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Annie: Hi friends, welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun, a very special episode. I'm excited for you to hear. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm really happy to be here with you today, so is Ashley, hi Ashley.

Ashley: Hi.

Annie: We've got a great show in store for you. But before we dive in, I want to take a moment to share about one of our incredible partners, stamps.com. If you're looking for ways to skip the trip to the post office and dodge all that hectic holiday shopping and shipping traffic, me, too, me too, me too.

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Ashley: Oh, thanks.

Annie: Here we are. It is you're always a part of our Q&A episodes which I really appreciate. And a few weeks ago and through several conversations with friends, including John Mark Comer's episode, the theme of fasting as a spiritual discipline kept coming up.

Specifically, how fasting affects women and the questions women have around this spiritual discipline. So in the AFD Week in Review email, there's a link in the show

notes if you aren't getting that, but in that email recently we asked for your questions. And you guys really delivered questions you had about fasting.

Now dudes listen along, anyway, because this isn't just for females. But we certainly are leaning on some of the questions women have that are unique to women. So I invited some other friends to lend their voices and their expertise to this conversation, as well as you Ashley.

Ashley: Mh-hmm. Thanks.

Annie: Welcome to the podcast.

Ashley: Thankful to be here.

Annie: Thanks for helping us do this Q&A. So will you talk a little bit about us splitting up the questions?

Ashley: Sure. So just kind of looking through the different aspects of fasting that people had questions about. We noticed certain themes that rose up and wanted to invite these wise voices to just kind of grapple with those questions along with you.

Annie: Yeah.

Ashley: And so that's kind of how we grouped the questions. But there are some that we wanted to save just for you to address.

Annie: Yeah, that's great.

Ashley: Knowing that friends reached out, in a lot of ways, because they're interested in hearing your experience as well.

Annie: Yeah. Is fasting a spiritual discipline in your life?

Ashley: It is.

Annie: Yeah, me too.

Ashley: Yeah.

Annie: It matters. I want to hear more about it. Let me start by doing a couple of the questions that are kind of top-level, I think that'll be helpful for people.

This friend asked, "What is fasting look like? What do you hope to get out of it and what are the biblical reasons for fasting?" We're going to talk about the biblical side of it all throughout the show. But in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, fasting is modeled as a discipline that is good for your spiritual formation in your spiritual life. We will talk about that with everybody that is coming.

So what is fasting look like for me? Do I have a weekly rhythm? Well, I fast every week at some point and in those times that is I'm praying for some specific things that are long term. Some specific things that I'm kind of making deposits in that bank account of going like, "I really care about this thing God so I'm fasting again to connect with you, to pray in alignment with what you are doing."

And then there are seasonal fasts like our church, Crosspoint, sometimes has fast for the staff or fast for our whole church. And everyone who has read, which book is it in? Is it in *Looking for Lovely*, is it *That Sounds Fun*, or *Remember God*? Oh, which of my books is it in?

Ashley: All those books.

Annie: Oh, geez, I hate that. I think it might be in *Remember God*, where I talk about that I fast the week before my birthday.

Ashley: Yes.

Annie: And the reason I do that is kind of an alignment thing of like, "God, what do you have for the next year?" I want my ears to be as attuned as possible. And so our pastor, Kevin, often says, "Fasting is giving up something you love for something you love more." And on this show we are talking most about fasting food.

So there's a weekly rhythm for me. There are seasonal rhythms for me. And then there are like 911 rhythms for me. Is that true for you, too?

Ashley: Yes, absolutely. Well, just because I just heard you say we're talking about fasting from food. What are some things that we're not talking about as far as fasting and that word goes?

Annie: Oh, very good. We're not talking about intermittent fasting.

Ashley: Right.

Annie: We're not talking anything about dieting. And we're not talking about medical things.

Ashley: Yes.

Annie: We are not medical professionals. We do have a counseling professional on with us-

Ashley: True.

Annie: ...in this.

Ashley: I have watched a lot of medical TV.

Annie: I'm riding this Grey's Anatomy ship till the end.

Ashley: Same and I did the same with ER back in the day.

Annie: Same, I am playing the violin on this titanic for sure. But that's what we're not talking about. We're not talking about our bodies changing, we're not talking about anything like that. Is that kind of what you are-

Ashley: Yes, exactly.

Annie: What we are talking about is the spiritual discipline of fasting. That can be one meal, can be one day, can be three days, can be seven days, can be anything in between. There are also times, like what I would call 911 fasting is, I have a big meeting coming up on a Monday. I'm going to fast lunch on Sunday and pray during that time.

Ashley: Mh-hmm.

Annie: Or there's something significant coming or a decision that me and our team here needs to make, me and a partner need to make. There's a decision that needs to be made and we have to decide on Thursday, I will fast on Wednesday. I feel like Esther model that beautifully for us in the Bible. She's got to go to the king and so for a couple of days before she is fasting to be prepared for that.

Ashley: In preparation.

Annie: Yes.

Ashley: Exactly.

Annie: Yeah. So there are times where I do that. Or if something, I have a friend who had something sideways happened in her life last week. And she texted me and said, "I'm fasting breakfast on Tuesday will you join me and pray for this thing, for my child that needs to happen?"

So that leads to the, "What do you hope to get out of it?" It is a discipline that leads you closer to God. That is what everything I do in my spiritual life is to know God better and to be a better friend to Him, and to understand His friendship with me better. Everything is about getting closer with Him.

Also, I will proudly say I think prayer changes things. I think fasting changes things. I fast because I want things to move and I want things to change. What would you say is your hope behind fasting?

Ashley: I think, for me, it's typically about making mental and heart space.

Annie: Yes.

Ashley: To hear from the Lord.

Annie: Yes.

- Ashley:** Even just the image of that hunger is motivated by needing fullness.
- Annie:** Yes.
- Ashley:** And likening that with why we eat multiple times a day.
- Annie:** Yes.
- Ashley:** Is because we're filled and we're emptied, and we're filled and we're emptied. And so just kind of that same idea, but switch to the spiritual realm where it's like, if there's an emptiness I'm seeking God to fill it.
- Annie:** Yes.
- Ashley:** And I can be more receptive if other stuff is not in the way.
- Annie:** Yes, that's beautiful.
- Ashley:** Okay.
- Annie:** Yeah, because a lot of times the time where I would eat breakfast I pray a little bit longer or I journal a little bit more or I read an extra day of reading.
- The time when I would eat lunch I go on a quick, I mean, we had someone, I won't blow her up. But we had someone in our office that was fasting. And every day at lunch she would walk, she would go outside and go on a walk and pray instead of eating with us and never made a deal of it. She just would say, "I'm going to go on a walk." And after about four days we're like, "Tell us more?"
- Ashley:** Yep. Yep.
- Annie:** And that's when she told us.
- Ashley:** Yeah.
- Annie:** So I think that is really important. Okay, I want to do one more question then I want to get to our first guest. Okay, "So what does fasting look like for you?" So for me, usually, I mean, there's a Daniel fast where you eat really simply, Jada and I are getting ready to talk about that. There are times where it's a juice fast, where you are drinking juice during the day or liquids during the day but no solids.
- Ashley:** Mh-hmm.
- Annie:** And that is what I tend to lean toward is a juice fast, that's what I do the most. I also think the longer you do the discipline, the more days you do also determines what you drink. Also you are always drinking water, you are always drinking you do not fast from liquids, that is really dangerous for your body.

Ashley: Right.

Annie: So we don't fast from liquids. But like if I'm doing a one day my challenge to myself is to do a water fast. But a lot of times mine look the most like juice fast or extended ones like our community doing a 21-day fast. I would do a Daniel fast or something that simplifies what I eat, but I'm still eating at some place. So that's what it looks like for me.

I also want to say here that throughout the show between Ashley and I, and our guests, we are being descriptive, not prescriptive. We're not telling you exactly what to do that's between you and God and your community of faith. We are telling you what we do and what fasting looks like in all of our lives.

Ashley: Yeah.

Annie: Okay, one more question and then we'll get to our first guest. "What is the rest of your day look like when you fast?" The rest of my day looks pretty normal?

Ashley: Yep.

Annie: I do not exercise very rigorously on days where I have not eaten.

Ashley: I think that's wise.

Annie: But I might go on a walk if I'm fasting every meal that day. If I'm fasting one meal it's just additional prayer and then the rest of my day looks normal. I can get hungry, I can get a headache, we're going to talk about that with some of our guests. I can be in a bad mood.

Ashley: Sure.

Annie: And it is about reconnecting with God every time. Every time my stomach growls, every time I feel short about something. Every time I feel angry about something, I go, "Oh, man, I wonder if you'd had a cheeseburger if you wouldn't feel angry because that means something is sideways." That means something is sideways. So, any thoughts on that before we bring Jada in?

Ashley: No, I love that. And I think I've just in normal rhythms of my day when I leave work, I go straight home and make dinner for my family.

Annie: Uh-huh.

Ashley: And there are times when that becomes an opportunity to kind of model something for my kids.

Annie: Ah, interesting.

Ashley: And there are times that what makes more sense for where I am with the Lord is fasting breakfast and lunch and still eating with my family.

Annie: Exactly, yes. Jada Edwards, who you all know and love, she's been on the show recently. She is an experienced author, speaker, Bible teacher, mentor. She's committed her life to equipping women of all ages with practical biblical truth to help them live more genuine lives. She currently serves as the Creative Services Director for One Community Church, and she was on our Mother's Day episode as you'll recall this year. If you want to go back to hear that it was episode 293.

Jada is a dear friend of mine. I deeply respect her walk with the Lord and full transparency she's a Black woman leading in the church. And we had questions about, from you guys, about whether it is different based on the community you grew up in, your ethnic background, kind of who you grew up, and Jada has young kids.

And so a lot of y'all had questions about that just like Ashley was just saying. So here is Jada answering some of your questions about fasting.

[00:12:02] <Music>

Annie: Jada, welcome back to That Sounds Fun, thanks for doing this.

Jada: Yeah, Annie Downs, you're the best.

Annie: Oh, you're the best.

Jada: Thanks for having me.

Annie: I'm so glad to get to see you again. Ah, okay. Fast, I mean, this whole episode is about fasting. Tell me a little bit about your experience of the spiritual discipline of fasting and how that's affected your relationship with Jesus?

Jada: Yes. I think as a kid I saw with my grandmother and my mother, they were, I wouldn't say all the time. But there were at least five or six times I remember growing up where they'd be like, "We're going to fast this weekend." Or "Something's going on, we're praying for someone." Or even just wanting to hear from God. And then as we moved into the church I grew up in Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, shout out Tony Evans.

Annie: Yeah, Tony Evans,

Jada: Come on now you can't go wrong. And so we did Solemn Assembly. So the first week of every year the church would fast, and it just kind of became a practice. And we kind of took that when my husband and I started our church, One Community in North Texas, I mean, we came out of town and we're like, "Oh, we thought we do fasting at the beginning of the year." And so we do it, at least, usually two times a year. And, so, now, having practiced it a little bit individually, I think it was more like, "Oh, we're just not eating, okay, mom and grandma or whatever."

But I think now corporately just to see how it opened, really, just capacity it is not a manipulation tool. It doesn't make God do anything. It is a stripping away of something that might not be critical for the moment, because we're just more available we just have greater capacity.

So it's not trying to get a yes out of God, it's the same reason we study the Bible. Hopefully not to cherry pick a verse to fix my life today, but to feast on the Word of God knowing that it's good for me in the long run. And so-

Annie: That first week of the year what do you do? Do you eat nothing and drink water? Are you drinking juice? Are you what's your...?"

Jada: We do a couple of things. We ended up changing ours, so the first month when we're doing some kind of fast. So the first week we call that Solemn Assembly, kind of the book of Joel and we will not eat after 3 pm.

Annie: Okay.

Jada: And so it's no food and no technology.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Jada: Which people will be like, "I would rather just starve." So we added technology like a couple years ago and the people thought we were not godly.

Annie: Yes.

Jada: And so it's no food and no technology after 3 pm for that first week.

Annie: Okay.

Jada: And obviously if you work night shift or if your schedule, we are just like, "What is your block of time that you'd be eating late lunch and dinner, don't eat? So work it out, it's not some rules. And then the rest of the month, for 21 days, we do a Daniel fast.

So you can eat all day. We're kind of back to technology we're not managing that anymore. But it's Daniel fast limitations and if people aren't familiar with that, there's a million websites on Daniel fast. It's basically everything is plants, vegan-based, nothing from the ground. But also, but also no fried food, no sugar, no caffeine, yes. If you don't hear from Jesus, listen, listen.

Annie: It's on you.

Jada: Right.

Annie: And the people can go read about it, like you said, you can google it. But also it is called a Daniel fast because in the book of Daniel, that is what he and his friends did to

show King Nebuchadnezzar, "We can be as strong as your other soldiers even if we don't eat the rich foods." And so a lot of people do that.

Okay, let's jump into some of these questions. Thank you for doing this with us. Okay, here's a great one. "How do you work out and have a normal day while fasting? Can I tell anyone that I'm fasting?"

So we've had a couple people ask like, "I'm an athlete." Or "I work out every morning." Or "For my mental health I need to work out every day." Can you work out while you're fasting? And can you tell people that you're fasting?

Jada: You can work out while you're fasting. But again, so I'm going to say an overarching thing that I think is probably going to sound repetitive to everything. The purpose of fasting is to strip away physical comfort, in order to be more available in a spiritual capacity.

Stripping away physical comfort to be more available in a spiritual capacity.

Now, sometimes working out for most of us, I think, is a comfort. That doesn't mean it's not beneficial, but it's not going to take our lives if we don't do it for a week or six weeks even, 40 days.

Now, some people because they've got certain, I know psychotherapy is often tied to physical fitness. So some people like they need to do it, there's all kinds of reasons. So it's not to jeopardize your health. But if in any capacity it's a comfort that you know you can do without, then it's something that you need to consider giving up.

I have fasted, sometimes I will work out the first couple of days in my fast because my body still has food and then after a while I'm tired. And sometimes God is like, "Yes, sit down, because you know what, you work out more than you're with me."

So you prioritize your working out, so how about you give that up for a few days. I have no time to pray but I got a 45-minute workout in. And so it's just like, He's like, "You'll be all right, you'll be alright." And you know what, in those two weeks I don't gain 50 pounds, I'm all right, I'm still alive. I don't get diabetes and hypertension, it's like it's fine.

And so I think it's, as with all of these questions, I think it's going to be very much a heart check. Am I convincing myself that this is a need when it's really a comfort? Because if it's a comfort, it's going to get in the way of my availability while I'm trying to hear from God.

Annie: Beautiful. Okay, here's a question. "Should fasting be done weekly or seasonally or during the really difficult times in our lives?"

Jada: Yes.

Annie: That's what I thought too. That's what I thought too.

Jada: So I think it's good to have a rhythm. Just like, I may pray more when I'm in a crisis, but good lord I really need to pray regularly.

Annie: Yes.

Jada: Even if it might not be the same time and it might not be Tuesday, Wednesday or whatever.

Annie: Yes.

Jada: You want it consistent. But also those things get amped up when we're in a crisis. And so I love that our church does it annually, we have a rhythm for it. But that does not mean, there's many times my friends will text each other or somebody that I just know from church will say, "Can you fast with me this weekend?"

Annie: Yes.

Jada: And sometimes I know I got a big dinner to go to and I'm not going to set myself up to fail. But here's what I do, I will go into that weekend praying, "God, what can I give up that's not a distraction?"

Because maybe I need to go to this big dinner and it's more drama to sit at the table and not eat. But that night it's no Instagram, it's no Facebook, it's no ice cream, it's no whatever I might treat myself to. And the Lord will show you because it's really about the heart of giving up something so I can really hear from God.

Annie: Yeah, my rhythm is like that too. I have a weekly rhythm. Our church has a seasonal rhythm. And if something turns sideways you can always go, "I'm going to fast lunch tomorrow."

Jada: Yes.

Annie: Or "I'm going to fast on Friday, because on Saturday this big decision is coming." Esther models that beautifully for us too, right?

Jada: Absolutely.

Annie: Where she took those days before she sat with the king. And you can't predict when you're going to sit with the king, but if you know the days are coming, yeah. Okay, so here's a great question. "I would love to hear from some of our female spiritual leaders of color about fasting.

I'm a white female raised in the church and didn't learn that fasting was something that people did in today's time until I was an adult. I wonder how that differs in different cultures and denominations?" And so when I called you I kind of said, "Jada, I assume it's not different in the Black church than the White church." But I actually don't know, is it different?

Jada: No, it's not that different. There's no difference. I mean, we might miss our food a little more. Daniel fast is probably harder for us than complete fasting. Because I mean, a lot of people are moving into healthier I'm not going to stereotype a whole groups of people.

Annie: Yeah.

Jada: But I'm saying depending, I'm from the South, that's probably a weightier factor than the fact that I'm a Black woman. But, no, honestly, I learned of it in my church, like I said, with Tony Evans. But he is not a traditional Black pastor if you know him. So it's not something that came out of any type of cultural understanding from what I knew.

Even when my grandmother and mother did it, it wasn't anything they did in their churches. They just practiced it because if you read Scripture, you're going to see those disciplines that solitude study, fasting others. So I don't think it's cultural at all. I think, it's we do it in a way that it's I think, clearly aligned with Scripture with Daniel the way you say it. So no, I haven't seen a difference.

Annie: And the thing you and I talked about when we were talking offline is we're also not the religion that fasts.

Jada: Totally.

Annie: Every race, so it not only is it not a racial divide, it's not a religious divide.

Jada: Absolutely.

Annie: We just fast to a God who is living, that's the difference.

Jada: Absolutely. I mean, that's what Ramadhan is. Ramadhan is a whole season of giving up something. But it's such a self-mortification practice that I mean, almost every religion has some aspect of self-denial to it.

Annie: Yes, yes. Okay, this one connected a lot with me, "I have a tendency toward overeating." Same, same, is what our friend is asking. "When I fast after I finish fasting I over eat a lot. I want to practice this as part of worship. But I don't know how to do it in a healthy way that's separated from how I feel about my body?"

So can you talk a little bit about like, how do we come off a fast. Whether it's you don't eat from 3 pm till the next morning, and you go bananas at breakfast. And there is that tendency of like, deny, deny, deny, over serve. So how do we come off fast really well?

Jada: So I am not a super, I don't think I'm very good with moderation when it comes to food, I love food. So I tend to do better with abstinence. And so, for me, moderation when my fast is after three and I'm starting back up the next day, that's harder than when I don't fast, when I don't eat all week.

So what I usually do, and this is not going to be exciting, no one's going to cheer for this, but it has worked for me when I do it. What I try to do, and I think it's just a mind game, I'm playing at self-discipline mind thing with myself. I will try to extend my time of when I can eat by maybe an hour.

Like if I know I can eat at six in the morning, I just try to tell myself, "Just eat at seven." Because really it is also about this ability to say no, just to say no to yourself. And that's when it's a daily thing, I'll just try to add an extra 30 minutes. Or if I know we're supposed to stop eating at 3:00, sometimes I'll be like, "I'm stopping at 2:00 today."

It is just a thing for me because I want to discipline my body. I'm like Almost like my body cannot be... It is so strange but I will have this self-talk in my head, and I'm like, "My body cannot be dictating to my mind how I feel." This is not okay.

Because when I'm able to say no to the cookie or to the overeating or the whatever. Man, you better believe when the unethical choice comes up about money or my body or sexual purity I got a benchmark. You know what I'm saying? I'm trying to build up my resume that I know how to deny my body.

Annie: Oh, come on!

Jada: And, so, it becomes a whole thing. I'll say this last thing, we're fist bumping y'all-

Annie: We are fist bumping, y'all don't see my hand's in the air.

Jada: But this is the last thing I'll say. When we do it for the 21 days I do the same thing and so I will often try to go one more day. Just to be like, "I can do this. I can do it." And God has been faithful. Almost every day in our fast, we've been doing it now for about eight or nine years, there's been something I've not returned to.

Annie: A breakthrough on that 22nd day, yeah.

Jada: It's small stuff like Chick-fil-A Lemonade, it sounds so small but I broke my fast with it one day. And I'm telling you the Lord graced me with a migraine that was ungodly. And I was like we do, "Okay, this sin or this thing doesn't," not that Chick-fil-A Lemonade is a sin.

Annie: Certainly.

Jada: But when we do the thing and it doesn't feel good. We're like, "Oh, let me just keep doing it till I get used to it."

Annie: Right, I got to retrain my body to take in the bad stuff.

Jada: Retrain my body to drink this cup of sugar.

Annie: That's right.

Jada: And so I did it. I was training like two, three days in a row, I was like I gotta have my lemonade and my body was like, "No, ma'am." And so every single fast there's been something that He's been like, "It's fine, just let it go." And so it's been good. But I think pushing that boundary beyond where your freedom point is like making yourself-

Annie: Yeah, go a little bit further.

Jada: ...go extra thirty minutes, extra half a day it really helps.

Annie: I mean, I can't tell you how many times, when I'm fasting, I say things like when my body will grumble or my mind will say, "I can't do this." I'm fasting breakfast and lunch and it's three o'clock and I can't wait till five o'clock. I say to myself, "Oh, really? Oh, tell me more, tell me more." I mean, I just like my mind and my body get in a fight with my spirit. Where my spirit is like, "Oh, you think you can't? Yes, you can."

Jada: Yes, you can.

Annie: Like it it's almost like we have to coach ourselves into discipline. Because you're right, how we treat food is how we treat sex, is how we treat other people. If we cannot deny our bodies we are going to live in a world of lacking self-control and I don't want to lack self-control in any area.

Jada: Yeah. And I can tell you I was really irritated with myself when we first started doing this and I was hooked on diet coke. I was finishing my master's program and that's one of the things I'll never return back to.

And so I remember those first couple of days, girl the shakes. I'm not a coffee drinker, so I got all these other sources of caffeine. And I was going to open my car door, my keys are shaking I was like, what is happening? And then I was so bothered that a substance did that to my body when in its absence.

I was just irritated about the whole thing. And, probably, I was irritated because I hadn't had a Diet Coke, so it was just so much. And me and God had to have a whole conversation. And I was like, "This is not okay." Like, "If I want to drink a Diet Coke? Sure." But I don't want to have to drink a Diet Coke, we've branched into something different.

And people go through it, Annie, when we have our fast they get headaches from the coffee, they get whatever, and I said, "Y'all, it's okay to feel the pain of something that you are dependent on leaving your body, that's okay-"

Annie: That's good Jada.

Jada: It's okay.

Annie: Yeah.

Jada: It's okay. Because when I first get, if I'm a recovering addict, I'm not thrilled about the first time I have to turn down alcohol or drug. It's okay. It's okay to feel that wrestle. It's okay. Let that thing leave your body and every headache and every whatever, you take an Excedrin, take whatever.

But you're telling yourself, "This is something that I am breaking dependence on." And that's better than the cup of coffee.

Annie: In my weekly discipline I don't usually get headaches or my body doesn't have a response. But when you get to three days or seven days or something longer, I take medicine if I have a migraine. I'm like, "Listen, God didn't say I have to stay here and feel all this. I'm already not eating. I'm already praying, Lord, I praying, I don't have to live through a migraine."

So this leads to another great question that we are being very careful to not give medical advice, because we are not doctors. But on those mornings where I take a migraine, if I have to eat a saltine or if I have to do something to take medicine that I need to take I don't think God ignores me over a saltine.

Jada: Absolutely. And fasting is not to make you unhealthy. So we are there's inference that when Jesus went into the desert for 40 days of fasting, he went as a healthy, well-fed man. He wasn't malnourished and then God said, "Let's take on 40 more days."

Annie: Right.

Jada: It's like, I mean, it's coming from a healthy place. But there's been times where I've had to take a medicine. My allergies are getting the best of me and I know I got to go and do something and I will usually take it.

I can kind of tell in an hour, "Ah this is making me queasy, let me get a cracker." But let me tell you something, every time there's a moment, there's an opportunity to say no to self. What I really want is my Ritz butter cream cracker.

Annie: Yes, same.

Jada: But you know what let me do a saltine, let me do a piece of bread. I'm not eating a big bread, but let me do something. I'm not trying to necessarily enjoy this discomfort-

Annie: It's not a cheeseburger. I have a headache, it's a saltine.

Jada: I need some fries, I need some seasoned fries. To go with this Claritin. These Claritin says, "Take with seasoned fries."

Annie: With seasoned fries, Annie, what choice did I have? What Choice did I have? Okay, so speaking of, people, this is a good one too, this is a great question. "I want to fast and tend to eat lunch with co-workers during the week. How do I navigate not being obvious with when my absence and my lack of eating will be noticed?"

That's great, because in Matthew, Matthew says, "Put oil on your head don't let anybody know you're fasting, keep it to yourself." And so how do you do that? How do you exist with co-workers when you're fasting?

Jada: Yeah, and that's something you really have to be careful about. Because I think if it's one or two people that you have relationship with, ask the Lord. This may be the opportunity for you to sit there with your glass of water. And y'all chit-chat, chit-chat, and they ask you, "Why you're not eating?" You're like, "Well, it's kind of a thing I'm doing right now."

If it's a large group of people, then maybe you take a smoothie and maybe you give up another meal, so it's not to be a distraction. But before we run to the fact that there's going to be a distraction there may be opportunity.

And so I've had those situations where I'm like, "It's okay, I might just sit at this table." Because sometimes I'm not fasting, I'm just trying to get my life together. And I'm like, "No carbs, just no carbs." You know what I'm saying?

And you know what, I think when we're just doing it for ourselves, we don't have a problem saying, "Oh, no dessert for me." Because then everybody is going to ask you why you're not eating dessert. You're like, "Well, I'm totally in a cleanse and all that stuff."

Annie: Right. Right.

Jada: And, so, I don't think you have to call attention to it and if someone's asking it could be that this is a moment for you to introduce fasting to them.

If it's a large group then you may just want to follow along, go along and figure out another way where you make that cut. But I'm just saying don't run to the fact that, "Oh, I got to eat because everybody's there."

Annie: Assume opportunity over distraction. Okay, so this is a great question. "How do you keep the attitude of using fasting to draw near to God and not using it as a means to get what you want or what you're praying for?"

Similarly, I think this is second one is really interesting. "If you're purposely using the fast to bring a specific issue or request to the Lord," which I do I'm sure you do, too, Jada. "How do you not have resentment, if what you spent your time praying about is answered with a 'No'?"

Jada: Oh, that's so good, that is so good. And on my spiritual days-

Annie: Right, let's talk about on our best days and on our worst days.

Jada: On my spiritual days, on my worst days I'm like, "God really, seriously. I said no to Key lime pie and you know me. Have you met me what's happening here?" And, so, but on my spiritual days, I really before I go into the fast I do a couple things. I try to look at

my calendar, what might be coming up? What might be a trigger, making it hard blah blah.

But then I also start thinking through what do I want to get out of this fast? Because I think it's hard to not be resentful if I went in with kind of the wrong goal.

And so even though I would love for God to answer He'll provide da, da, da. My main goal is a closeness and nearness and so, "God I want to be near to you." These are the things that are on my heart but the nearness is the most important. So I think you can want those things, but if they're not the grand goal, then you'll never be disappointed.

Annie: So let's say you fast on a Thursday for a thing that supposed to happen on Friday. The answer that happens on Friday is because you fasted and prayed. It may not be what you want. But the answer you got on Friday is because you fasted and prayed or if you don't get the answer till next Thursday, you still get to say, "Well, I fasted and prayed." And what we won't ever know is if that would have come later without the fast.

Jada: Yes, absolutely. And if you're still pursuing this nearness then you might have more revelation and more comfort. That even when it wasn't your answer it was still God's answer. And that comes from the nearness, because if I'm not near Him I'm just waiting on Him to do what I want.

But if I'm near He'll be like okay, "I just need you to know, girl, this thing might not go the way you're thinking, but it's still Me." And I've been in a situation where I've seen the thing go in a different direction than what I wanted, but the nearness was my assurance.

It's "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." Your nearness, your comfort, your presence, that's what gives me comfort. Not the avoidance or the deliverance or the light in the shadow.

I mean, it's just like, sometimes I'm still walking through the thing but His presence is the sweetest part. And God, "I don't know if I would have felt your presence like this had I not stripped away a few physical comforts. And, so, at the end of the day I think it's hard, but we have to just want God more than we want stuff from God and that's just hard.

Annie: I said food, you said stuff from God. I was like, what do I want more of? Food.

Jada: Seasoned fries, seasoned fries, is what you want me to say.

Annie: That's right. Okay, so let's listen to our friend who called in with this question.

Guest: Hey, Annie, I have some practical questions about fasting. The first being about fasting and children and how do you explain it to them? And this kind of spiritual practice of not eating but for Jesus, because the kids will come up with with fun ways to throw it back at you, and say, "I don't want peace for dinner because I'm fasting from peace for Jesus."

But also, because I keep hearing this concept of, "Oh, the time that you spent cooking and eating you should spend with God." And I think you'd have a hard time doing that when you're cooking still and making dinner for other people.

And then do you leave them at the table while you go spend time quietly alone or do you spend time with them, and then just make it up on the back end? I don't really know how it works out from a practical standpoint. When you have kiddos and need to feed kiddos, and need to make sure they don't choke. And then also, as they get older, have conversations with them that's for like a chance where you get to connect. So I'd love some advice on that.

Jada: I have littles and, so, they're four... almost five and eight, and so it has evolved. When they were young, young, I was just like, "You got to eat whatever." But then as they get older now with the Daniel fast, I will say, "Hey, kiddos, this week, we're going to give up something we really love because we love Jesus more."

Annie: Oh, wow.

Jada: And then I'll let them pick. So I won't make them skip a meal, all right?

Annie: Oh, sure.

Jada: Give up something like candy on the weekend or give up your, okay, "What's your favorite toy." And not until the end of the week or whatever. But then also I don't eat with them and, so, I started doing that probably a year or two ago where I could really explain it to them.

And they're like, "Mom, why are you not eating?" I'm like, well, because right now, even though I love food, I'm not having it because I really love Jesus more. And, so, right now I'm just going to kind of make sure I'm focused on Jesus." And I just explain it really simple and then that's it. They accept whatever you tell them. Now my discipline has been, I tend to nibble while I cook.

Annie: Yeah.

Jada: And, so, I really had to go into the, it sounds so ridiculous I had to pray for these things. But those little things, they kind of break your discipline so they become an excuse, and then you've nibbled, literally, a whole portion of food after all the time you've cooked.

So I had to go into dinner like going in get my mind like, "Hey, no, do not eat out of the pot, do not, do not." And, yeah, you still do it sometimes I don't beat myself up. But I try to go in very aware because otherwise, like we do with a lot of things, it will be like this doesn't count. It counts. And so this is so crazy, it might just be me. But if you've ever fasted there's something liberating or empowering about feeling that hunger pain.

Annie: Yes.

- Jada:** Number one, knowing that your body is actually empty, because we, most of the time, don't get to that. And number two, knowing that I'm hungry but I'm not near death. I can say no, I got this. There's something, I don't know, there's something about it for me.
- Annie:** I mean, I love that feeling of like, you know who's not control? My body. I mean, it is I love the feeling of feeling like my flesh is submitting to my spirit. It also hurts and it makes me cry and it makes me mad, and I get hungry like everybody else. But then you have this moment of like, "Oh yeah, you know who's not going to win my body-
- Jada:** My body.
- Annie:** ...that is not eternal. My body is not eternal, so it does not win.
- Jada:** Oh, my gosh! Oh, my gosh! And we just had to go to a pizza party one time and the kids were all having pizza. It was a birthday party and pizza literally, is my spiritual nemesis. If I can be stranded, if I had to be stranded on an island and had one comfort food-
- Annie:** Pizza.
- Jada:** It'd be pizza. If I had two it'd be pizza and seasoned fries. So, pizza, literally, if I could marry the pizza, I'll be like, "Yes, come to my life." So we're at this pizza party. And fortunately, I do have some pretty good pizza tastes I don't always like kids pizza.
- But we were there and it was good pizza place. I was like "Oh, my gosh, who picked this place for kids' party?" And, so, the lady was like, "Oh, and this is the adult pizza over here, it's nice and fancy blah, blah. And then I was literally looking at it and my son goes, "My mom is not having pizza today because she loves Jesus more." I was like, "Oh, my gosh!"
- Annie:** No, accountability.
- Jada:** I was like, you know what you go jump on the, what? Just go over there, please.
- Annie:** Go play, go play.
- Jada:** But then I couldn't and I was kind of glad I had explained it to them. Because the lady, they didn't go to our church, but she knew she said, "Y'all are fasting." I said, "Yes." She said, "Girl say no more." I said, "Thank you, son."
- Annie:** Okay, so my last question, Jada, is your life markedly different because fasting is a discipline that's a part of your life?
- Jada:** Yes. And I would say it could be even more. I wish, there are times that I just know God is calling me to give up something. But man, January, there's a time in the summer, there's a time in the fall that seasonally I'll do it it has changed the game for me, honestly.

And my concern is that I wish I pressed into it more. Because by February, March, and you get into, I'm back into my regular. And then I'm sad because I'm like, "January, February is such great months." So if I could just stay in it and if your life is not always consistent, if you travel, if you don't always eat at home and there's a lot of things that can play into that. But I will say this, God has really shown me about giving, like I said, just a general principle of self-denial.

Like I'm a music junkie, I don't get in my car without the music on or podcasts on, I love listening. It's on when you come in my house all the time.

And there are times where I'm driving somewhere far and God will be like, "No silence." I'm like, "Oh my gosh, I'm not going to be listening to this audio book or to this song or to this?" And that's just something that may happen on a day, like, I just need to clear my mind. Or He'll say, "Hey, unless it's, do you have anything urgent, I'll be thinking through it, "No phone calls until for the next hour." No, ticks just don't do anything. And I'll go like, "Aargh."

So it's not always food but I think that the general principle of giving up things that have become distractions have shifted my, I want to say I'm more godly, I think I can work quickly be near to God. You know what I'm saying?

Annie: Yes, of course.

Jada: It's kind of like I can just more quickly get into a space of, "Okay, calm, simple, quiet, all right, God." And sometimes He says nothing. He's just like, "I just want you to be quiet. I don't have no deep revelation just clear your mind."

Annie: The girl I mentor when we were talking about it last week, I said, "Sometimes fasting is just depositing into an account so that God can draw from it in the future."

Jada: Absolutely. So that when you fast next time it's not the first time you've ever done it and you spend the first two days mad.

Annie: That's right. And when Jesus, remember there's a point where the disciples were trying to cast out demons and they aren't able to do it, and Jesus shows up and He's able to do it. He says, "Well, these only come out by prayer and fasting."

But we don't know that Jesus was fasting right then. What we know is He prayed and He fasted. And, to me, there is a bank account that that stuff deposits in and the Lord goes, "I can write that check right now because in 2021 you fasted for two days, and in 2022 I needed that.

Jada: Mh-hmm. Praise to God, yes.

Annie: Let's deposit, let's deposit. Oh, Jada, I love you. Thanks for doing this.

Jada: Yaaay, thanks, Annie.

[00:38:45] <Music>

Annie: Oh, man, Ash, she's brilliant.

Ashley: Absolutely.

Annie: I mean, that language about self-denial, as the Lord does, we're going to see that continue to show up in these other two conversations. Even though all three of these were recorded independently on the same couple of days. But independently, I'm super, super impressed with that.

Ashley: So just like we played an audio clip of a question from a friend for Jada, we have one for you as well. So let's go ahead and listen to this question.

Guest: Hey Annie, another question for you is about breaking fast and your advice there. I did a sunset-to-sunset fast after hearing you and John Mark Comer discussing it on the podcast.

And I caught myself really stressed out about when exactly sunset is. I ended up looking at an app on my phone to see when the official sunset is in my area and then I watched the clock a little too closely.

And, so, I was curious about advice both on kind of having a good attitude or maybe the right mindset to approach that end of fast. If there's any sort of, I'm going to say ritual, but the practice there that would make sense.

And then also afterwards I found myself overeating a bit which physically didn't feel good. But then also it didn't feel like the right kind of way to wrap that practice up. So I would love some advice for breaking a fast as well.

Annie: Oh my gosh, this friend, bless her heart.

Ashley: I know.

Annie: I get it, I totally get it. Sunset-to-sunset is what you're saying. I tend to talk more meal-to-meal. So I think we can let go of the rules that you may have heard John Mark, and I say. As far as sunset is 6:37 you don't have to stop eating at 6:37.

Ashley: Right.

Annie: I would say if you're doing sunset-to-sunset that means you are stopping after dinner. And you are not eating again until the next night's dinner.

Ashley: Right.

Annie: And, so, I think that is more a healthier mindset for me, is I go "If I'm fasting today that means I do not eat today." From when I wake up till I go to bed I do not eat, I drink, I

do not eat. But if I'm doing something like, Jada talked about, where I'm going until 3 pm.

Ashley: Right.

Annie: Also, like our friend mentioned, the temptation to overeat is certainly there because you're hungry.

Ashley: Right.

Annie: But as Jada also talked about it's an ease out, it's a slow out. Maybe a banana, maybe an apple, maybe something at three o'clock that is not a meal that sets you up to still eat dinner with your people.

Ashley: Right.

Annie: All these questions say a thing to me about how much our friends care.

Ashley: Yes. So honest.

Annie: And so yay, good. Do the best you can. If the sun has set and you are halfway through your dinner, the Lord would love for you to finish your dinner.

Ashley: Right.

Annie: It will be fine. He knows our hearts. He knows our hearts. He knows our hearts. The other question I want to do before we introduce our next guest because, again, we are not medical professionals. So we have pulled aside the medical questions because we just can't answer them.

Ashley: Right.

Annie: So, us people here, Christine talks about when she was pregnant how she handled fasting. So a lot of questions about pregnancy and breastfeeding and what you do fasting wise during those.

Ashley: Right.

Annie: Spoiler alert, you don't.

Ashley: Yeah, yeah, you don't.

Annie: Did you fast while you're pregnant with any of your girls?

Ashley: No.

Annie: No.

Ashley: Gosh, no.

Annie: Yeah.

Ashley: If I may say I also, during those seasons when I wasn't fasting as a regular rhythm. I also found aspects of pregnancy and nursing to be some of the moments of like the closest communion with the Lord that I've ever had.

Annie: Ah, yeah.

Ashley: So there's not a way in which that felt as if I got further away from Him, because I paused that rhythm.

Annie: Yes, that's beautiful. That's exactly right. So one of the questions that I got is, "How does fasting look different for me, because I've been diagnosed with PCOS."

This friend also has PCOS and has been hesitant to fast. And, again, this is descriptive not prescriptive, this is not for everyone. But for me and my body, for all sorts of reasons, but PCOS has never gotten in the way of my fasting spiritual discipline.

Also, our friends will hear us say in the future, if I do any kind of fast longer than my birthday fast, the one seven, even the seven-day one, my counselor, my pastor, my doctor, all know.

Ashley: Yep.

Annie: And so because those three know if something goes sideways with my body, because of PCOS or anything else I have resources.

Ashley: Yeah.

Annie: I have people that are with me in that. We had a ton of questions, Ashley, come in from our friends who are concerned about eating disorders. How to handle fasting as a spiritual discipline when they want to be mostly concerned about their body.

Ashley: Mh-hmm.

Annie: Join the club-

Ashley: Sure, same, same.

Annie: And this is, and people have heard the answer, I think we've answered this already. But the interesting thing is we got a couple questions like, "Why would we talk to mostly women about this?"

Ashley: Yeah.

Annie: And it's this part.

Ashley: Yeah.

Annie: This is the part that is different. Because culture tells women, American culture tells women, to be a certain size and not a number but just smaller than you are.

Ashley: Yes, take up less space than do.

Annie: Take up less space than you do right now. And that has clipped some fasting wings in some of our female friends. So Aundi Kolber is here. I adore her. Y'all remember she was on episode 196.

She's a licensed therapist and author of the book *Try Softer*. She's a trauma-informed therapist and she's such a wise and gentle voice. I think you're really going to find her perspectives here healing and helpful. So here is a couple of more of your questions answered by our friend Aundi Kolber.

[00:44:24] <Music>

Annie: Aundi, welcome back to That Sounds Fun.

Aundi: Yay, oh, it's good to be back with you.

Annie: I'm so happy you're here. I love anytime you're on. I just need you to keep writing books or keep having things so that we get to talk on in front of everyone. It would make me so happy so keep on keeping on.

Aundi: I love it and I'm working on it.

Annie: Okay, good. Okay, good. I reached out to you as part of this fasting conversation. Because such a big part of fasting, particularly for women, is what goes on in your mind.

So will you tell a little bit about your counseling background and kind of who you are in case our friends are meeting you for the first time. And your story with fasting and how it is a part of your life as a spiritual discipline?

Aundi: Yeah, well, thanks for having me. I'm really honored. And I love that you would bring in some mental health perspectives to this. Because I think, historically, we haven't always done that well in the church and it really matters. And so I'm just so glad, I'm glad to be able to talk about this. Because I think it's about the wholeness and fullness of who we are as people.

So I am a licensed professional counselor in Castle Rock, Colorado. And I often say that I'm a trauma-informed therapist. And what I mean with that, it's a big idea. But it means that the work that I do is so much more than just talk therapy. It's really about honoring that we literally hold our stories in our bodies.

Meaning the lives, we've lived, the pain we've experienced, the joy we've lived it's encoded in our bodies. And even without words our bodies express our stories. And so a lot of the work that I do is about learning. I'm helping folks to really learn to attune to their bodies, to honor their bodies, to listen to their nervous systems and their cues.

Often that's to help heal trauma but it's also just a part of being human. And I think it's a bigger picture of this is what it means to be made in the image of God. And so part of my story, I am a survivor of complex trauma.

And a part of my story that I actually haven't talked about a ton publicly, but I'm happy to share is that I do have a history of disordered eating, particularly, in my teen years and in college. And this was at a time where I was also an athlete. And so that was a complex world, because I-

Annie: And you were also a Christian at the time, right?

Aundi: Yes, I'd been a Christian really, I grew up faith as a part of my life. And I was definitely that was a part of my life in my teen years and in college as well. And, so, you and I were talking just a minute before we hit record, but one of the things, for me, and part of the reason why, honestly, I was like "Yeah, I do want to talk about this." Is I remember being in high school and I think I was like a junior. I was already in varsity. I was a pretty decent basketball player.

But there were some folks doing some fasting and I decided I wanted to participate, particularly, fasting from food. So it's like the beginning of basketball season. I think it's like my first or second day like we get back into tryouts, which is usually the hardest days.

Annie: Right. Right.

Aundi: And bless my heart, I did fast and at the end of the second night or I think I wasn't completely fasting. But I was really cutting back from eating enough food to be doing the level of activity I was.

And at the end of the night, I was dizzy and I almost fainted and I started to feel sick. And then I was like, "Oh, I don't think I'll be able to participate in basketball if I'm doing this." And it was one of those times in my life where at that time I felt some shame. Because I felt like, "Oh, man, I should be able to do this."

But what I was missing was the context of so much. At that time, I had so much unaddressed trauma. I had a history and experiences with disordered eating and that was absolutely playing into my decision. Like, "Ooh, I'll work out more and if I'm eating, less."

Annie: Yeah, and it's spiritual.

Aundi: And it's spiritual. And here's the thing and I have so much compassion for that younger me. I think there was a lot happening below the surface that I wasn't even able to acknowledge cognitively.

Which definitely influences the work that I do now. That sometimes those stories we hold in our body we're not even in a place where we're able to acknowledge them in a conscious way. Which is why this discussion on fasting, particularly around food, matters so much.

Because there are ways we can learn to listen to our bodies and really participate with God in the listening. To say, "In what way God can I walk with you to really move towards the goal of spiritual formation here." How can this work be done in a way that yes, like, I want to experience God but I also don't want to create more harm.

Annie: Yes. So when we're looking at the question, just for our friends listening. We took every question that came in and split them up between what they've heard me answer independently. What they've heard Jada and I talk about. What they'll hear you and I talk about, and what they'll hear Christine and I talk about.

And so we aren't going to go through every single question but yours that we specifically put in this section, I mean, an overwhelming amount of questions were pretty much the same question. "I have a history with eating disorders." "I have a history with disordered eating in some way."

And, Aundi, our friends listening know that that is true about me too. I wrote about it one of my books. I saw a disordered eating counselor for a while that is part of my history as well. I don't know a lot of women who don't have some touchpoint with disordered eating at some point in their lives.

So I'll just read you the first question but this is, for our friends listening, this is one of about 70 questions that this is the question. "I have a history of disordered eating and restricting feels like a potentially slippery slope. So what are your suggestions?"

Aundi: So I think the first thing I want to just say, because I didn't even say it in the first part, is that I think the idea of fasting and just really the concept can really be beautiful. There's a lot of good there. It's not bad that you want to say like, "God, I want to meet you." And there's something really holy that there can be something really holy about our discomfort.

And I think in a sense that's what fasting gets at, is that when we have this element of discomfort we can connect to God in a potentially a way that we can't, when we're really comfortable.

Annie: Yes.

Aundi: So there's some good to that. But what you and I have also talked about is that there's a difference between discomfort and harm. And I believe, with everything in me, that

God does not want us to harm ourselves. That we are called like discomfort can be holy, but harm is not. And so much of this conversation is really about that.

So this person who's asked this question, so thank you for asking this question. And thank you for even knowing that like, "This feels like a slippery slope."

First, I want to say pay attention to that. That's a good thing to be aware of. That is actually your body giving you information. Your God-given body it works like that on purpose. To bring that up to your awareness to say, "Something here is not right."

And if we go back to that question of is this going to produce life or is this going to produce death? Is this discomfort that will produce growth or is this harm that will produce death? And that's where we really want to know there's a big difference.

And so what I would encourage folks to be aware of is that, generally speaking, if there's a history of eating disorders, disordered eating, also potentially trauma, childhood trauma, abuse. Essentially, if there are patterned stories of harm that live in your body, you are not bad, you are not less than.

But what that means is that, that can potentially influence us in acting in ways that aren't really truly in alignment with what God has for us. And this is where curiosity and creativity can be helpful.

So for example, for me, like the way that fasting in my own life looks like. Honestly, social media is probably my number one thing that I regularly fast from. And I do that just really recognizing, on so many levels, that sometimes I literally need this space and clarity so that I can hear God. So that I can connect with God in a way that it's just not possible when I've got however millions of people out in the world saying what they have to say.

And so, for me personally, that is a spiritually formative practice that builds, that it moves me towards life. I feel more like myself, not less. And so for folks who are wondering about these questions, this is a really important one.

When you engage in this practice, what's the fruit? What's being born? What is coming from it? Like, can you hear God more clearly? Are you honoring your body in a way that feels more in alignment with what God has for you? Not what the scale says your value is based on. Not what a clothe size says. Not what like anybody else but like the true wholeness that resides in you like does that feel more intact? And I think that's part of the way we know with any spiritual discipline.

Annie: As you're talking I'm thinking about fasting versus dieting versus a cleanse. Because sometimes fasting and a cleanse can look really similar. But I almost have to do a pro/con list or when I'm fasting this is what this does mean and this is what doesn't matter.

But when I'm doing a cleanse, something feels wrong in my body, I'm trying to get healthier in my body. So it is okay if I'm thinking about my body changing. Does that feel true?

Aundi: It does. It does. And I do think that, that even, and this is not me saying. Because I really like to make sure that I don't, one of the things I say is, I don't give advice.

Annie: Yes, and we've talked about we are being descriptive not prescriptive, yes. We're not medical, well, you are a medical professional, I'm not a medical professional. We are not physicians.

Aundi: There you go. I'm not a physician, yes. But what I would just say is that even cleanses for some folks can also be triggering and, so, I just honor that. And that's why I say there's a lot of nuance to the folks that are going to be hearing what I'm saying here.

When I talk from a trauma-informed perspective, though, essentially, and honestly, this feels like right in line with Jesus, to me, is that I'm thinking about the person who has been the most harmed. And I want, to the best of my ability, the words that I say to also be applicable there, as much as to the person who's like, "Yeah, I've experienced a little bit of hardship but I'm okay." There's this sense in which we are honoring the spectrum of it.

Annie: Because we do have questions from people that are very actively still having eating disorders. So we do have the whole spectrum of people asking questions. People who are in recovery and people who are not yet in recovery.

Aundi: So when you asked me to do this, it was so interesting because this verse came in my brain. And it was from Isaiah 58:6, and I don't know if you know this one.

Annie: No, I've never heard it.

Aundi: But it was like, "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to lose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke. To set the oppressed free and break every yoke." And the reason, so in the book of Isaiah it's essentially like right before then, the people are doing a certain kind of fasting and they look really humble and the author is talking about that.

But I love that there's this verse and here's what's so helpful to me about it is here's this other picture of fasting. This is a picture of fasting that's actually about freedom. This is a picture of fasting, that's about untying the yokes.

So for those of us who have a history where we have lived in bondage. Where maybe your entire life, the narrative that's been living in your body is you don't deserve goodness. You don't deserve food. You don't deserve to be loved. You have to work harder.

So what would it look like? So if we go back to that discomfort idea that is holy, to say, "You know what, it's sometimes really uncomfortable for me to receive goodness." Is

that a spiritual formation practice? Is that a sense that there's a fasting element to saying, kind of like in Isaiah, like, there's a freedom that comes from this type of discomfort too.

And, so, for folks who are listening who really resonate with like, "This is my story." Because we don't, and this is not my direct quote, I can't remember who to give it to. But like, we can't heal in the same way we've been harmed. We actually have to do something different.

And so I just want to encourage folks like how can you be creative, to be able to say, "Okay, what is it that God's calling me to? What's God asking from me?" And is there a way to allow God to meet you in that journey, in a way that's really specific to you?

So like, if connection has always felt really painful, what would it look like to have one small step, it's not this huge thing. But maybe this is your discomfort practice that allows you to meet God where you say, "You know what, I'm just going to text one person every day." Or like, "I'm going to try this one group in this way." These are just like examples of, I think God is so creative and really empowers us to do this work with the picture of where are we going?

Annie: Yeah.

Aundi: How do we get there in a way that really leads us to wholeness?

Annie: Yeah. Okay, Aundi, that makes me think let's listen to Lydia's question that she sent in. Because I would love for you to tie what you're saying to what Lydia has to ask.

Lydia: Hi Annie and friends. My name is Lydia, thank you so much for hosting this conversation about fasting. As someone who struggles with my body with its size and its shape, and who struggles to love and honor my body well in its current form.

How do I engage in fasting in a way that honors God and not in a way that engages with body shame or with concerns about trying to fix my body? How do I separate the spiritual discipline of fasting from my own shame and anxiety about how my body looks?

Aundi: Lydia, that's such a good question and it's so valid and I think a lot of people have questions similar to that. And kind of like I was saying in the earlier part of the show. But I'll tie this in that I would encourage you to consider if fasting is going to actually be life-giving. In the sense that you may not be in a place where you're able to do it in a way that's not harmful for you.

And what I mean by that is fasting from food specifically. And I say that, like, even as soon as that leaves my mouth, do you know what I feel, is I feel like there will be this backlash from folks who'll be like, "But that makes me bad. That makes me less than. That means maybe I don't have as much faith."

And maybe if that's a question that's coming up for you as you hear me begin to address that, is to say that Jesus was always centering, and loving, and attuning, and attending, to the people who really were in the most pain. Who were hurting. Who were needing the most support. And I just want you to hear that, if that's you, Jesus is already right there moving towards you.

So please know that not doing something as a way to honor your own limits is so loving and so in line with the heart of God. And with that said, this other question, "So I don't shame myself and so I don't do these things."

I think the question that I would then want to encourage you to explore, Lydia, or anybody else is, is there a way to dip your toe into this idea of really honoring this body that has carried you. That has lived so much life, that has held your pain, that has allowed you to take up as much space as you have needed.

So going back to this idea of discomfort, if that sounds uncomfortable to you, could that be a clue that this is a place to press in? And I say that like we want to do that with honor, like we always want to be checking in with ourselves.

Because if this is your story, if you go too fast it can actually create a whiplash. Where then you're like, "Actually, I really don't like my body." Like if you push too fast and this is where again, going back harm versus discomfort, always keeping that in mind.

So not to push this but I just released it's called the Try Softer: Guided Journey. And a lot of what I do there are several practices that really help folks first engage with what is even your line. Like where's the line in your body where it goes from discomfort to harm.

Annie: How do you learn that though, Aundi? How do you know where that line is? Because I'm thinking about Lydia, and myself, and a lot of our friends. We decide to try fasting for a day and we're fine at breakfast and then at lunch, how do we know if it's discomfort or harm?

How do we know whether to push through and go like, "I'm going to do this discipline for this one day or for this one meal?" How do we know where the line is like, "This is uncomfortable." And where the line is like, "Okay, now my brain is not healthy, I need to honor that?"

Aundi: Great question. I think, a couple of cues that I would say is one is, is if you begin to feel really disconnected from your body, that's actually a sign.

Annie: Like you're fighting against your body.

Aundi: Yes, like that will usually come first. And, again, the discomfort is, is that, "Okay, this is discomfort, but I can ride it like a wave." Usually, that's what it means to be uncomfortable. Like, "I can stay with this, I can ride it like a wave." It's like, "I can lean in, but I'm present, I am myself."

Harm typically looks like, literally, I'm fighting myself or it goes beyond that to I just don't even feel connected to myself. I don't know what's happening in my body. If someone asked me like, "Are you hungry." I'd be like, "I literally don't even have any idea anymore."

Annie: Right.

Aundi: That's actually a sign that you might be dissociating and that's a survival mode, sort of like, essentially stress and or trauma response. And so those are some clues that this is crossing over that line.

[01:06:29] <Music>

Annie: Hey friends, I would love to share with you about our incredible partner, ID Tech Camp. About this time every school year, I start hearing from some of my mini BFFs' parents about how their kiddos are struggling in their math classes. Math can be tough, at least, until students are able to connect the concepts to things that matter to them in real-life.

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That code THATSOUNDSFUN at idtech.com/thatoundsfun, saves you \$150 and your child can start learning online from a live instructor right now. [Idtech.com/thatoundsfun](https://idtech.com/thatoundsfun). And now back to our Q&A about faith and fasting.

[01:08:18] <Music>

Annie: Another one of our friends asked, "How do we talk about fasting in a way that isn't triggering for our friends who struggle with disordered eating?" So maybe it isn't us. We've gotten multiple questions from women saying, "Well, I live in America. So I'm

affected by the desire for thinness but I don't have a history with eating disorders." And I love this question like how can I do this and not trigger my friends that are in the middle of a hard season with eating disorders? How do we talk about it with our friends?

Aundi: Sometimes it's just really helpful to ask. To say, "Hey, do you feel comfortable talking about this? And if not, it's okay." And if they say, "You know what I don't think I do." "Cool, let's talk about something else."

I think the biggest thing is really asking permission consent. And obviously like we can't always, unfortunately, because we are also complex and messy. There's going to be a time where our stuff is going to sometimes interact with somebody else's stuff in a way that is triggering.

Annie: It is just the nature of being human.

Aundi: Yes. And so for people who are hearing that both ways. If you are a person who has a history with this, and this is triggering for you, I would encourage you to advocate for yourself.

If you hear a friend saying this and this makes your body begin to go up into like fight or flight or even like you feel like you have to disconnect. I encourage you to say, "Hey, you know what, I don't really feel comfortable talking about this right now. Would it be okay if we change the subject?" And, so, I think that can really go both ways.

And it makes me think of Jesus's command to love your neighbor as yourself. There's this mutuality, like, "I'm going to do my best to show up for you. I trust that you're going to do your best to show up for me."

And in that I'm also going to try to show up for myself and all of that working together creates more safety, more care, more sense of like, "Listen, if God is calling you to that, bless you. Bless you, I pray it will be fruitful. I pray that you are able to hear God in ways you never have before. I pray that."

And may there be enough safety, that if that's not the season that I'm in, if that's not okay for my body or someone else's body, we would have the safety built in that that person could say, "You know what, I think I need to step out of this."

Annie: And it feels a little bit like, I'm thinking about when Jesus talked about fasting, and He kind of said, like, "Don't let people know. Keep it to yourself." And we've talked about with Jada and with Chris, this idea of having a couple of accountability people.

So, for me, if I'm doing a fast, my counselor, my doctor, and my pastor know. But outside of that people don't know. And so I'm not necessarily talking at a dinner table about fasting that could accidentally trigger someone while I'm fasting. Because already Jesus told us not to do that. Part of the thing is just keep doing your life and let go of food for a greater love.

So I'm wondering about that too, Aundi, about the safe people who, if for our friends that are really, and this is a couple of the questions. So our friends that are in the middle of disordered eating or have it in their history, who do they tell? If they decide they want to try this spiritual discipline?

Aundi: Yeah, well, I love what you're modeling there. That you're absolutely would recommend be connected to a therapist, if that's something that you're considering.

Potentially a dietitian would be just as or someone who can help with nutrition and really understand that if that's something that you really feel called to. To really understand that this is something that is happening in many ways in the spiritual realm, but also in a physical. We don't bypass our bodies.

Annie: Yes. That's good.

Aundi: And so you really need that support. And I think a pastor can be really be helpful if that feels safe to you. I think, folks who you feel like if when you sense in your body that you can be who you really are with them. Those are the people to pay attention to, those are the people that you, and again, there's a whole wide spectrum.

But usually our body gives us clues as to who is really safe, who we really feel safe with. And if that idea is foreign to you, this is where I think therapy matters so much.

Because this is often where we learn the templates. This is where we can have some reparative experiences. Because for folks, for example, who've had childhood trauma, it's really common to not completely, like your body can sometimes create a mismatch.

Annie: Wow, wow.

Aundi: Like for example, we might move towards people who actually aren't safe and we feel scared of people who are.

Annie: Ah, yeah.

Aundi: And often that is about the story in our body, about where we've received some sort of connection in the past. And if the way you've been parented or socialized or cared for was in a place that resulted in not being safe. Without even being conscious of it you may move towards folks like that.

Annie: Man, our bodies and our brains, fascinating, isn't it?

Aundi: It really is and I am constantly in awe. God gave us, like our bodies are are phenomenal.

Annie: Brilliant. Yes, they're brilliant.

Aundi: I mean, we are obviously so fragile, we're human and finite. But I mean, the ways that our bodies can grow and change and give us information, it's phenomenal.

Annie: I mean, something we say around here a lot is, "Your body does not lie." If you're tired, you are actually tired. Your body doesn't know how to lie it's your brain that lies to you. Your body doesn't lie to you.

Aundi: Your brain creates a story around the autonomic state that you're experiencing.

Annie: Ah, right.

Aundi: And this is why it's become so important to me, I mean, all the work that they do is body-centered and obviously, there's more than just that. Like we're talking, there's the relational aspect, and there's all this stuff.

But the body, if there was a pyramid the body would be at the bottom. In the sense that it's the foundation, everything comes through that lens. And so this is why I really go hard after this idea that we don't bypass the body. And it exactly goes with what you're saying, the body doesn't lie.

Annie: We had a couple of different people reach out who are teenagers and teenagers wanting to participate in fasting, but wanting to know how to do that well.

Some reached out that had eating disorders or have struggled with eating disorders. And others just said, "I'm young, can I do this if I'm young? I live with my parents?"

We had some single women reach out and say, "I live with other people. What does it look like to fast when I'm a college student and I live in the sorority house and I have 15 roommates?" So will you talk to young women for just a minute about how to incorporate this discipline? And who should be involved with them?

Aundi: Yeah, well, I think one thing to consider and I haven't really touched on this, but it goes, it probably speaks to some things from earlier in the show to our conversation as well. Is that if this is a new practice to you one concept that you may sort of consider and try is this idea of, in the work that I do it's like titration. And titration essentially means you don't go like, "I'm going to do a seven-day fast, water only, boom."

Annie: Starting tomorrow.

Aundi: Yeah, like, no. I mean, really, I'm not even going to go there.

Annie: No.

Aundi: But titration might be saying, like, "I feel led, to the best of my ability, I believe God's calling me to this. I'm curious about it, I think this might be good." It might be saying something like, "You know, I'm going to try for the next two days to skip my dinner and these are the people I'm going to tell about it. Here's how I'm going to make sure I have enough support and here's what I'm going to do so that I am supported." The relational piece really matters.

But I would say like, what are you doing during that time? So that there is a sense in which how can you get filled up from the absence that you're creating?

So like this is really random, I'm in Castle Rock, Colorado, and I love going walking and listening to worship music. For me, that just fills me up. I experience God when I'm moving differently than many other ways. So like, that would be an example, for me, of putting a spiritual practice in and receiving.

Annie: Yes, that's beautiful. Yes.

Aundi: In the space that's created. So the two big things there are well, actually three; the first is, to do something that moves you towards this thing you're being led to in a way that feels doable. As you do it make sure you're paying attention. That you're listening even to the cues of your body. Again, and again I say this but that difference between harm and discomfort, it matters in every single one of these things.

Making sure you have accountability. If you do have a history of eating disorders. One of the things that can sometimes happen is silence and isolation can feed the part of us who feels like, "I'm going to do this and I'm just going to like keep it really, really quiet. I'm not going to tell anybody about it." It feeds that narrative.

And so we want to be so mindful that we really have good support and that you're really checking in with folks around that concept. And then finally, having something to fill you up in the space.

Annie: I mean, I also would like to say and you can tell me if I'm wrong. I super honor a young woman wanting to do this. I think it's beautiful.

Aundi: Mh-hmm.

Annie: There is no Junior Holy Spirit. So there's not an age where it's appropriate to start certain spiritual disciplines. You can invite all of them into your life at any age. But what you're saying, particularly, when you're living in your parents' home, particularly, if you have any sort of eating thoughts that are not the healthiest, having some accountability, letting your parents know, having those people involved probably is really wise.

Aundi: Absolutely. And I think this is really that practice of holding. All of this entire conversation we've had is about the practice of multiple truths. There's multiple, like we really, absolutely, it's beautiful that these young women are wanting to move closer and listen to how God may be leading them. That's so beautiful. And that is not mutually exclusive from this reality of honoring the information of our body.

The reality that our culture is giving us messages all the time without us even being aware of it. About how we should be and how we should do all these things. And so all of this comes back to this idea that, you know what, we're already, we're so loved. And

because that's true we have the freedom. There's no rush. God's not like, "Hey, I'm checking my watch, I can't believe that you're da, da, da."

We're so loved, that is the ground of our being. And so because that's true in freedom you can explore the ways that God may be calling you to be formed. You already belong, you already matter, God is already with you.

Annie: He is already listening to your prayers, He is already attentive to what you are saying. Yes, that's exactly right, Aundi.

Aundi: That's right. And so because from that freedom, that's my prayer for anybody who's listening. That you would move in that freedom to know that God empowers you. To do whatever spiritual formation practices and disciplines that you need to become more aware of God already with you.

Annie: Yes. Okay, the very last question that I've been asking. Is your life different because of fasting?

Aundi: Absolutely. It is different in the sense that when I feel led, for me, it's always about creating spaciousness. Like, that is the theme for me. The theme of saying this thing, whatever I feel like I'm led to, it's creating too much noise. And, for me, it's always really coming into alignment and centering with, "What is God saying to me?"

And I know that because my full self is so integrated and in alignment that it's like ringing this really clear bell. And that's what it feels like when I allow and listen to leaning into fasting.

Annie: Beautiful, Aundi, thank you. Thank you so much. What a healthy and helpful part of this conversation.

Aundi: It's my honor. Thank you so much for having me.

[01:22:50] <Music>

Annie: Ashley, what did you think about Aundi

Ashley: Oh, I teared up a couple of times, just because the tenderness with which she approaches. All of the wisdom that she shared it just feels so dear and safe.

Annie: Yes. When she talked about discomfort versus harm, that is a line in the sand for me.

Ashley: What a brilliant filter.

Annie: We don't bypass our bodies. We don't bypass our bodies.

Ashley: That's right.

Annie: Which I also think is really interesting because our bodies are the not eternal part of us.

Ashley: Right.

Annie: And yet they're the bottom of the triangle, of the pyramid.

Ashley: It just can't be separated.

Annie: Yeah.

Ashley: Until eternity it just can't be separated, we're whole beings with all of those things.

Annie: Yeah, it's amazing.

Ashley: Yeah.

Annie: Okay, so here's a couple more questions that came in for me specifically. One friend says, "Do you fast on a certain day, like a work day or a Sabbath or a weekend?" I do not fast on my Sabbath. There ain't no world, no. It would have to be a 911 fast.

Ashley: Yeah.

Annie: In order for me to not feast on my Sabbath day with my friends. Even my breakfast, I make is usually what I spend a little more time on.

Ashley: Mh-hmm.

Annie: Because I have that kind of time on a Sabbath. So I do not fast as a normal weekly rhythm on my Sabbath. It's a workday, it's just a workday. And weekend, again, weekend would be hard. And I think you need to be careful what your week looks like.

I think there are days that my weekly fast does not align with we're having a work lunch or there's someone's coming into the office or we're celebrating a new staff member. And so I will shift it that week.

Ashley: Yeah.

Annie: But most weeks it's pretty aligned. Before we talk to Christine this question, I think this is the only one highlighted of the 100 plus we got we got well, of the hundreds that we got. This is the only one I highlighted, I think it's really important. Here's the question, "It feels like following Jesus in general and as a single woman, in particular, already means giving up so much. Why do I have to sometimes give up food too?"

Ashley: Aah.

Annie: It's beautiful question.

Ashley: Absolutely.

- Annie:** There's a couple of answers. Our life, whether you are single or married, whether you have children or no children, our life with Jesus is about sacrifice.
- Ashley:** Mh-hmm.
- Annie:** Take up your cross and follow Him. So we are all sacrificing something. Your yesterday meant a lot of nos today.
- Ashley:** True.
- Annie:** And so we are all sacrificing. I understand so deeply the feeling of here is a full cup and I lose a quarter of that cup because of this and a quarter cup because of this. So I got to lose another quarter of that cup? So the question is a concern that I do not have enough. That everything's being taken from me. What I have found is true is my life with Jesus cost me some and gives me everything.
- Ashley:** Oh.
- Annie:** My life as a single woman has cost me some and has given me everything. And my discipline of fasting has cost me some and has given me everything.
- Ashley:** Mh-hmm.
- Annie:** And so yes, of course, it feels like we're giving up one more thing, of course, that is true. And also, what you gain outweighs what you lose.
- Ashley:** Yeah, there's a sustaining that God can only do when we get to the end of ourselves.
- Annie:** Yes, yes. Beautiful. That's it. That's it. So, we hear you friends and we get it. And there are a lot of women who could say, "Jesus and blank plus fasting feels like too much."
- Ashley:** Right.
- Annie:** And there's, "Jesus plus my relationship with my family plus fasting feels like too much. Jesus plus my children plus fasting feels like too much." I mean, Jesus plus anything plus fasting feels like too much.
- Ashley:** Right.
- Annie:** I get it. Jesus plus not being married yet plus fasting feels like too much of my life too. I 100% hear you. And also, He's worth it.
- Ashley:** Right.
- Annie:** He's worth it. He's worth it. Okay, now, the volume difference between what just happened with Aundi and what's about to happen with Chris is significant.
- Ashley:** That's true.

Annie: Chris and I are ready to go. Y'all know our sweet friend Christine Caine; Australian-born, Greek-blooded, Jesus-loving Bible teacher, author and activist. She's been on the pod a couple of times. Way back on episode 82 and then again, most recently, on 297. And you may hear her dog in the background, he has some real thoughts about fasting.

I just love Chris's heart and her fire and the freedom she speaks over us. So here's our chat, including a lot of your questions with Christine Caine.

[01:27:34] <Music>

Annie: Chris, welcome back to That Sounds Fun. Thanks for doing this.

Christine: I'm fired up to be with you, Annie, truly.

Annie: It's going to be so fun. Okay, so let's start with tell me about your life with fasting as a woman. How have you experienced fasting to draw you closer to Jesus?

Christine: Okay, it's a massive journey, you know Annie I grew up in the Greek Orthodox Church. So we had different liturgical times of the year where we fasted.

But I have to admit, we would fast, my parents especially, Lenten fasts are a big deal in the Greek Orthodox Church. Except from the time I was a little kid, we'd make all this big, sort of special preparations for fasting and then my parents would cheat all the time. And then they would tell us "If your cousins ask or if your aunts, don't tell her that you've eaten meat."

So I don't even know, probably, my first traumatic memories of fasting, that you don't tell the truth. And, so, I don't know it's setting us up in this whole podcast but that's what it comes down to.

They were my early years and but fasting was part of that Greek Orthodox faith. And let me quickly just tell a lot of people listening to this. A lot of people were very serious about it, just my family happened to be hypocritical.

Annie: Yeah.

Christine: And then, I really became a fully devoted follower of Jesus in my early 20s. And I didn't grow up reading the Bible I didn't know you could. And so I'm sitting down reading about the life of Jesus. I mean, Matthew and Luke and I'm reading about Jesus being taken up to the mountain being tempted by Satan and there's a 40-day fast. And of course, I'm a Pentecostal we are going to change the world and if Jesus, my Savior, fasted for 40 days, then guess what the very least I could do in my life was fast for 40 days-

Annie: Ah, come on.

Christine: I couldn't have lasted 40 minutes.

Annie: That's be like crazy you went from zero to 40.

Christine: Maybe 40 minutes and then I adopted my Greek method of fasting, which is like pretend.

Annie: Ah-hah, ah-hah.

Christine: And, so, that would be like all the deal. But then I started to read a whole lot more. And jokes aside, I started to develop, here's how it happened for me, in my early 20s. I started to develop a genuine hunger for God.

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Christine: I wanted more of God's presence. I wanted more of God's power. I wanted to see that working through my life. And, Annie, you know I came from such a broken background that I needed some breakthroughs. And it just seemed like I wasn't getting them.

There was just in areas of renewing my mind I was doing everything I knew to do, reading the Bible, I was talking to a counselor, I had a spiritual director. But it was like there was some areas to do with shame in my life and guilt and condemnation, that I just wasn't getting a breakthrough.

And then as I was reading through the New Testament and of course the Old Testament is full of fasting. But reading in the New Testament and I came across this one Scripture where Jesus said, "This type doesn't come out except for by prayer and fasting." That was the deal breaker for me.

I was like, "Okay, Chris, I'm going to try this." And I decided that I'm going to do a three-day fast. And I've kind of jumped in and I talked to my pastor at the time about that. And they said, "Why don't you," what, I wanted to be strict. I said, "If Jesus could do 40 days, I could just do water only."

And they're like, "Probably not. Why don't you try a juice fast? And Christine, that does not mean that you take your spanakopita and put it in a blender and drink it. Which you know, you try to do all of that.

But why don't you try just drinking juice for those meals during your day and then spend that additional time that would have either been food prep or going out to eat or whatever in the Bible, like in Scripture. And with some worship music and really turn your focus on God. And I want to say to you, Annie, I was in my early 20s. And it was only three-days of juice and the thickest juice I could find-

Annie: Sure.

Christine: ...and still be considered fasting.

Annie: Yes.

Christine: But something happened on the inside of me. That then I moved from there to developing a practice of fasting in my 20s and 30s and 40s. I'm in my mid 50s now that it sort of has become a regular part of my rhythm and I guess we're going to get to some of these questions down the track.

And it looks very different and it looked very different when I was pregnant to what it does now. It looks very different on times of extreme travel and international travel than it does during this whole pandemic where I've been in one location for 18 months, it has looked very different.

So I guess we're going to get into a lot of this, but a lot of different factors have determined what my fasting practices have looked like over the years. Depending on what season I'm in and what I'm able to do.

The one thing I will say upfront, there is nothing legalistic about my approach to fasting. Never has been and never will be. But I also know a lot of people, throughout my 35 years of Christian ministry. That did have a very, very legalistic approach to fasting and some of them did a lot of damage to their bodies too, just by not listening to wisdom.

So I couldn't be more grateful that you're having this conversation. Because, I think, there's a lot of nuance we need to bring to this and make sure that people are aware of that.

Annie: Yes, that's beautiful. Thank you for saying that. Because we do it's that line between self-denial and doing something unhealthy. So yeah, I mean, you're probably going to have a headache if you're going to do a three-day or a one-day fast, you might have a headache. That doesn't mean your body's telling you to quit.

Christine: No. And you know like with my daughters we're very careful they're teenagers. But I'm like, "No, no, no, fasting a snack is not going to cause you to not be well." Or my other, my eldest daughter is hilarious, she's like, "Mom, I fast between dinner and breakfast."

I'm like, I don't even know what it is with human nature, but trying to find a way around something. And I do have friends, this is not a lie, one of my friends blended a bake dinner in a blender-

Annie: Oh, gosh.

Christine: ...and then put straw in it, and I went, "Okay, you know what, I think we've missed the whole purpose of fasting."

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

Christine: And I'm not doing this to joke right up front on the podcast, because everyone needs to realize this there's a lot of things that go into this.

Annie: Yes, that's exactly right. Okay, so that's one of the questions why is it important or helpful to fast? Why should women be fasting as a spiritual discipline?

Christine: Number one, Scripture, both Old and New Testament has got a lot to say about fasting. And for someone that's thinking about this, it's really important go through the verses and you'll go, "Okay, if Jesus himself fasted and there's evidence throughout the Scripture of people fasting. Obviously there's something attached to it. There's some benefit that accrues to us through doing this."

For me, it's always about growing closer to God. It's always I feel an extra solidarity, maybe, with people that are suffering when I come through a season of fasting. There's something about denying myself that helps me to connect everything.

I mean, of course, I'm involved with helping to rescue the victims of trafficking. But any kind of injustice or suffering, I think denying myself just not having whatever I want, when I want, as soon as I feel hungry. There's something that makes me think, "There are people all over the world, Christine, that feel this ache of hunger that you have in your stomach, actually, they're feeling it 24-hours a day, seven days a week."

So there's something about that solidarity. So not only me and God, but me and those that are suffering. And I have to admit, for me personally, it does something about increasing self-control in my life.

I find that if my mouth is out of control, my mind is out of control. My sleep, just staying up binge watching an extra series or so. I find that fasting helps me reign in some of my other appetites that are out of control.

Annie: Wow. Yeah, it's an over-arching self-denial, over-arching self-control. Another question is, "How do you keep your motives pure?" This friend said, "I feel like when I fast, I subconsciously feel like I'm doing it for health or dieting purposes."

Christine: I think it's what we all go through if we are really honest. And particularly when I was younger, one of the great benefits of being 55 is you really get over some of that stuff-

Annie: Sure.

Christine: People listening to this podcast you're mostly not at my age yet, but I was there too in my 20s and 30s. I think it's a matter of us being honest before God, like, I'm not the fasting police. I'm not here to police everybody's motives and I think, we could fool maybe ourselves, definitely other people, never God. That's what it comes down to.

So I find when I'm fasting I'm doing increased journaling time normally during that too, because I'm creating space in my day for that. And I find being really honest about all the bad things I feel and wrong motives I feel. As much as the benefit that is, normally I don't really understand the benefit until after a fast.

Because often, especially if I've gone more than a day. Anything sort of more than a day it sort of starts to consume you a little bit. The fact that you're either hungry or you're denying yourself or whatever.

Annie: Yeah.

Christine: So it's hard enough for me to remain a Christian during that time exhibiting any of the fruit of the Spirit.

Annie: That's right.

Christine: And, so, I'm doing pretty good if I can even have some of the fruit of the Spirit some of the time during that and then I reflect. But during it certainly it's a great time to show me what's in me. You will be shocked if you read some of my journals. And so part of that could be, "Lord, I think I'm really doing this because I basically wanted to go down a jean size more than I wanted to actually get closer to you."

I would not be being honest, if I didn't say somewhere along the line in my 20s and 30s that didn't pop itself up. And I can't say I did this right every time, but in the few times that it did happen, I can say that I would stop fasting at that point. Because to me, almost, the purpose of it was revealed because it actually unlocked something on the inside of me.

Annie: Also, I wish that I could fast for one day and change pant size. I mean, I'm like, "Y'all, it's three meals." It ain't got to give you a new face on the internet, it is a day." I'm always like, "Y'all settle down." Okay, so I like this one, too.

This question says, "I'm hesitant to fast because I easily become hungry. I always want to avoid being cranky, I want to be kind and love my people. Well, is it worth it to deal with being so hungry end up snapping at my people for the sake of a discipline? How am I supposed to deal with emotional control when I'm just so hungry?"

Christine: And therein lies the whole purpose. Like, is it worth the discipline, is the cost worth the price I'm going to pay? Well, I would probably reframe the question and go potentially part of what the Lord might want to deal with in us is to build that muscle. Build that tenacity muscle where I'm not allowing my hungriness to dictate how I respond to people, how I treat people.

And you are never going to learn to be able to go longer and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit for longer until you're in that position where you have to. And the truth is most of us really put ourselves in uncomfortable, costly positions, where we're going to have to rely on the strength of God.

Annie: Yes, say it.

Christine: The power of God and so we never have to change and nothing ever grows. And it's just like me, I could look at my weights in the gym forever, never pick it up. But it's not

until I start doing some of those reps where I want to throw those things, I don't want to do. Well, at that point, we go, "Oh, wow, I thought I was stronger than I really was."

And I think that's what that does to us. So you go, "Is it worth it?" And my argument would be that's the entire purpose. You don't use the excuse of, "Oh, man, I just lose my temper." Because maybe that's the very thing that the Lord wants to work on and you can't work on it, unless you have the space to do it.

And then that's what it does it creates that space. And I think, a bigger question with all of that, for all of us in Christianity, particularly in the West, we're very comfortable. I mean, for my friends and brothers and sisters in some Muslim countries and in different regions of the world, they wouldn't even be having this podcast that we're having right now.

Because this is so woven into the fabric of their spiritual disciplines because it's life and death. I mean, I'm talking about spiritual battles and overcoming things in the spirit realm. That they would be thinking it's only those that are extremely comfortable and have extreme access to an abundance of food normally, that are even having the kind of conversation that you and I are having right now.

Annie: Yeah, that is convicting, thank you, Chris. Thank you so much. It's great to have you here have a good day. Okay, "Should fasting be done weekly or seasonally or during really difficult times in our lives?"

Christine: I've done all of the above. So, again, you will find this anyone that would know me. I am extremely hesitant to put any kind of legalistic, ritualistic you must do this for whatever. Have I found benefits in doing it weekly? Absolutely.

Are there times of extreme challenge in my life where it's like, this needs focus. I know, Nick and I, my husband, in different seasons even as a ministry or in our trafficking or even in our marriage. Where it's like, we really need a word from God in this or we need a breakthrough. We might go on a very serious fast and hold each other accountable and go, "Okay, we are going too fast until we break through." But we don't do that all the time.

But there are times, very definitely, that that would happen and there are different seasons. And again, when I was pregnant, I didn't. So that was like and it would be different for different people. I was 35 the first time I was pregnant, I was 40 the second time. I had enough things to navigate with my body, that I didn't think that that was something that I should do. I didn't feel any, the Lord would have had to come and write it on the wall for me to do it.

Annie: Yes. Yes.

Christine: So I think sometimes-

Annie: And a lot of pregnant women have asked us about pregnant and nursing and well, we are not medical professionals.

Christine: That's right. I'm not a doctor so I can only tell you what I did and I didn't for that whole reason. And the whole time I breast-fed all of that I didn't. And that's not to say that other people do but I just didn't.

And I think at other times I've come out of surgery and had a lung rehab after I had thyroid cancer. Had a long, many, many months of rehab, I didn't do I just did what the doctor told me. And that was, for me, not a season to do anything additional just kind of getting through my rehab, taking all my medication, that was enough.

So yes, is it seasonal? Yes, I'll say that as well. Should you do it weekly? Yes. And should there be intense types of it? Yes, to all of it.

Annie: Yes. "Are we allowed to drink coffee while fasting?" Is a question.

Christine: I think you can decide. There are different times, can I just tell you, you know I am dead serious about something when I'm not drinking coffee.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. That's right.

Christine: I'm taking out every demon, because for us to get to that part where it's like the exclusion list. I've always even, often, at the beginning of the year we would do like maybe a Daniel fast in our family for the first month or 15 days or something in January.

For us it's more like this is how I want to start the year I just want to put Jesus first. And I've got kids so it's like let's maybe do a Daniel fast or make it work. Well, I've stretched my definition of a Daniel fast to include bean juice, because coffees are beans. Because a very a technical Daniel fast one is not supposed to have coffee. I don't how Annie has got me confessing all of my sins to you all.

Annie: Yes, thank you. Thank you.

Christine: But I've told you all my Daniel fast has bean juice.

Annie: Bean juice of all-

Christine: Because coffees are beans and that's a vegetable.

Annie: That's a good answer. A very good answer. Okay, so and a follow up to that another one our friend says "Can you start small fasting for an hour or fasting for one meal and build up? Should you start with a 40-day fast?"

Christine: I love that question because sometimes, not sometimes, most of the times in every area of our Christian life, we so devalue the small first step that we never take it. And I'm saying to anybody listening to this podcast, never ever devalue that.

So just start exactly where you are and it could pick something, and maybe you might even just go, "I really, particularly, love this kind of food. So maybe just that one item is where I'm going to start." For some it might be one meal. For some it might be one snack. With my daughters, I just started with a snack and you would have thought I'd ask them to go on three-year fast so you got to start where you are.

Annie: Another friend asked, "Do we still do our normal day-to-day things while fasting?" Do we still go to work? Do we still exercise? What does a day look like? How does your day shift if you've decided to fast on a Wednesday?

Christine: Yeah, again, that's a great, great challenge. And because Annie so loves how I'm direct, I'm just going to come to you with Scripture here. Jesus actually did say, "When you are praying and fasting make sure that nobody knows." So I just want to throw that in and that's, for me, is one of the biggest challenges.

Because sometimes I have got big meetings or like all of us, we just got a life. So and I've got to turn up and a smile on my face, spring in my step, doing it because it is not for other people to know. Like, if we're doing to get a checkmark so that someone thinks I'm really spiritual. I could tell you, upfront, we are not doing it right at that moment.

It is not about other people knowing that I'm fasting. There are rare occasions I tell people, because if I'm in a very serious one. And other times I'll just break a fast sometimes if I'm with people. Because I don't want them to know and I want to make a big deal about it. So you just, again, it's discretion.

Sometimes, though, if I'm in a very intense thing that there might be a couple of people that need to know, just so it doesn't get awkward for anyone of why I'm not eating or what's going to happen. So, but the premise, and this is what we all have to remember, it's not for people to know. It's about my relationship with Jesus and that's actually the deal, and so it's not for brownie points. So do you go about your normal day? Yes. You know it would be great to use the excuse of fasting to lie in bed for the next 40 days.

Annie: Right.

Christine: And go, "I'm on a 40-day fast, praise the Lord." But no, no, no, no, so don't bring that one to your boss.

Annie: And 40-day just for everyone listening, I don't know people who fast for 40-days anymore. That is a very, I mean, my community we hear one-day, three-day, seven-day, like that's kind of what is common. 40-day is not, I don't know people who do that, that's very rare wouldn't do you say?

Christine: I would only know one person and that's it, quite literally. And in my 35 years I've probably only known less than 10 in my entire 35 years of people. And they are like so super spiritual about it. I am not worthy! My husband's done some very long juice fast and again, very monitored. And if anything's happening in his body we will make adjustments radically.

I don't believe God calls us too fast so we end up in hospital out of malnutrition or dehydration. I think it's really important to not confuse the two. And anywhere in your mind as soon as you start getting into any pattern of thinking that goes, "I can't do this, I can't ." And you get that it's sort of like almost a legalism that comes over. We're no longer under grace at that moment and that is you need to not do it.

Annie: Yeah.

Christine: That's what I'm trying to say.

Annie: I mean, another question that got asked is "How important is it to have accountability?" So what is that line of obeying Jesus of putting oil in our head and nobody knows, and we're smiling, and we're all the things but do we need someone to know?

Christine: Yeah, and perhaps I think yes depending on where you're at and how long it's going to be, all of these things matter. I think anything over two days someone very close to you ought to know. And if you're thinking of anything over a week you better get some counseling. [Crosstalk 01:48:55] make any of those sort of decisions just haphazardly.

But I know I could tell you because you love her too Lisa Harper. So Lisa Harper and I, if we're going to do anything that's a couple of days or more, she will call me every hour to tell me to hold her accountable. And because we are just like waiting I'll say, "You've got all of us create a little bit of fun." Or you're in the midst of it all but I think it will help you stay true to it.

In my case, I've got Nick, my husband, it will be just like okay, this is and because I've got a couple of teenage daughters. I'm very careful even at home how we talk about that and what it means. And you know my girls, especially in the early days, we would talk a lot about them and body image and fasting, and what we're doing. And so whoever is listening to this, we're all in different seasons. I'm a mother, I'm a mother of teenage daughters.

So I'm not just going to suddenly go on this very strict fast without my family being aware of what's happening and why it's happening, and the spiritual reasons behind it. And I'm going to really pray long and hard before I make that kind of decision.

Annie: Yeah, so in my life if it's a seven-day or anything more than that, my counselor, my pastor, my doctor, know. Those besides my up-close mentor accountability, I make sure my counselor knows because I got body stuff. I make sure my pastor knows because it's going to be hard. And I make sure my doctor knows because I have a body and we need it.

Okay. So someone is asking, "How is fasting different for men and women? Why are we just talking about fasting, particularly, for women?"

Christine: Well, I think if we're honest, we're being honest, body image and women is a category all on its own. Entire magazines and books, and studies are dedicated to that. And, so,

the Bible says, "Get knowledge, get wisdom, get understanding." And that's what I love about this podcast period is that there is the spiritual, that is very important. But also the Scriptures instruct us, "Get wisdom, get understanding, and get knowledge."

And so, as women, understanding that we're prone to be impacted by body image stuff. And knowing that you can at times and that when you bring God into it things become a bit blurry. But you could be using a spiritual practice but it really isn't spiritual.

The purpose of it is that you are trying to either control something in your body or you're trying to lose weight or there's something about yourself you don't like. Fasting is not going to fix something about yourself that you don't like.

Annie: Yes.

Christine: I think this can then cross over to how we even view God. Because subconsciously, we could be saying, "Well, God, I fasted, I should look better now." Or "I should this now." Or "I should that now." And I think that's a really dangerous line, because fasting is not about those things. It's a spiritual thing to do with me and Jesus and I can end up resenting Jesus if I don't lose weight when I'm fasting, if I'm fasting for the wrong reason.

Annie: Right. And I've got guy friends, you probably do, too. I have two guy friends who have what they call their fasting clothes and they're just a size smaller. And they stay at the corner of the closet and when they're fasting and when they lose a chunk of weight, because they fasted for seven days or something. They just switch those clothes and then they switch back like it doesn't matter. I don't know a woman who can switch back up and not care.

Christine: My husband has that. Because it's, and I find that that get into my head. I'm like, "You're sickening to me." I'm like, "Who are you and what happened?" And I've been going as long as you and that hasn't happened to me. So I've got to separate those things in my mind.

Annie: And also, Chris, tell me what you think about this. I've been rolling this thing around in my mind. When people talk about how their mothers and their grandmothers prayed for them. That's who we hear when someone says, "How did you get here?" They say, "Well, my grandmother prayed for me." So the enemy knows how effective prayer and fasting are and if he can take out 55% of the population from fasting, because of our body issues he knows he's limiting our prayers.

Christine: Oh, absolutely. And the breakthroughs we would experience through that, I think what you're saying is a very important thing that's different. And it's not like this surreal thing to kind of bring in this spiritual supernatural component.

Because the fact is prayer and fasting are put together in the Scripture and they are supernatural, spiritual thing. And they're used in the context of spiritual warfare. And they're used, I mean, in so many different things.

But they're used in the context of saying, "Okay, the reason I'm fasting, and it's biblical fasting, is because breakthrough happens. Is because connection with Jesus happens. Self-control happens, self-discipline happens." And, of course, I'm Pentecostal, so for the three of you that are Pentecostal, listen to this. There's also we believe a real power also I don't if that ever happens-

Annie: Yes, that should not be Pentecostal Chris, that is just true.

Christine: It is in the Bible for all of us Pentecostal or not because we read the same Bible. And, so, what it does, though, I think what we have to not forget is when I'm really seeking God's guidance. Now, of course, fasting doesn't make God speaking to me any clearer. It does make my capacity to hear God clear.

Annie: Ah, that's good.

Christine: Because that's more the thing. It's not like, I feel more intimate with God in prayer. Does that mean God's not listening to me when I'm not fasting? No, I'm just more attentive to God's response in the midst of all of that.

And I think when you see how much deliverance and even the amount of times. Why would Jesus, I mean fully God fully human, why would fasting be such an important component of His life and ministry if there was not a power that came with that. And I think it helps us to overcome temptation, as well as prioritize the centrality of God in our lives.

And I could tell when I'm succumbing to temptation more often than say, usual. I'm like, "Okay, Chris, I think you need to go on a fast." Because it helps, it does something about building a resilience in me. Where I'm not excusing things quite like, in my own life I'm not talking about judging or anything like that-

Annie: Totally.

Christine: I'm talking about Christine Caine. There's great power in it for me and helping me to overcome temptation.

Annie: Yes, yes. Okay, so here's the next question. "How do you pray when you fast? It just seems like a long time to pray about something and it would be repetitive or boring or awkward. So what is your prayer life look like on the days that you fast?"

Christine: Nothing anything, well, mystical as such I might go for a walk with God. But sometimes my times of silence in prayer and I don't know whether that's mainly because I feel weak and I'm just like whatever. But I have, possibly, during times of fasting my capacity to be silent before the Lord and hear from the Lord tends to be greater than when I'm not. I don't know how to explain that. For me, again, this a very subjective conversation-

Annie: No, I love it.

Christine: I tend to be different. That I find and whether it's I'm just weaker in energy, I don't know. But I find that I'm just way more willing to linger before the Lord and wait for the Lord than I normally am to get through my prayer list.

Annie: Yes. Okay, I'm going to say what might be a controversial thing and I just want you to correct me. Well, offline you know you always have permission to correct me, you know this. You're allowed to pastor me in the right way anytime. I'll be the lamb you throw over your shoulders anytime you want, Chris.

But sometimes when we talk about fasting and people say, "I know we aren't supposed to fast for change, we're supposed to fast to get near to God." Sometimes I think people say that so that they hedge a bet that if things don't change, they don't get mad at God. And because I actually think we are supposed to fast to see things change.

Christine: No, of course, because Jesus said, "These won't come out except by prayer and fasting." Therefore, that means you can expect a correlation between I'm fasting and this happened. Now, I'm not saying in every case that's the reason for it. I think when it comes to fasting is an act of faith as well.

Annie: Yes.

Christine: And I think in lots of acts of faith we love to hedge our bets. So we don't want God to come out looking bad.

Annie: Yes.

Christine: And we don't want to be disappointed. So I'm going, "Oh." And then what that does that is minimize your faith. And then I think sometimes you miss out on a breakthrough you could get with expectation. If you go, "I'm bringing my expectation to this and I'm believing God for it. I'm not putting a time limit on it. I'm not telling God how He's going to do it. But if this kind comes out by prayer and fasting that's what..."

I said earlier, like when I want a breakthrough, I'm fasting for a breakthrough. There are other times I'm fasting to build my intimacy with Jesus, I'm fasting for a whole lot of other things. And there are times and there are times Nick and I are like, "I am not letting go until I get a breakthrough." And I could tell you 35 years, it works. I don't know what to say it works.

Annie: Yes. Yes.

Christine: Is it okay to say it works?

Annie: Yes. I mean, that is what I feel like one of the calls on my life is to impart faith. And to say to people believe for what you don't see. Believe for what you don't see. So stop eating so that you will see the breakthrough that you want.

- Christine:** Amen, because I know your heart is so tender with people because it's so true. And I think I look at times where Jesus, agonizing after praying after fasting. I think for the exact same reason as you're weeping right now, it's like, oh, guys, if you could get this, if you could get this, the very breakthrough you're looking for. The very, it's on the other side of this, it would happen.
- Annie:** And if you don't believe that you're going to make a difference. I mean, I sat in the thing the other day, Chris, where people were talking about, "If we pray does it change God's mind?" And a whole bunch of people kind of were like, "No, I don't think so. I don't think so." And I was like, "It has to." I love Jesus said this is why you don't give up the persistent widow, like the judge changed his mind.
- Christine:** That's it. And in the Old Testament, God says to Hezekiah, "Okay, you can live for an extra 15 years." Okay.
- Annie:** Right.
- Christine:** I'm like that is what I pray, I believe if we pray in alignment with God. When you take the faith component out of prayer and fasting, I don't know what we're doing, personally.
- Annie:** It's rules, it's just rules.
- Christine:** I just don't know what we're doing. And usually we're just we kind of just sitting on a mat, just doing some sort of incantations and that's not the invitation from God to partner with Him. And we are supposed to stir up that gift of faith. I mean, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
- Annie:** That we cannot see.
- Christine:** That is what the Scripture says it is, that's what the Scripture says about it. And that we walk by faith and not by sight and that's what all this is about. And the life we now live in the body we live by faith in the Son of God, "And the righteous will live by faith."
- I keep trying to tell people, I know we live in a very scientific, rational, empirical world, except we're Christians and so we're a faith people. So there is a little bit of us that is a bit weird because that's what faith is. I don't know how to explain it to anyone.
- You and I, I mean, at the base level the thing that unites every one of us that it is a person of faith listening to this podcast, it doesn't matter what denomination you are. All of us believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Okay, so that's what, that's the linchpin of the Christian faith. It doesn't matter what tradition you're from, we all believe that.
- Well, I don't know, it takes a lot of faith to believe somebody that I never met 2000 years ago rose from the dead and He's coming back again. I've actually staked my entire eternity on that. So I'm like, "You know what, that's a weird thing to believe and I believe it." So I will believe that breakthroughs happen through fasting.

Annie: That's exactly right. That's exactly right. And I keep thinking, I mean, to me, for a long time, that part in the Bible where it says that, "Faith without works is dead." I thought it meant like believe Jesus, and then go serve at a soup kitchen, which I think it does. I do think there are works that look like Christian works.

But the longer I'm doing this, I'm like, "Wait, I think he means faith works. I think he means do things that look crazy, like fasting for change, faith without works of faith is dead." Yeah, do things that are crazy.

Christine: Listen there are two sides of an airplane they're both wings.

Annie: Yes. Yes. I'm like looking at my age I'm like, I'm sorry, I'm yelling, I'm yelling Chris, because I'm just it's so sure-

Christine: I wish you could all see this she's like on fire. Well, this is our point is a lot of our faith doesn't work because we don't put our faith to work. So if we put our faith to work we go, "Oh, faith works." We go, "Yes, it's an acting," faith is the substance, it's a thing. The substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen.

And it is shocking to me, that particularly, in this era that we're living in, in this cultural moment. We who are a people of faith whose faith is predicated on such a supernatural act that occurred 2000 years ago. Why we struggle so much with faith, I'm going, "The very foundation of our faith is so obvious, so embrace it." [Crosstalk 02:02:23] I'm like we win let's just embrace it.

Annie: Yes.

Christine: And I get it. People have seen excesses and things done in the name of God that has got nothing to do with God. And acts of faith that are more like acts of stupidity and not common sense. I understand all of that, but that does not negate the reality of faith or the importance of faith. And I don't think you have to throw the baby out with the bath water. We could just simply not be idiots and still walk in faith.

Annie: Yes. Yes. And I mean, one of the questions that I would love for you to answer is for this woman who said, "Every time I break a fast I feel guilty because I didn't get the spiritual breakthrough, the closest to God I was hoping for and I'm disappointed that God didn't change anything." I think disappointment drives us away from spiritual disciplines all the time. So her question is, "Am I fasting wrong if I don't feel anything different at the end?"

Christine: No, but I would keep going back. Because there are different times I feel a lot of stuff and a lot of times I don't feel a lot of stuff. But here's the faith component again, by faith, I believe that God is doing what needs to be done.

That's why I think it's important, to the best of our ability, to see it through. Because you just don't even know what's on the other side of that obedience. And like I said sometimes it's months later you go, "Wow, now I could draw a thread back." I'm not

saying that's going to happen every time. Listen, I have so many stories of my life where it happened the one time and that one time was enough to carry me the other 50 times.

So I'm like, it's just I do it out of obedience and I find the more I do it out of obedience the more times I'm able to say, "Whew, I got something out of that, or I felt something." So a lot of us just give up, we do it once and go, "Man, I never felt anything what a waste? I'm not doing that again." And I'm like, "Are you kidding me?" We wouldn't do that in any area of our life if that was the case, not just this area.

Annie: That's right I'd love for you to work out one time at the gym and your body be exactly what you've wanted.

Christine: Why do we sort of have this different standard for God, than we do for ourselves or for any other interests or career or a sporting pursuit of something that we're trying to get in our life? We'll go back again and again and again and again. And I'm like, "Wow, poor God, one strike and you're out."

Annie: That's right. But I'll give a restaurant two tries if I had a bad experience.

Christine: That's exactly right.

Annie: Okay. So one of our friends is asking, "How do you decide the length of a fast? How do you know if it's a meal, if it's one day, three days, seven days?"

Christine: We've got such a broad range of listeners, of course, and I'm sure to put a lot of disclaimers here. Anyone with any health issues, medical issues, I'm not a doctor, I'm not that. So I'm just talking generically I think it's about a spiritual is just decide.

I am probably the most pragmatic Pentecostal you're ever going to meet. Because I just think 99% of things are just common sense and go, "Okay, I'm not going to come up with a date, on a 40-day fast." I'll come up with a date on what let's try one meal and let's try two meals. Let's try a full day. Let's try maybe two days. I am very much step-by-step, line-upon-line, precept-upon-precept.

There have been rare occasions and when I was younger I did this a lot more than I do. Where I would do extended fast and sometimes I would be in prayer and go, "I just really feel like I'm supposed to fast." Again, at the time I wasn't married, I didn't have children. I had a lot of other, I had a lot less responsibilities than I've got. I wasn't running a global organization with 19 offices around the world, I wasn't doing any of that.

So at those times, particularly in my twenties, I did, that's where I did most of my longer extended kind of and even spontaneous fasts. Nowadays, I would be at different times of the year. And, particularly, at the beginning of the year is a big one in our family and then different seasons, and sometimes with the liturgical calendar.

Or oftentimes, I'm a little bit of a rebel, so sometimes if everybody else is fasting. I'm like going to be eating chocolate cake and I'm like, "Nope." And then when nobody else is doing it, I'm going to do it so that, I don't know if there's anything that's just Christine's rebellious nature. But I would say just make a decision and start, err on the smaller end for start, and then just see how you go from there.

Annie: Yeah. Beautiful. Okay, let's listen to this recording that came in this question that one of our friends sent in.

Lauren: Hey, this is Lauren Elliott in Shawnee, Kansas. I just want to know how do we like really test our motives? I feel like often I want to start fasting and I think that it is spiritual, but I like second-guess myself about my motives. So how can we know and be confident in our motives as we start to fast and then throughout the process?

Christine: We put too much pressure on ourselves. You could do the best you could do. Sometimes I read that Scripture in Hebrews it says "For every man it's been destined to die once and then the judgment." Not talking about salvation but judging our motives in our life. And I'm like, "Oh God, I asked God for like crop failure on any wrong motives I've had. Lord, I pray crop failure."

Annie: Crop failure, that's beautiful. Crop failure.

Christine: I'm like everything that I did that I wasn't of you, please crop failure. And, so, I don't know, guys, I think I wouldn't get too intense because sometimes we talk ourselves out of it by so trying to over analyze our hearts.

And here's my bottom line you do the best you can. I'm not excusing wrong motives, overt ones, but I am saying Scripture says, "Who can know the heart?" Honestly, the heart is deceitful above all things and who can know it.

So I work, even in my own life, under the presupposition that I try to do the best from my heart, but I don't even trust my own heart. So I'm like, "Lord, search me." And very regularly I pray the Psalm, "Search me, try me, see if there's any evil way in me, wrong motive in me and renew a right spirit within me, Lord." And I think that's the best we could do. The very fact that you're asking the question, probably, suggests that you're on track.

Annie: You're on the right track. That's exactly right. If you even know that there's a chance your motives are off good on you. I don't know that when I practice fasting that I even say the motive thing enough. I'm convicted by you in that question asker friend, because I'm like, yeah, I need to make sure I'm saying, "Are my motives pure here, God?" Or as best I can do godly, I'm going to be a human every day.

Christine: Totally.

Annie: Okay, so, okay. So my last question for you, Chris, we're asking everybody this. Is your life different because you've fasted?

Christine: Absolutely. I mean, I go through my prayer journals and in many instances, especially for a lot of the very big things that have happened in my life, the decisions and breakthroughs and expansion.

There's a direct correlation between some very focused times of fasting and answers that came from the Lord. And I'm not saying the Lord would have given me those answers, I'm sure my capacity to hear my radar was up at a level. And that's the biggest thing I don't know how spiritual that sounds, but my spiritual radar, my little antenna, I'm receiving downloads from the Lord that happens a lot more in those seasons.

And even as I get older, because you could get lazy. You know familiarity with Jesus breeds a laziness in our faith. And so one way, like in the natural I've taken to climbing some mountains now in my fifties-

Annie: Yes, that's amazing. Yeah.

Christine: Because I just didn't want my physical body to get lazy. Fasting is one of those disciplines, because I've sort of got enough muscle memory, Scripture memory experience. If I'm not careful I could just run on the fumes of that with no fresh oil. And I find fasting keeps the oil fresh because it keeps me hungry for God.

Annie: That's beautiful, Chris, thank you. Oh, I love you so much. Thank you for doing this. Sorry, I cried on you.

Christine: Oh, no we always cry during a fasting.

[02:10:30] <Music>

Annie: Oh, man, Christine Caine, I'm fired up.

Ashley: Same.

Annie: I mean, I texted her yesterday afternoon and I was like, "I'm still buzzing. I'm still buzzing. It is faith and fasting. Faith and fasting are the two things that we want to walk away from this conversation, having deposited a little bit more in us.

One of the other questions we got is resources about fasting. Besides this extended episode, which I'm incredibly proud of and so thankful to our friends for doing, and to our friends for asking questions. I'm just proud all around. I'm proud of our guests. I'm proud of our friends listening that who even want to dive into this. But what are some resources that you know of that people can go to some books?

Ashley: So it's interesting because the very, very first resource that I ever encountered about fasting is a chapter in Richard Foster's book [*Celebration of Discipline*](#).

Annie: Celebration of Discipline.

Ashley: And sweet-little-high-school Ashley read this book every year.

- Annie:** Yup.
- Ashley:** And she's gotten a little more relaxed since then, but the entire book is beautiful and challenging and convicting and helpful.
- Annie:** Yes.
- Ashley:** And there is a whole chapter about fasting there. A local pastor here in Nashville named Dave Clayton, who pastors at Ethos Church has a short book that I've found really helpful.
- Annie:** Yes.
- Ashley:** I read maybe three years ago when our church was doing the Awaken Series and Experience, and it's brilliant and it's very accessible.
- Annie:** Yes.
- Ashley:** Like it's a great place to start.
- Annie:** Yeah.
- Ashley:** And it's called [*Revival Starts Here*](#). And again, that's Dave Clayton.
- Annie:** And if you search it on Amazon, if you search Revival starts here or Dave Clayton, it's the first thing that pops up.
- Ashley:** Yep.
- Annie:** And he is a really trustworthy pastor.
- Ashley:** Yeah, he is,
- Annie:** And, so, his writing and his teaching you can feel safe in embracing for yourself. Also speaking of that, John Mark Comer has a series from Bridgetown, January of '18 there's a series about fasting that really impacted my life. So I would encourage people to go back and listen to that.
- I'm stoked. What a great conversation to have. Also, listen, y'all we have this thought. Our first podcast back in 2022 is on Epiphany, it's on January 6th. And here's something that came up while Chris and I were talking and we talked about with our team. What if we, as a community, fast for one meal on January 6th.
- What if we, as a group of friends, fast for one meal on January 6th, like what might happen? What might change if all of us start the year off getting closer to the Lord and contending for what we need to see?

So I am going to fast breakfast on January 6th, just because I like that time in the morning. I'm already at home, it gives me a little more time. You can pick breakfast, lunch, dinner. You can do breakfast and lunch.

You can do whatever you want but January 6th, that Thursday, that is Epiphany we are going to fast and pray one meal together, all of us. Again, as we're thinking about what Aundi talked about we're talking about discomfort and not harm. So please be very thoughtful about that as you are joining in with us.

If it needs to be something else, it can be something else. If it doesn't need to be something fast a meal, fast meal with us. Let's be a little uncomfortable for a couple of hours on January 6th, all together. And we'll give you more information about that when the year starts, but I wanted you to go ahead and put that on your calendar.

Our team is going to be invited to do that. I am going to do that. So January 6th, Epiphany, we're going to start the year off with an Epiphany and maybe fasting for the first time. But for sure, our group of friends fasting together for the first time.

Hey, be sure you follow Chris, and Jada, and Aundi if you're not already doing so, so you can tell them thanks so much for being on the show.

You can also just go to my Instagram and thank them in the comments of this post. Tag them and they will see it. I'm just so thankful for how they invested in us this way. I'm just so grateful for each of their perspectives and their wisdom. And we're going to end a little bit differently today. Ashley, when you think about resources about fasting, what was your first answer?

Ashley: Oh, I mean, it's such a Sunday school answer, but it's God's Word, like go straight to the Bible. When I look back at the chapter about fasting in Celebration of Discipline, one of the sentences that Foster writes, it says, "This is the list of biblical personages who fasted reads like a who-is-who of Scripture. Moses, the law giver, David, the king, Elijah, the prophet, Esther the queen, Daniel the seer, Anna the prophetess, Paul the apostle, Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son."

Annie: Mh-hmm.

Ashley: And it's just, there are so many examples of fasting in Scripture and so I don't know why we wouldn't, at least, just take a little stroll through some of those stories and ask those questions, like, "Okay, well, why and how, and what were the outcomes of these situations?"

Annie: Yes.

Ashley: And what, if anything, and I think there's probably something can I gain and apply from getting to know these characters and their stories and how fasting-

Annie: And how fasting.

Ashley: How fasting affected their lives.

Annie: Yes, that's right. Will you close us, Aundi mentioned a Scripture in Isaiah about fasting.

Ashley: Yeah.

Annie: And will you just close us with that?

Ashley: Absolutely. It's Isaiah 58 and I'm going to read verses six through nine, so hang in with me. It's beautiful. It says, "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen to lose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke. To set the oppressed free and break every yoke. Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter. When you see the naked to clothe them and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood. Then your light will break forth like the dawn and your healing will quickly appear. Then your righteousness will go before you and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call and the Lord will answer. He will cry for help and he will say, 'Here, am I'"

Annie: Yeah.

Ashley: Then in verse eight, leads us to, "Your light will break forth. Your healing will appear quickly. Your righteousness will go before you and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard." I mean, ultimately, the end of all fasting is that the Lord will answer.

Annie: Yeah. The Message says, "Then when you pray God will answer. You'll call out for help and I'll say, 'Here, I am.'"

Ashley: "Here I am."

Annie: Amen.

Ashley: Amen.

[02:17:21] <Music>