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Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F Downs. I'm really happy to be here with you today. We have got a great show in store. You hear in the background some beautiful Christmas music from our friends for KING & COUNTRY. It's their version of *Little Drummer Boy* from the album *A Drummer Boy Christmas*. Be sure to check that out. It is so good.

And while we're talking about Christmas, I want you to know that the 2021 Christmas party here on the pod starts later this week. We've got 12 days in a row, you guys, 12 days in a row of super fun episodes. And don't you know that our old pal Santa is going to be stopping by for a visit just like he has the last couple of years?

And you know, we're loving these TSF Q&A episodes, so we're going to ask Santa to do one of those with us. So if you have a question for him, I'd be happy to pass those along. So just follow the link in the show notes to send your questions or even questions from the MiniBFFs in your household. We have voice or text options available to you just like we do with all the other Q&As. I can't wait to hear what Jolly old St. Nich has in store for us this year.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to take a moment and share about one of our incredible partners. This podcast is brought to you by [BetterHelp Online Therapy](#). We talk about BetterHelp a lot on this show. And this month we're discussing some of the stigmas around mental health. For example, a lot of times people will wait until things have hit emergency status and feel unbearable to go to therapy. But, y'all, there's a better way.

Therapy is a tool to utilize before things get worse. And it can help you avoid some of those lows. Likewise, there's a stigma that therapies for quote-unquote "unstable people." But therapy doesn't mean something's wrong with you. My gracious! It means you recognize that we all have complex emotions and can use help learning to process them instead of avoiding them. I for one am extremely grateful for my counselor and her steady voice in my life over the years. I think you'll find it really helpful to connect with a therapist through BetterHelp.

BetterHelp is customized online therapy that offers video, phone, and even live chat sessions with your therapist. So you don't have to see anyone on camera if you don't want to. It's much more affordable than in-person therapy. And you can be matched with a therapist in under 48 hours. So give it a try, see why over 2 million people have used BetterHelp Online Therapy.

This podcast is sponsored by BetterHelp, and That Sounds Fun friends get 10% off your first month at betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun. That's betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun.

Intro: Today on the show I get to talk with Pastor Sam. Samuel Rodriguez is a pastor in California. And not only that, but he's a movie producer and author and is the president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (HCLC). It's the world's largest Hispanic Christian organization. And he's advised multiple US presidents which is remarkable, right?

His latest book, *Persevere with Power: What Heaven Starts, Hell Cannot Stop*, is a fascinating look at the faith of the prophets, Elijah and Elisha, and how we can all learn to persevere through the challenges we face. Y'all are going to love this one. I'm so grateful to get to know Pastor Sam. I think you're going to love him immediately just like I did. So here's my conversation with Pastor Samuel Rodriguez.

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Annie: All right, Pastor Sam, welcome to That Sounds Fun. We're so glad you're here.

Pastor Sam: Thank you for having me. Honored to be with you.

Annie: Oh, man, what an absolute honor it is for me. So I'm sorry you said that first because I felt it first. I'm so thankful. Okay, we're just going to jump in. Well, we got to talk about one really important thing first. You are a Yankees guy.

Pastor Sam: For generations deep. Diehard. Like yeah.

Annie: I'm a Braves.

Pastor Sam: Listen, you know you had your year and God bless you. And perseverance, you know, Galatians 6:9, you're living it out. So it is. No, there it is.

Annie: Listen, I'm both a Braves fan and a diehard University of Georgia Bulldog. So whatever kind of favor God has on the state of Georgia... I live in Nashville now but I grew up in Georgia, so whatever the favor is this year I'm saying yes and amen to it.

Pastor Sam: It's Georgia, sweet Georgia. Indeed.

Annie: How about it!

Pastor Sam: How about it! God bless you. But hey, there's always next year.

Annie: That's right. So the Yankees, I mean, rebuilding kind of year?

Pastor Sam: It is. I have my qualms, my angst, and consternation with current management, not the ownership because it's multi-generational Steinbrenner.

Annie: Right.

Pastor Sam: But I'm not an Aaron Boone super fan. I'd rather have a Don Mattingly coaching the Yankees. It would be like utopia. Because I grew up going to Yankee Stadium watching John Madden play when the Yankees were at rock bottom. So it would be great. But this year my prayer gets answered hopefully.

Annie: I mean, you're ever in Sacramento though. So do you have to stay... I mean, I'm thinking about time zones of watching baseball. I guess it's early for you. So it works out.

Pastor Sam: Yeah, it surely works out. Yankees are like the Dallas Cowboys. It's you either love them or hate them. There's no in-between. But it's for generations deep. I actually have an entire room dedicated to the New York Yankees. It's my shrine. So it is what it is.

Annie: That's awesome. That's awesome. Before we jump into *Persevere with Power*, I mean, I am so on fire to talk about this with you. I finished reading the book and I was like, "I cannot wait for us to talk about this." But I've got to know how do you have time to do all the things you do? Like how do you run a church and your ministry? I just don't know how you do it. And your family.

Pastor Sam: And produce movies and all that. I've learned throughout the course... It's been this scalability of maturity. Because initially, it wasn't like that. I was terrible in managing time. I wasn't the best steward of time. But as I matured and grew up and evolved, I learned how to manage time in such a way where now I am seeing greater outcome producing more by focusing on the main things. It's going to sound a little bit preachy now.

Annie: No, come on.

Pastor Sam: But I found that there's a formula. If you live a holy, healed, healthy, happy, humble, hungry, honoring life, the seven Hs I call them, live a holy healed, healthy, happy, humble, hungry, honoring life, God will take care of absolutely everything. So making health a priority, I'm finding myself producing a lot more than ever before. So it works.

But in addition to that, coffee and green tea. Coffee and green tea. There it is. Four cups of green tea a day, at least one good latte with three shots and call it a day.

Annie: Okay, so I want to talk about *Persevere with Power*. But forgive me if we kind of cherry-pick our way around only because I'm so interested in some specific things. So even this conversation right here, in the book, you talk about how we treat our bodies really affects our prayer life. Like you talk about how Elijah when he was tired, like when he wanted to give up, the first thing that angel did was feed him and let him rest. I mean, for those of us is we're looking to 2022 and how we want to pray, how does your health really directly connect with your prayer life?

Pastor Sam: Ain't that wild?

Annie: Wild.

Pastor Sam: Ain't that crazy? It's crazy. Here's this man having this existential moment, this existential crisis. And all of a sudden, God's recipe is not this "Let me give you a 40 day fast" which is wonderful. I adhere to it, I do it. But a 40-day fasting, biblically substantiated, verse by verse, you know, conversational piece where you somehow engulf yourself in the Hebrew exegetical extrapolation of that. No.

Annie: No.

Pastor Sam: Here's God's answer. "Okay, you're having a crisis, I'm going to feed you and I'm going to make sure you rest." Wow. What a formula! Just resting in Him, in His promises, physically, mentally resting. Did you notice how... and it's in the book. But did you notice how Jezebel came after Elijah right after Elijah was totally exhausted?

Annie: Yes, yes. Yeah, it blew my mind. After a mountaintop experience and then when he's exhausted.

Pastor Sam: But he was physically exhausted. Remember how he ran against the chariot, Ahab's chariot? He literally ran against a chariot, and he got there. Whatever, you know, Nikes or Adidas he's wearing-

Annie: Tighten up. He had to tighten up.

Pastor Sam: Alexander McQueen's, whatever it may be at your discretion. But it worked. But besides, he was physically, spiritually exhausted. And all of a sudden, Jezebel took advantage of a man, a prophet, a human being who was exhausted.

And I do believe that Jezebel in spirit, without getting too mystical about it, that reality attacks when we are exhausted. I mean, we could be great people living righteously, loving Jesus. But if we're physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, relationally exhausted, that's when Jezebel says, "I have an opportunity." That's a portal.

And we have to be cognizant of that. Always be mindful of resting, of refreshing your body, your mind, your soul, a selah. The psalmist was right. And in the middle of a song, he would just take a break, a musical break, and then come back to it. That selah in life is transformative.

Annie: I am interested because, you know, I think a lot about that word: hungry, angry, lonely, tired. And I have never paid attention to how it affects how I pray until reading your book when I was like, "Oh, some days when I haven't had my tea in the morning or had a little breakfast, I can feel a difference in my spiritual life." I grew up in the church and so there's some that tells me you're not supposed to connect those, you're supposed to be tough. Just be tough no matter what and you should be fine spiritually.

Pastor Sam: No, Annie. God bless we both grew up in the church and we know that great stuff. At the same time, there was a bit of a myopic application of Scripture, right? Limited bandwidth. They didn't have 5G Wi-Fi. So as we grow and mature and develop, no, there's continuity. Your physical body, your spiritual well-being, your physical, your mental, your emotional, even your relational and financial well-being, there's one continuum.

We have to stop fragmenting and creating dichotomies and building walls in areas that do not require or demand walls. Quite the opposite. One continuum. So how you treat your body, your soul, your body, your mind, your health in every aspect, every silo, there should be the Hebrew word is shalom, where there's nothing missing, nothing broken.

And 3 John 1:2, 3 John 1:2, even though it only has one chapter. So it's 3 John technically 2. 3 John 1:2 talks about how God has orchestrated a divine rubric and

prescription of health, not just on the other side of eternity, but on this side of eternity.

So we could actually adhere and live in that reality. But then you have to be intentional about it. Take care of yourself. What you eat, what you receive, what you surround yourself with, your environment is critical, both physically and mentally. And I would even argue spiritually and relationally.

So, yeah, Elijah went through that process. So I love the fact that God said, "You know what, I'm not here to judge you, I'm not going to criticize you, I'm not here to tell you to do a million things, but get you some food and make sure you sleep."

Annie: Yes!

Pastor Sam: Wow. Food and sleep. Food and sleep.

Annie: Food and sleep. Do you want to have a better relationship with God? Eat and sleep.

Pastor Sam: Wow. And it works. And it works.

Annie: It works. Especially sweet. I mean, I just cannot wait to meet Elijah because you just want to be like, everything had gone so well, God had shown up and answered all his prayers. And then he's like, "I just want to die. I just want to die." And you're like, I feel that rollercoaster of emotion.

Pastor Sam: But if Elijah can go through that... this idea that we have to be pristine and we have to be perfect in the walk. What? This is like the iconic Rumble in the Jungle, quintessential, standoff moment, Elijah, Mount Carmel, the muchomalo hombres. Here it comes, right? Boom! Here it is. You know, you bring your god, I bring my God.

It was an Old Testament West Side Story. The sharks and the jets, right? It's West Side Story in the Old Testament, except there was one guy, one guy. And he says, "Hey, the real God will answer with fire." And he did. And then right after the biggest victory, he gets a text message. Jezebel posts on her Facebook account: "In 24 hours Elijah will be dead." That's 1 Kings 19:2, for those that do your biblical due diligence.

So she literally says, "In 24 hours he will be dead - Elijah will be dead." And the guy freaks out. Anxiety, depression, gives up ministry, tells God, "I'm done with this, I'm dying. I want to die." And just one of the greatest conversations, again,

throughout scripture is God and Job. This is God and Elijah going like, "What?" And I love it. It unpacks so many things for our respective lives.

And I love the fact that we're all vulnerable. That we're all vulnerable. We have to be aware that at the highest moment, the enemy will come especially when we are exhausted and we are not wrestling to take advantage of that portal.

And the battle is between your mind and your mantle. The real battle is between your mind and your mantle. It's between the thoughts that run through your head and the calling upon your life. You know, the real battle is between anxiety and anointing. It's between depression and destiny. It's between your memories of your past and imagination. Your mind has a battle between memories and imagination. And that's the true battle.

And the great news is that He already won the battle. And all we have to do is live in His victory. And in the finished work of Christ, Colossians 2:15, we live in that and we *Persevere with Power*.

Annie: So what were you experiencing either in your church or your own life? Or when you're looking at the world, what made *Persevere with Power* the right book to write for right now? What are you seeing happen in the church that that's why we needed this book right now?

Pastor Sam: I saw a micro and a macro. At a micro level, at a very personal level, I saw my family go through COVID. I was asymptomatic because of my running regimen. But my daughter, who is a millennial, who gave birth to my first granddaughter, Mila, during COVID, her white blood count was already naturally down but nothing that required medication. But it was a perfect storm.

You know, natural WBCs that are in the low grades. Giving birth to Mila... if you're a woman you know that your white blood cell counts go down when you give birth, and then COVID. Perfect storm. She ends up on a ventilator.

So my millennial daughter is on a ventilator and I was speaking to the doctor, and I find out that my daughter is aiming towards the other side of eternity. And I'm pushing the doctor on it going like, "You know, what do you mean that she's not doing well? You mean she'll be there for a day?"

At that time I was serving on the Coronavirus Recovery Commission, the National Coronavirus Recovery Commission. So I'm writing, I'm talking to the people at the

CDC. So I'm aware of the stats and is my daughter the anomaly? Is she that 0.1%? So I'm kind of going like, "What?" Taken back by the reality.

And that prompted me to a great degree to write the book. She's fine now by the way. There was a supernatural intervention. I have great empathy for those who have lost loved ones. I do. We have the same outcome on the other side of eternity. But I can't deny what happened in my family and the miracle that took place.

So God did show up. I made a prayer in my Jeep Wrangler Rubicon broken, you know, and I just lost it. I'm a dad. So it wasn't preaching pastor Sam. It was just Sam Rodriguez discombobulated. And I made the most snot-filled, you know, teary-eyed, messed up, incoherent prayer that anyone could ever make. And it sounded like this. "I have no idea what to do next." And that was it. That was my prayer. "I have no idea what to do next, but you do."

And then I discovered that in 2 Chronicles 20:12, a guy named Jehoshaphat made the same identical prayer when he was surrounded by all the enemies. Verbatim "I have no idea what to do next, but you do." And at that moment there was an invasion. I know it's going to sound a little bit too spiritual here-

Annie: Oh, no, we're way into it.

Pastor Sam: I'll tell you this. I experienced it. I'm a faith in science guys. So it's not hype. The Spirit of God filled my Jeep Rubicon. I know it sounds weird to some, but I experienced it. I felt the glory of the risen Christ just filled my Rubicon and God just embracing me telling me, "Sam, I got you."

And I just made one prayer. Here is it. That prayer, and then I said, "God," verbatim, I said, "God, can you do me a little favor? I'm mature enough. Not that I need a miracle to believe in you. We're way beyond that. With or without it, we got this. But yes, just give me a little something some. Can heaven invade my daughter's ICU room? Can you send your angels her way, because we don't have access? We can't even communicate." California restrictions COVID.

And my daughter then texts us. And here's my daughter's texts. Without knowing what I prayed, and that my sister was making the same prayer in Philadelphia 3,000 miles away without her knowing when I was praying. My daughter, not knowing what I was praying, where I was at, "Dad, I promise is not the meds. Heaven just invaded my room."

Annie: Wow.

Pastor Sam: That's when I knew that God definitely was intervening. And then 24 hours later, I spoke to the doctor, the same doctor who told me that if my daughter doesn't fight, she won't make it, said, "Mr. Rodriguez, I quote, "I can't explain it."

Annie: I love when they have to say that.

Pastor Sam: And I went, "What do you mean, ma'am?" "I can't explain it. But there's been a complete turnaround to such a degree that you all should be making plans to pick her up in the next 48 hours." My daughter went from a ventilator dying to 72 hours later being picked up at a hospital. And who does that but God? So you know that's part of the trigger. That's the micro.

Then the macro trigger was everyone just pushing the plow, just persevering, just asking questions. "Where is God? Why are we going through this? What's happening here? What's next? What about my children?" And that triggered this idea of what heaven starts hell cannot stop. This powerful biblical truth of Galatians 6:9 "do not grow weary of doing what is right. At the appropriate time you will reap a harvest of blessings." On this side of eternity, not just the next. But one caveat, the apostle Paul writes, "You can't give up."

[00:19:09] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, [Nutrafol](#). I've shared this stat with y'all before, but 30 million women are impacted by weakened or thinning hair. Y'all.

If you are among them, please know you're not alone. I have multiple of y'all DM me every time we talk about Nutrafol and say, "Tell me again what that company is that can help my hair." This is it. There is a solution you can trust to deliver results. Thousands of women have taken back control of their hair with Nutrafol and many of them rave that the supplement not only transformed their hair but restored their competence too. What a win!

Nutrafol offers two targeted formulas for women that are clinically shown to improve hair growth and thickness with less shedding through all stages of life. As Nutrafol's powerful ingredients bring your body back into balance, you might also notice improvements to your overall well-being including more restful sleep, less stress, better skin, and nails. It's wild. It's so cool how all that is connected.

Healthier hair growth takes time. You'll begin to experience thicker, stronger, faster-growing hair in three to six months. In a clinical study, 86% of women reported improved hair growth after six months, and more than 1,500 top doctors recommend Nutrafol as an effective and high-quality solution for healthier hair.

You can grow thicker, healthier hair and support our show by going to Nutrafol.com/tsf to save \$15 off your first month's subscription. This is their best offer anywhere and it is only available to US customers for a limited time. Plus free shipping on every order, y'all. So get \$15 off at Nutrafol.com. That's Nutrafol.com/tsf.

And now back to our conversation with Pastor Sam.

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Annie: We talk about prayer a lot around here. I mean, our whole group of friends here at That Sounds Fun are all fasting breakfast on January 6 to start epiphany, to start the year. Like we're going after it next year. And yet people ask me, "When do I stop praying for this thing?" So tell us not to give up. Like when do you stop praying for something that you want God to do or want Him to give you or want to see Him do in your life or someone else's life?

Pastor Sam: No. So you continue to pray. You pray and you believe. And you pray within a biblical framework. Meaning you pray. You pray in the name of Jesus, you pray driven by the Holy Spirit, you pray according to God's promises and word. And you pray way beyond you.

So you begin with the first caveat which is thy kingdom come, thy will be done. I am praying for your will to be done way beyond my emotions, my inclinations, my desire. God be God, but show up." Now, it's not my fault and your fault that God's set up this system. That prayer is the Wi-Fi that connects you to the fulfillment of God's promises. It's not my fault. He set it up. This is His Wi-Fi.

You pray, the password, in the name of Jesus. That's the password. You go in there. And that's the Wi-Fi that connects you to the fulfillment of God's promises. So you pray. But you pray with great intentionality and you continue to pray. But when do I give up prayer? You need to pray and believe.

It came to a point where I prayed... Let me give you an example. I prayed for a relative who was struggling with drug addiction. So my initial prayer was, "Lord, please free her from that bondage, free her from that bondage, free her from that

bondage." Then you pivot as you grow in your prayer. And here's now the prayer, Lord." Lord, thank you. Thank you for this amazing young lady who will thrive in your glory, who will occupy great space in advancing your kingdom, becoming a blessing to everyone she knows." So I went from praying for a victim to declaring a conqueror.

Annie: Wow! Wow!

Pastor Sam: And that's the evolutionary scale of our prayer lives. Once you pray, you have to believe that He's going to do it. And then your prayer life should manifest, should look like someone who believes that God answered that prayer.

And I discovered in my prayer life that the same God of the process is the God of the outcome. The God of the process is the God of the outcome. Which means what? As Christians, we always adhered to the "the end will be wonderful." But what about the process? He is same identical God.

So I understand that I can't confuse what I'm going through it where I'm going to, and I'm not going to conflate the temporary with the permanent. So my prayer life needs to evolve as I believe God for the fulfillment of that prayer. So keep on praying, but change the prayer to declaration. From a prayer for a position to a prayerful declaration.

Annie: There are times when I'm praying and I do not want to give up. I mean, I have persevere tattooed on my body. I mean, I'm like, "I don't want to give up." But also there are times where I'm unwilling to change my prayer even when I feel myself wanting. Meaning, "But God, I was asking you for this." But as I'm praying, I'm sensing, "Oh, the Holy Spirit is asking me to change what I'm even saying." But you don't want to because you're like, "No, I thought I wanted that. But actually, I hear you, Lord. I hear you say "Instead of this working out, I want your will."

Pastor Sam: And hence praying in the Spirit. Praying in the Spirit is not some sort of awkward—I'm going to use a harsh term theologically—weird thing. It's not. Praying in the spirit is letting the Holy Spirit pray in you, with you, for you through you. He knows you better than you know yourself. So it's the Spirit of God. According to the Apostle Paul in Ephesians who's praying through you. And he'll tell you, "Hey, Annie, hey, Sam, you know, let me give you... put this nugget...Go ahead. Put this in your prayer life. Go ahead. Release this. Say the following." And all of a sudden you start praying stuff that never would have come out of your mouth before and you go like, "Okay. Yeah."

Annie: I mean, there are times where I hear something come out of my mouth and I'm like, "Yeah, I agree with that. Yeah, okay, Annie. Okay, Lord, what are we talking about?"

Pastor Sam: I love that. I love that. To a great degree, we find the prophet Elijah going through these evolutionary growth spurts, where he encounters God, where his prayer life changes. Even the way he pray changes, the way he did things changes. And then his activities of Elisha subsequently change. And I love it.

This great story of a guy who was here in point 1 King 17:1, all the way to the end of his journey in 2 Kings 2:11. And you see an incredible amount of maturity from one of the most iconic prophets to ever live.

Annie: You did such a beautiful job in writing the book of tracing that maturity growth. Because I think a lot of times we think that transition in our faith is from non-believing to believing and that should be it. But the maturity of Elisha as he grows in his relationship with God, everything changes in him as he matures.

Pastor Sam: The maturity process is laid out primarily in 17 and 18 where he prays for a drought, then he prays for a fire, then he prays for rain. But that serves as a biblical prophetic metaphor. I'm going to use the word "rubric" again, an outline for us. We go through our droughts, we go to the fire in order to end up with the rain. But that's life. We go through a moment where we don't see anything growing whatsoever. Everything is dry. We're being fed by ravens for crying out loud, you know, from very orthodox means.

The fact that God used the raven to feed Elijah tells me, tells you, informs us that God... ravens don't feed. Y'all get that. They're scavengers. They're scavengers. Go to nature.com. That's what they do. They're scavengers. They don't feed. But God has the power to change the algorithm, the configuration, and the coding of whatever comes your way in order to end up blessing you.

So the raven that's supposed to pick and destroy and look for cadavers, he changed the algorithm, the configuration, the coding of an entire bird, an animal in order to do the opposite of what it's created for. So whatever comes your way, regardless of its intentionality, its purpose, God has the power to say, "Stop! You will bless her. You will bless him. I'm not even giving you a choice. I'm the architect of the universe. I will change your algorithm where you have no other choice."

That storm and that problem you're going through, God has the power to say "Instead of harming you, it will bless you." So it's the drought and then there's the

fire and then there's the rain. And people want to jump from drought to rain without going through the fire. I discovered a-

Annie: I would like to as well.

Pastor Sam: I would love to. That's my utopia. I discovered that you can't bypass the process. That in life you have to go through the fire to get to the rain. In other words, before you experience a favor you have to go through fire. Fire proceeds favor.

Annie: Fire proceeds favor. Every time.

Pastor Sam: Every single time. From Genesis to Revelation, even in the New Testament, Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist said, "He's going to baptize you the Holy Spirit and with fire." So it's always fire before the favor. So anyone who's asking for favor, "God, give me favor," be careful what you're asking.

Annie: That's right.

Pastor Sam: Because what you're actually asking for is "God, I'm giving you permission to consume everything in me and around me that would impede the fulfillment of your purpose in my life. So go ahead, fire it up." And fire, for all my charismatic friends, does not necessarily make you dance and shout and jump. The fire of God makes you repent, get on your knees, get on your face. It's uncomfortable. This is not the little, giggly kind of fire. The fire of God consumes.

Hebrew says that "God is not like," which is really interesting grammatically speaking. You know, wordsmithing this. It says that "God is," not "like." He is a consuming fire. So that means that He is there to not in a way to punish us. No, no, no, no, in a way to make us better actually. He is there to say, "Look, there are things in you that I'm going to have to address. I got this." And it's Him, His Spirit who does it. So he goes in there and there are thoughts.

Like Sam Rodriguez used to pray in my early years, "Lord bless me, Lord blessed me, Lord blessed me." I don't even pray that anymore. These words doesn't come out of my mouth. Here's the way that Sam has evolved because of the fire of God. "Lord, make me a blessing to everyone I know." Radical. Because automatically it means to have to be blessed in order to become a blessing. But it's no longer about me. It's no longer narcissistic Sam. It's no longer self-absorbed Sam. It's not about the selfie image, it's about the Lord.

So you're either a Christian that's looking at a mirror or a Christian that's looking through a window. So, I'd rather be the one looking at the window and saying, "God..." I'm not even going to say "God answer my prayers!" My prayer every day I wake up is "Lord make me the answer to someone else's prayer today."

Annie: Wow.

Pastor Sam: It's the fire that does that. It consumes the ego, the pride, all of that. And then comes the favor of God, which in Christianity we call the rain, the abundant rain.

Annie: I was laughing the other day because the Maverick City has this beautiful song called *Refiner*. And some friends and I were talking and we're like, "You better really mean it if you sing that. Because if you start saying to God, burn me up and change me and refine me, He's going to."

Pastor Sam: Ain't that wild? Then when God does answer our prayers, then we're surprised on what happened. Elijah pray, he said-

Annie: Oh, I love this. Talk about that.

Pastor Sam: He says, "No rain." He looks at Ahab, 1 King 17:1. Here it is. That's how we're introduced to this crazy prophet. He dressed awkwardly. The Bible says he had a very different diet. So he wasn't eating from Pollo Loco. I just want you to know that. He wasn't. It was different.

So he comes along, and he says, "Here it is, Mr. King. No more rain." Later on, there's a drought subsequently. And we find Elijah next to a brook where God is feeding into the brook. But the brook dries up. Why does the brook dry up? Because Elijah prayed what?

Annie: No rain.

Pastor Sam: No more rain. So he's living the consequences of what he prayed for. So next time you open up your mouth and say, "God, let your will be done," do you know what you're actually saying? When you say, "God, forge me," and the stuff we say, like, "Lord send your fire. Purge me. Make me more like you." Really?

Annie: Are you sure?

Pastor Sam: Do you realize you're going to live out the conce...? When your brook dries up, don't blame the devil.

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

Pastor Sam: It's the consequence of you telling God, "Be you. I abandon it all in your hands. You're the Lord of my life. Go ahead. Send your fire. Sanctify..." Whatever term you want to use. Sanctify, purify, do all that. Lord, just take the stuff out. And then you live out the... What happened to my relationship? I was dating that guy and somehow he out of the blue just left my life. What just happened? You prayed. You said, "God remove anything that would somehow hinder the fulfillment of your purpose in my life."

So when that takes place, don't blame the devil. I think the devil one day is going to sue a lot of people for defamation of character.

Annie: Defamation of character.

Pastor Sam: I think there's going to come a moment where the devil is going to go, like... I think there are moments where you'll see heaven and hell come together, and they look at you, and you start saying, "Devil, you did..." And then like heaven and hell come together and go like, "No, no, that's all you. That's all you."

Annie: Wow.

Pastor Sam: "We don't do this. That's all you. That's all you." So it's like you be mindful of that. But prayers are powerful. The stuff that comes out of your mouth. I mean, talking about, you know, you could either shift the atmosphere, but you could actually create atmosphere via the conduit of the words that come out of your mouth.

Annie: Yes! I mean, one of the questions that I see people ask and I've heard people ask is, when we pray, does it actually change God's mind? And do we want to change God's mind? Like when we pray, sometimes... you can correct me on this, Pastor Sam. But sometimes I feel like it's a little bit of a cop-out when people are like, prayer is just about connecting with God. I'm like, "No, it's not. It's not. It is about connecting with God, but that's not all it's about. When we pray we shape things.

Pastor Sam: I'm going to show you some stuff here in scripture.

Annie: Okay, let's go.

Pastor Sam: You're right on point. Listen, this is going to sound weird. Again, there are those in theological streams out there that may differ from this, but I'm going to biblically

substantiate it. So it's in the book. It's in the book. There's a guy named Hezekiah. He's the King. Hezekiah is about to die.

Annie: I love this. Go!

Pastor Sam: Hezekiah goes to a wall, puts his hands on the wall, and says, "Yeah, I get it. You already gave a word. You gave a word that these are my last days. You said it, God. So I get it that I'm about to die. You gave a word out. You already let the prophets know that my time is up on this planet. But here's my prayer to you on this wall. Can you add years to my life?"

The Bible says that God heard His prayer, changed. One version in the Hebrew exegete says His mind changed. His thinking process changed. The plan that he had for Hezekiah changed, and he added years. So the relationship we have with God is so powerful. And I get about the preordained. I get all that. I get all that. But I'm telling you, in all the scripture from Genesis to Revelation, we see God supernaturally show up in circumstances because His children cried out onto Him. That's the reality of the promises of God.

So can we change God's mind? All I can tell you in Scripture, there were people who pray to God said, "You know what? All right. All right, I'm going to listen to that and I'm going to go with what you just prayed." It's like, wow, how do you explain that? Well, yeah, there's certain things we can't explain logically. But all I know is that God's love for you and His purpose for you exceeds and trumps any other sort of stipulated, myopic understanding of how He works in your life. He is God.

Annie: It is added to the intimacy I feel with Him in prayer to think maybe when we have this conversation, He... I mean, I could cry, saying it to you. Maybe when I bring this to God, He will hear me in a way that it makes Him feel different and makes Him respond different.

And I just think that is such an intimate thing that God would even consider me as I'm praying, right? And so it's added... I mean, you can hear it in my voice. It's added intimacy to my relationship with God to say, "Your will be done. I don't want what you don't want. But I'm experiencing this thing that makes me ask you, 'could you change your mind?'"

Pastor Sam: You're telling me God never wakes, God never smiles at you? He never does a God wink or God smile? We are His children. I have felt moments in my life where I literally felt the Spirit of God crying with me. This is what people don't really get.

He is a sovereign, Mighty God, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. But He is a spiritual being and He's an emotional being.

How do we know this? Because the Bible says in the New Testament that you and I have the capability, unfortunately, of grieving the Holy Spirit. In the Greek, that grieving means literally to make Him cry. So He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, and He's a cognitive being and He's an emotional being just like you and I.

So I love the fact that, yeah, the heart of God... that we are His children. Are you kidding me? The words that come out of your mouth, your posture. In your most difficult moment, you cry out onto Him. This is, you know, the old religious way of looking at things.

I grew up in a very rigid, strict, evangelical setting where there was a bunch of stuff. I love the fact that I was raised in the church. But some of the teachings were so archaic and out of alignment with scripture. So the wineskin was wrong. The wine is always perfect, but the wineskin was so wrong. And I was taught crazy stuff and eschatology. If the rapture comes and you're in a movie theater, you're going to stay behind. Really?

Annie: Oh, my God.

Pastor Sam: According to what rating? Like if it's a PG do I stay behind? But if it's an R rating, you know, is that R for revival? I'm still confused. So all that stuff, that sort of myopic theological world. You didn't have the Wi-Fi. So it was old school, it was analog, it wasn't digital.

But in reality, I discovered this in my most broken hour is when God gets closer to me. Ain't that crazy? When you're dirty and messed up is when people... the old religious worldview would be God abandons you. How dare you? And I discovered that that's when God says, "Come here. You need me more than ever before." And that's when God cries with you and He holds you tighter.

In John 10:28 and 29 Stand fully activated where he holds you in his grip. And nothing will ever take you away from His crass. So this loving unbelievable compassionate grace-filled God who is committed to each and every one of us, that's the God we serve. And that's why we persevere because His promises are yes and Amen.

[00:38:52] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friend! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, [Liquid IV](#). Since cold and flu season is in full swing, it makes it even more important than usual to remember that good hydration and vitamins can help support a strong immune system.

But honestly making hydration a priority helps us feel healthier on a day-to-day basis no matter what time of year it is. And it fuels us to work hard, play hard, rest hard and play hard. It's why we love Liquid IV around Downs Books and that That Sounds Fun Network.

Just one stick of Liquid IV in my water bottle hydrates faster and more efficiently than water by itself. I like to use it early in the day because it just helps me feel well-fueled for whatever's on the to-do list. And y'all know we got some to-do lists around here.

Not only that, but Liquid IV tastes great with flavors like lemon lime, guava strawberry. The immune support one is tangerine flavored and it is so good. Protip though. Be sure your lid is on tight before you start shaking your water bottle up. Okay, okay. We've learned this the hard way.

You may be wondering what makes Liquid IV so effective. And scientist Annie is here to tell you that it is their cellular transport technology (CTT). It just means that Liquid IV helps get the optimal ratio of glucose and sodium and potassium into your bloodstream. So it's the perfect balance to help you hydrate more quickly and effectively than water alone.

And I love their heart to give back. Today they donated over 11 million sticks to people around the world. So grab your favorite Liquid IV flavors nationwide at Walmart. Okay, Liquid IV in Walmart? Or you can get 25% off when you go to [liquidiv.com](#) and use the code THATSOUNDSFUN at checkout. That's 25% off anything you order would you get better hydration today using the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN at [liquidiv.com](#).

Sponsor: And I've got one more amazing partner to tell you about, [Thistle Farms](#). Friends, we burn candles every day, literally every day. Candles create a scent, candles create ambience, they create the space for the creativity when we're writing, they create sanctuary and sanity in the midst of the busyness that is life.

Well, Thistle Farms' candles are our go-to because they are so much more than a pretty scent. They create sanctuary for women survivors of traffic, prostitution, and

addiction. We have a choice when we bring home a candle. We can bring home things that matter to us like a beautiful smell, a pretty vessel, something that matches our living room, or you can bring home a candle that literally brings home another woman. It is a simple but powerful decision when we use our economic capital, our social capital, to make sure that there is a place ready for the next woman. It's just incredible.

Thistle Farms has the most, the most beautiful candles, you guys, and some come in stunning gift sets as well. So consider doing some holiday shopping at Thistle Farms. It's a way to give someone in your life a gift while giving hope to someone you don't even know. Because that's what our community is all about.

So use the code THATSOUNDSFUN for 15% off at Thistlefarms.org, and stick around for the 12 days of Christmas because Becca Stevens who founded Thistle Farms is one of our guests. Again, that's thistlefarms.org. And the code is THATSOUNDSFUN for 15% off.

And now back to finish up our conversation with Pastor Sam.

[00:42:02] <music>

Annie: And I feel like perseverance is when we encounter Him in our weakness. Because if we quit when we're tired, we don't ever see Him show up when we are past tired.

Pastor Sam: Absolutely. Right. It begins by you knowing who you are. Like what defines you. So I discovered and in the book I write about that, you know, you're not defined by what surrounds you. You're defined by God's Spirit inside of you. You're not defined by your circumstances, you're defined by His covenant. You're not defined by the hell you're going through, you're defined by the heaven you're going to. You're not defined by your failing years, you're defined by His forgiveness.

And for all the religious folk out there, get over yourself. You're not defined by what you do for God. You're defined by what God already did for you. What He already did. So you live in the finished vicarious atoning work of Jesus. You live in that.

So I love that. The moment I discovered all that I went like, "Wow, now I'm definitely not going to let go. I'm going to continue to push my plow." Have you ever been, Annie, in a moment where you wanted to let go the plow in life? Life's plow. Have you ever been in the moment of giving up?

Annie: Of course, yes. Yeah, of course.

Pastor Sam: I've been there. And that's why it triggered the book. I've been in moments where, you know... Again, the book is about one verse, 1 Kings 19:19. And then I go through all the passages. But there's a guy named Elisha who is pushing a plow. He's farming. The most famous rock star, more followers on Instagram than anyone else.

Prophet Elijah comes along. Literally. No conversation. Do your biblical due diligence. It's a movie script. No convo. He takes his mantle, his club, places it upon the plow pusher, and walks away. The rest is history. Elisha let's go the plow, follows him. And the history of Israel is changed forevermore. This to me talks about the fact that every day, with the exception of the day of rest, Elijah has to push the plow, break the ground. And so let's see.

The plow pusher became the mantle carrier. If you do not know what it is to push the plow, then you shouldn't have any expectation of carrying the mantle. The mantle was for the plow pusher. The mantle is for every single person who knows what it is to push life's proverbial plow in your family, your home, your faith, your health, your relationships, your career. You know what it is to push life's plow on good days and bad days, sunny days and rainy days, on days when everyone loves you, and on days where you can't even stand yourself. And yet you push.

There came a time back in the early 2000s. By the grace of God is a different story. But I was advising a former president of the United States of America. At that time it was George W. Bush. And I know how I got there. It wasn't Sandy's personality. It wasn't his charisma. It wasn't his plugs, his connections.

When I was 14 years old... and it's completely verifiable, people were there, so no hype. And when I was 14, my parents are not preachers. And I was 14 years old in an Assembly of God church in Allentown, Pennsylvania. I was an agnostic. My parents made me go to church. I'm a math and science guy, graduated from Lehigh University. Still am a faithful science guy. I may preach like Kirk, but I think like Spock. That's who I am.

So I doubted everything, especially the charismatic stuff. Are you kidding me? That stuff has to be... you know. So this guy who I never met before from Teen Challenge choir director walks in for the first time in our church, sings a song. In the middle of song he stops it and says, "There's a Sammy in here. A Sammy. A Sammy now. Not a young man; A Sammy. I'm the only Sammy in my church.

My Church, of course, being so quiet and introverted, not caring about my mental trauma offset "Here he is." They all pointed to me. My pastor says, "Sammy, it's you" right there in front of everyone. They bring me up, and this man begins to say, you know, "Sam, you're going to be a preacher. And my pastoral preaching is going to be around the world. I'm going to use you mightily," bah, bah, bah. And then he says this: "And the Lord says, you're going to end up praying for President of the United States." I'm 14.

There was a young lady in the audience who heard it who said, "If this is true, I'm going to marry that boy." That's my wife of 32 years.

Annie: No.

Pastor Sam: No. Help me, God.

Annie: Pastor Sam!

Pastor Sam: Yeah, yeah. There was a whole church who saw it. I did not recei... like I heard it, but I walked out going like, "Man, I don't know." Again, my doubting Thomas, like, "Is this legit?" First of all he said Sammy, though, I get it. So Sammy is not like your typical... All right, I get you. All right. So when I saw that word come to pass... So back to the story. It came to pass. All I'm here to tell you is, again, there's a fine line between the prophetic and the pathetic.

Annie: I love that part.

Pastor Sam: And I've been in the presence of both. But I can't deny the fact that God still speaks. I'm the byproduct of it. So when I was advising George W. Bush, the pressure was so intense on so many issues, and there was so much warfare that I told God one day "I'm done." Like regarding that, not here, not my relationship, not my salvation, my horizontal calling.

I went like, "Hey, I'm going to do something else. I am not doing this. This is way much more than I signed up for. And tomorrow morning, I'm going to look for another job. I quit." Well, the next morning, guess who got up and continued to push the pile?

Annie: Right.

Pastor Sam: And it wasn't because I'm animated. You know, I drink a lot of caramel macchiato. It wasn't any of that. It's real simple. It's Romans 8:11. The same identical spirit that

raised Jesus from the dead lives inside of you. It's way beyond me. Meaning, if with that spirit Jesus came out of the tomb, you and I can come out of everything. And that's why we'll never give up.

We continue to push that plow because even when you don't want to push it, the Spirit of God will say "I got this." Sometimes you're pushing the plow, and then you discover that sometimes the plow is pushing you.

Annie: That's the truth. That's the truth. That's it. Well, I mean, it's what Peter said. "Where else would I go? Where else would I go?" Even on my worst days, Pastor Sam, I'm like... I mean, this is a terrible... not today. But on a day that's terrible, this is a terrible day, I wish I had any other job. I wish I was any other person. Where else would I go? Where else would I go?

Pastor Sam: And here we are. You and I are the byproducts. We're plow pushers who have been given assignments from heaven way beyond us and our personalities and all that. It's just God saying, "Hey, for such a time as this." And if you continue to push your plow, without a doubt, the plow of perseverance will always lead to the mantle of promotion. The plow of perseverance will always lead to the mantle of promotion.

So that's why you can't be complacent. Today's complacency is tomorrow's captivity. You are what you tolerate. And there is no such thing as comfortable Christianity. And I discovered that truth must never be sacrificed on the altar of political or cultural expediency. Continue to push that plow in spite of yourself. There's a mantle of promotion that's going to change your life forevermore.

Annie: Will you talk a little bit about surviving versus thriving? I think as we're thinking about next year and going into a whole, you know... when people are making plans, you make this list in the book toward the end of like, "This is surviving, but here's what thriving could look like." How can we shape our lives going forward for a thriving version of a prayer life or relationships or relationship with God? How do we thrive from here versus just survive?

Pastor Sam: Every single person listening to this podcast is either failing, surviving, or thriving. That's one of the three categories. You're either failing, you're surviving, you're thriving in life. Whether you're a believer or a non-believer, you're either failing, surviving. I would argue if you're a believer, you can't be failing. But you're either failing, surviving, or thriving. If I were to use a biblical narrative as a metaphor, you're either in Egypt, the desert, or the promised land.

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Annie: Oh, wow.

Pastor Sam: And the vast majority of people, Annie, never get into the Promised Land, horizontally speaking. Vertically through salvation in Christ, yes, you're already there. But horizontally in life on this side of eternity, the vast majority of even Christians never make it to the Promised Land, horizontally speaking, because they go around in the desert.

They're just going around in circles, going around, and they're satisfied with manna. And you settle for less. Don't settle for manna in the desert when there's milk and honey waiting for you in the Promised Land. Don't settle for an Ishmael when there's an Isaac with your name on it.

Annie: Listen, oh, you better talk to some women who are dating the Ishmaels out there.

Pastor Sam: That is completely accurate.

Annie: And men. Men too. They're dating women.

Pastor Sam: That's right. No, I gotcha. But they settle. Don't settle for less than what God has for you. And don't just survive. Thrive. And what's the difference between surviving and thriving? Oh, absolutely, it's what we alluded to previously. You know, from God Bless me to make me a blessing. God answer my prayer to make me the answer to someone else's prayer. In order for you to survive, you have to learn how to climb out of hell. In order for you to thrive, you have to learn how to bring down heaven. It's a different take, man

Annie: Right.

Pastor Sam: It's a different way of doing things.

Annie: You said to survive, you must fight off your enemies. To thrive, you must fight off yourself.

Pastor Sam: Absolutely.

Annie: Your doubts, your fears. I was like, "That's it. That's the difference." When I'm surviving. I'm like, "The enemy doesn't have a voice here." When I'm thriving, I'm like, "Hey, you don't get to say that stuff to yourself."

Pastor Sam: That's right.

Annie: So good.

Pastor Sam: It's a different way of looking at things. You know, it's about mirrors and windows. It really is. But you have to be intentional. For the sake of my children, do I just want to survive or thrive? How many altars were built in the desert?

Annie: Yeah. I was like, "I don't know the answer. Zero." Yeah, that's not-

Pastor Sam: You're not supposed to build a housing complex in what you're going through. Spiritually, cognitively, intellectually, emotionally, stop building silos in what you're going through. Don't become enamored, even subconsciously in the process of what you're going through.

No. You're not a perpetual victim. No. You have to just learn you're going through it, but don't stay stuck there. Don't build an altar in the desert. Get to the promised land. That's where you go to Gil Gao and build your first altar. That's where you build monuments and statues and buildings and houses and all of that—in the Promised Land.

So again, every single person, it's at Galatians 6:9. It's the promises of God. It's Philippians 1:6—the good god who started the work, he will finish the good work he has started. All these promises are legit, but you have to believe it and walk in them.

Annie: Yes.

Pastor Sam: Literally occupy that space. And it's doable regardless of the Jezebels and Ahabs that will come to distract you and disrupt you in life.

Annie: So finish us out. Give us a little bit of gospel vision of a thriving prayer life for 2020. Give us a little bit of vision of what does it look like for us to persevere next year, for us to pray and actually see things change, for us to look back on '22 and go that was the year that prayer made a difference for me.

Pastor Sam: I really do believe that the majority of people right now listening to this, you've been pushing the plow and you're about to see your mantle of promotion. It's not high. You're about to exchange your plow for a mantle of promotion.

What does this mean? It means that even that mantle Elijah placed on Elisha, it became an inheritance, right? If we do this right, Annie, here's the prayer life. Your

children will not inherit your sins, your children will inherit your blessings. Your children will not inherit your mistakes, your children will inherit your mantle's in your miracles. That's the reality.

So a prayer life that is deliberate. You're going to pray, not like you're just pushing the plow. You're going to pray like you're carrying the mantle. You're going to pray with intentionality, with purpose. You're going to pray, knowing very well what Elisha did. Again, you're going to pray knowing that there are Jezebels out there, they're already out there. Well, when Jezebel declared this man's going to die in 24 hours, he didn't. Matter of fact, Annie, it's been 2,800 years since Jezebel said the man with the mantle would be dead and he has yet to die.

Annie: He never died.

Pastor Sam: He never died.

Annie: The best part of the story.

Pastor Sam: Isn't that wild? That's a movie script. I'm telling you.

Annie: The Lord was like, "Oh, excuse me, Jezebel, I'm actually going to opposite of that."

Pastor Sam: That's my point right there. It's the opposite. Whatever the enemy has declared upon you, your family, your home, your marriage, your relationship, your health, the opposite will take place. You have to believe that. The opposite will take place.

Yes, whatever he has declared, because what happens starts, hell cannot stop. That's how we pray. "Lord, you already started. Heavenly Father, you already started to work in my life, in my children's life, in my family's life, you already started the work in my health. And Lord, the work you have started, you will finish it. And not just on the other side of eternity, on this side of eternity."

John 10:10, the latter part, "I am standing on your promises. In the name of Jesus, I believe it." Live it out. I walked it out. I'm the byproduct of... this is not hype for me. This is not like an idea. I've lived it out.

In 2011, all of a sudden, God opened doors for a preacher to do movies in Hollywood, not with Christian studios, but with 20th Century Fox, Sonys. What are you talking about? Annie, I've seen the realization of that. And all I got to do is what? Let go of the plow in the right season, carry the mantle, and know very well that that mantle is a legacy for my children and my children's children.

Annie: Double portion.

Pastor Sam: We're going to change the world.

Annie: Listen, I could jump out of this chair.

Pastor Sam: We're going to change the world.

Annie: Yes!

Pastor Sam: We're going to do this. But pray. God answers your prayers. He does. Pray in the Spirit, pray according to the Word of God. Pray in the name of Jesus. Make sure you deal with all unforgiveness in your heart, let go of all unbelief and unforgiveness, forgive everyone who was ever offended you even when it hurts, just forgive them. Do that, and watch the glory of God show up in you, with you, and through you.

Annie: Okay. Pastor Sam, we usually end by asking people what sounds fun to them. But I would just love... will you just pray us out? Will you pray for us as we kind of point to next year and as we get through Advent and the holiday season? I just want to open my hands and let you pray over me and our people listening.

Pastor Sam: Let's do it. Heavenly Father you are awesome. You are amazing. You are God of the process and God of the outcome. You are God of the now and the God of the next. We're fully cognizant of the fact by your Spirit that our now is not our next but what we do now will determine what we see next. And now we are asking you not for the surge, we're asking for the chiropractic God to show up and adjust and align everything in our respective lives in order for us to make room for what's next.

Lord, I sense in your Spirit that what is next is truly remarkable. It is amazing. Every plow pusher right now in this audience will emerge by faith through Christ as the carrier of a mantle. We're about to see an exchange, from the plow to the mantle, from the plow of perseverance to the mantle of promotion. Do it indeed.

Psalm 65:11, Lord, you will crown the year with a bountiful harvest and even the hard pathways of difficulty will overflow with abundance. I believe that. Amos 9:13 Our heads will be spinning, swimming around, trying to catch up to everything, all the blessings you are sending our way where the sower and the reaper overtake one another. We receive this. We believe it by faith through Christ.

John 14:12-14, the year 2022 will be the year of greater things. In Jesus' name. We believe it, we come in agreement at the authority of your name because what heaven starts, hell cannot stop. In Jesus' name.

[00:58:34] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, don't you love him? Oh my gosh. I could have talked to him for an actual other hour and I hope we get to soon. I loved him. And be sure to grab your copy of *Persevere with Power*. And go follow him, tell him thanks for being on the show.

If you need anything else for me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may be me, that's how you can find me. And I think that's it for me today, friends.

Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me is I want to put some Liquid IV in my water bottle. That sounds fun to me. I'm thirsty. So that's what I'm going for next is put some Liquid IV in my water bottle.

Y'all have a great couple of days and we'll see you back here on Wednesday with, get ready, Author Mitch Albom. I know. You guys, I know! I can't believe it either. We'll see you on Wednesday.

[00:59:26] <music>

Kendra: I'm Kendra Adachi. I'm the author of *The Lazy Genius Way*. And my favorite Christmas song is *The Christmas Song* sung by Nat King Cole. Because there's something so beautifully comforting and nostalgic about sitting in front of a fire whether it's snowing or not, if it's a Netflix fire, if it's a real fire. That voice singing those words feels like Christmas to me. And I love it so much.

Mike: Hey, I'm Mike.

Cheryl: And I'm Cheryl.

Mike: And we're from Cross Point Music. Our new record is called *Never Going Back*. And if I had to pick a favorite Christmas song it would be *O Come O Come Emmanuel*.

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Cheryl: If I had to pick my favorite Christmas song it is a throwback by Darlene Love called *Baby Please Come Home*.

Dr. Matthew: Hi, this is Dr. Matthew Sleeth, the author of *Hope Always: How to Be a Force for Life in a Culture of Suicide*. And my favorite Christmas song is really embedded in an entire group of Christmas songs. It's in Handel's Messiah. I love the piece of work before I was a Christian when God finally gave me ears to hear that I was simply hearing the Bible sang out. Who!

There is a particular song, the Lord gave the word: great was the company of the preachers, that is so magnificent, I bawl like a baby every time I hear it. But the entire Messiah gets me... it's a three handkerchief affair the year the Messiah.