

**Mika:** Absolutely.

**Christina:** Yes, come on, Mike. Come on, Mike.

**Mike:** We just made our itinerary right there. I appreciate it.

**Christina:** Come on.

**Mike:** I love having y'all on, man. Thanks so much. Thank you all for taking the time and just for blessing us with the wisdom that God has given you over so many years. Appreciate y'all.

**Mika:** God bless you. It means a lot.

**Christina:** Thank you, Mike. Thank you.

[01:24:21] <music>

**Outro:** Oh, you guys, aren't they awesome? Oh my gosh, I've learned so much from this conversation. Hey, I think the best way for us to keep learning is to follow along with Mika and Christina. Listen to the Truth Table Podcast, follow along with their resources, what they are creating and what they are doing. I'm so thankful to Mika and Christina Edmondson for joining Mike on this episode. Please follow them, tell them thanks for being on the show and how much it meant to you.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that's how you can find me. And I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same.

Have a great couple of days. We'll see you back here on Friday to wrap up this great week with Mike Kelsey as our host. We'll see you then.

[01:25:18] <music>