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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 a great show in store, one of them that y'all wait on every year. Here it is!

So there's two majorly exciting things happening around here starting on February 17, which is like weeks away. For starters, the That Sounds Fun tour kicks off February 17. If you haven't gotten your tickets yet, you've got just a couple more weeks to get that remedied. Just go to AnnieFDowns.com/events and secure your spot for fun and laughs and friendship and special guests and confetti and a live podcast. I cannot wait.

And on February 17, a big ol' group of us are going to start going through *100 Days to Brave* together. Here's what we figured. Life is full of situations that require bravery but we don't always feel full with the courage that we need. *100 Days to Brave* is a devotional all about stepping into the things we face in our everyday lives with bravery.

This time though, your kiddos or the MiniBFFs in your life are invited to get in on it too because my very newest book, *100 Days to Brave for kids* is releasing on February 8. It's available for pre-order right now. I'm so excited to get these truths in the hands and hearts of my MiniBFFs. It's perfect for kids around the ages of seven to 12. Though younger kids aren't totally invited, they just may need help with the reading part.

We've got it all mapped out. When we start our 100 days on February 17, we'll all finish together right before Memorial Day. So all you need to do is pull out your copy of *100 Days to Brave* or buy one anywhere you love to buy books, and pre-order a copy of *100 Days to Brave for Kids* so you've got them ready to go on the 17th.

We will have a fun checkoff sheet for the kids, y'all can keep track of the days. We'll also have an email you can sign up for. We're setting it all up for you. So there will be a really easy way for us all to get together. I cannot wait for this journey.

I'll post the first five days on my Insta Stories to give you plenty of time to get your books. And then we'll email you every 10 days with some encouragement to keep it up. Because the secret sauce, listen, listen, friends, the secret sauce of *100 Days to Brave* is finishing it. So I love the community and the fun that happens when we go on this journey together. And it also helps us to finish.

So to sign up and be a part of this opportunity, just go to the #100DaysToBrave2022, link in the show notes, and claim your spot. Okay? So if you look right below this, there are all the show notes and you will see the link for #100DaysToBrave2022. That is where you sign up to get the emails and be a part of all of this with us.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to take a moment and share about one of our incredible partners. This podcast is sponsored by [BetterHelp Online Therapy](#). We talk about BetterHelp a lot on this show. In these last couple of months, we've been discussing some of the stigmas around mental health. Even though some people think this, you don't have to wait until things are unbearable and you're at your wit's end to connect with a therapist.

And contrary to old stigmas that thankfully are being debunked, therapy doesn't mean that something is wrong with you. No! Y'all going to therapy is a wise and brave step to take for your own mental health and the health of your relationships. I can attest to just how helpful it's been in my life to have someone to process with and who helps equip me with tools for times that are challenging.

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 could be matched with a therapist and under 48 hours. Give it a try and 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 their first month at betterhelp.com/thatoundsfun. That's betterhelp.com/thatoundsfun.

Intro: All right, y'all, today on the show I'm joined by our dear friends Raechel Meyers and Amanda Bible Williams from She Reads Truth. Some of your favorite episodes and mine are where Raechel and Amanda come to share with us about the Christian calendar and the Lent and Advent seasons.

You'll see also in the show notes below there is a link to a Spotify podcast playlist that has every time Raechel and Amanda have been on the show. So if you want to hear all the times we've talked about Lent or all the times we've talked about Advent, you can find it there on that Spotify playlist.

Rachael and Amanda lead She Reads Truth. It's an organization that exists to encourage women and men and children to be in God's word every day. I am profoundly grateful for their friendship and their leadership in my life.

And I love that we learn something together every time we talk. We're about to do it right here. You're going to love this one. Just like always, let's dive into the book of Ezekiel and the Christian calendar, and what are we supposed to give up for Lent? Let's talk about it.

So here's my conversation about Lent 2022 with Raechel Myers and Amanda Bible Williams from She Reads Truth.

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Annie: Raechel and Amanda, welcome back, welcome back.

Amanda: Hello.

Raechel: Yay!

Annie: I have a lot of questions about Ezekiel.

Amanda: Well-

Raechel: We don't have a lot of answers.

Amanda: As you may or may not know, I am the foremost expert on Ezekiel.

Annie: Ezekiel himself. Yes.

Amanda: No, that's completely false

Annie: Will y'all identify yourselves with your voices for our friends who don't know who's who?

Amanda: Yes. Hi, everybody, this is Amanda.

Raechel: And this is Raechel.

Annie: From She Reads Truth.

Raechel: That's right.

Annie: I'm so glad y'all... And He Reads Truth and Kids Reads Truth.

Amanda: All the people reads truth.

Annie: Everyone's reading truth.

Raechel: In the sound of the "all y'all."

Annie: All y'all reading truth.

Raechel: Yeah.

Annie: All y'all reads truth. When are we going to get that? Why do we not have that yet?

Raechel: Well, that just feels like one more thing.

Annie: Oh, one more resource for all the people. Hate to do it. You guys, we do this twice a year. I'm very thankful for you. I have some feedback from our Advent conversation.

Raechel: Let's hear it.

Annie: Mostly people loved our deep dive into Advent and Epiphany, and kind of the Christian calendar.

Raechel: I'm among the people who love that.

Annie: Same.

Amanda: Yes. Our conversation here at this table changed the way I thought about my Christmas decorations this year. Like we left them up until Epiphany.

Annie: Really?

Raechel: That is a real-life shift to commit to Christmas decorations through the 6th of January.

Annie: I didn't do that. I didn't do it.

Amanda: To be fair about a day or two past that.

Annie: TBH it lasted a little bit longer. I mean, when you think about what your Advent has led so far into this year, how did Advent speak into Christmas tide and speak into this little bit of ordinary time before we go into Lent?

Amanda: That's a good question. I mean, I think yet again we find ourselves with the calendar has turned and a lot of things have not changed. And just hearing day in and day out during the Advent season that Jesus is the light, the everlasting light, I think that, you know, in the darkness that we all are experiencing in various ways, collectively and individually, it's just good.

It's good to know. It's good to be reminded. And to have received... You know, that's the kind of reminder that I usually need is the everyday kind. And so yeah. What were you going to say, Raey?

Raechel: Our theme at Advent this year was of course light. I mean, we all talked about it, right? We always have a theme, we always have an approach to advent. But there was something for me this year about this light theme and the deep-diving through Scripture. And even the coming out of it as being people of light. And then as a community we're reading the book of John in January.

And so coming out of that, like all of a sudden like your eyes are tuned to read, your ears are tuned to hear these light connections. But even for me, like, I came out of it... sometimes I close the door on Christmas and then I open it again the day after Thanksgiving. And for me, I feel like I still haven't closed the door on Christmas.

Annie: Wow.

Raechel: The light theme for me, like when I look at the stars at night, I'm still thinking about the light of the world and I'm still thinking about the reminder that God's faithfulness. Even when I can't see the stars because of light pollution or because of clouds or whatever, it's the same thing. The stars are still there whether we can see them or not. Likewise, God's faithfulness is still there whether we can see it or not. And I think that that has carried me in a way that I hope continues to carry me.

Annie: Lent is a little bit different.

Raechel: Yeah.

Amanda: Yeah.

Annie: And so I think Lent is so interesting from Advent. My Advent was really hard and I just ended up having to sort through things I didn't want to sort through at Christmas and figure things out that... And I am not kidding, y'all, hand to heaven, it all came to a head on Epiphany.

Amanda: Wow.

Annie: And I was like, "Huh!" I mean, it was the day it snowed here, remember?

Raechel: Yeah.

Annie: And I even said on Insta story, like, "This is not what I wanted Epiphany to be." And what I was deeper saying is, "This was not what I wanted Advent to be."

Amanda: Because it's over. It was over.

Annie: Yeah.

Amanda: And Christmas Tide is over.

Annie: And it had not been at all what I'd wanted it to be. One of the things I want us to do really well as a community, and with your leadership is like, how do we set intentions and purposes around the Christian calendar and not expectations?

Amanda: Oh!

Raechel: I love that. I mean, one of the things, Annie, that you taught us last time we were here for Advent, and I've genuinely resonated with that and continued to carry, is that you said... Maybe it's your Enneagram seven or whatever, but you said, "I'm not a day person. I'm a seasoned person." Like I don't need the day to feel special, I've learned that that's going to let me down 100% of the time. But the season is really where the joy comes from for you. Right?

Annie: Yes.

Raechel: And I think that, likewise, like you're talking about setting intentions versus like, what's that going to look like?

Annie: Yeah

Raechel: And I think one of the things is going, "What does this Lent season look like?" And then asking the question, How does it point me to the cross? How does it lead me to the cross? How does it make the cross bigger in my purview? Right?

Annie: How does it make the cross bigger? Yeah.

Raechel: And so as we walk toward... I mean, it's culminated, you know, with Black... I almost said Black Friday.

Annie: Nope!

Raechel: Good Friday.

Annie: Good Friday.

Raechel: It's culminated with Good Friday. And then more than that even with Easter Sunday and the Resurrection. We call Easter Sunday Resurrection Sunday. How does Easter Sunday feel not like Christmas Day where you're like all the pressure is on this one day? But how is it going to be different because of the way I spent that season?

Annie: Yeah, yeah. Amanda, will you kind of tell us like... give us the Lent overview.

Amanda: Okay.

Annie: What is Lent? We got a bunch of questions in from our friends from the AFD Week in Review email. And a couple of them are saying, like, What is it? I mean, what even is Lent?

Amanda: Excellent questions. This is not something that we just know. So Lent, in the similar way that Advent is the season leading up to the celebration of the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day, Lent is the season that leads up to Easter Resurrection Sunday like Raechel just said. But the season itself is very different. It's longer. So lent itself starts on Ash Wednesday, which this year... so it's a different date every year. So this year, it's March 2.

Annie: Advent we follow Sundays. Christmas is always December 25th.

Amanda: Correct.

Annie: Lent we follow Ash Wednesday to Easter and the dates are going to change every year.

Amanda: Yeah, correct.

Annie: Okay.

Amanda: Very good, Annie. That's right. So what we do at She Reads Truth is we start reading our reading plan for Lent the Monday before Ash Wednesday-

Annie: Got it.

Amanda: ...so that it's nice and tidy. So we're going to start our Lent study on February 28, but Lent, the season on the church calendar, starts March 2.

So what this is, it is not prescribed in Scripture. If you listen to any of our conversations with Annie in years past, we will say this every year because it's important, every year, that lent is not prescribed in Scripture, but it is modeled after... We know that fasting and meditating on God's word and feasting on God's word, those things are important, right?

We know that Easter Sunday is in many ways the centerpiece of our faith, the resurrection of Jesus, the life, death, resurrection of Jesus. And that is also kind of the centerpiece of our year. As Christians, we want to always be looking to the cross because that is the centerpiece of our faith.

So Lent is a season Jesus fasted 40 days in the wilderness. And so what we do as believers, we want to observe the season of Lent, which is not something you are required to do to be a Jesus follower, but you are invited to do just with centuries of believers around the world and down through time-

Raechel: This is not just American. This is not just 21st century.

Amanda: Raechel and I did not make this up.

Raechel: Here's an idea. You have tickled Annie like thrice.

Annie: Yeah. I really like that idea of like, So we've made up a church calendar.

Raechel: And it's going to be 40 days of hard stuff.

Annie: That's right. Of the heart.

Amanda: We're going to need you to fast from actual food. It's going to be great.

Annie: It's going to be fun.

Raechel: Trust us.

Amanda: But the season of Lent, you have 40 days of fasting and those are like your Monday through Saturday. But then you have seven days of feasting on Sunday, and then the ultimate feast day of Resurrection Sunday which begins Easter time.

Raechel: Which makes me want to circle back, Annie, to a minute ago when I was like, The season of Lent, the intention there is like, how can I make the cross bigger? I'm going to add a SO THAT.

Annie: Okay.

Raechel: And I like SO THAT in Scripture. We want to make the cross bigger So That the resurrection is put in its proper place. Right?

Annie: Yes. Yes.

Raechel: Because the cross is Jesus paying for our sins and dying. And we want that to be as big as it merits. And I think we'll never make it as big as it merits.

Annie: Yeah, of course.

Raechel: But it's for us to understand the depth of what that means, the significance and the heaviness of that So That Easter Sunday has its proper place and has its proper significance. Because that's the victory, that's the stomping the dragon, that's the like victory is secured, and eternity imperishable, unfading, not going anywhere.

Annie: That's it. That's it. Yeah.

Amanda: The dragon being death. Death himself.

Raechel: Yes.

Annie: Yeah. I'm going to throw a little side... Like if this was VH1-

Raechel: Yeah, pop-up video.

Annie: ...pop-up video, I'm going to do a pop-up video here moment of just saying, for those feasting and fasting days, if you're actually doing food, you need to be really thoughtful about your feasting days or your body will not handle that well.

So if you've decided you're going to do a certain way of eating six days a week, if you go all the way hard on that seven day a week, you're going to hurt your body. So just be thoughtful when you're feasting. We do not have the same type of food they had centuries ago where they could do this more readily with their bodies. We have to be thoughtful.

Raechel: I liked that pop-up video. That was worthwhile. All the doctors listening are nodding, going, "Thank you, Annie."

Amanda: And we would encourage you friends that if you are too fast for Lent, physically fast from a thing, then do this in the context of your real-life community.

Annie: Yes, make sure somebody knows.

Amanda: Like you need to chat with a doctor who knows you and your body. Your church family needs to know. There are ways that we-

Raechel: Well, and let's say not church family. I hear what you're saying, -

Amanda: Oh, you know what I mean.

Raechel: I want them to hear that right. Yeah. This is why we're together.

Amanda: See, this is the benefit of it being two of us. She knows what I mean even though it's not what I said.

Annie: The ones you can reach. You don't have to get up in front of everybody. Unless that's how your church rolls. I don't know.

Raechel: Well, and Annie, I feel like you have an actual rule of thumb about this. Who has to know?

Annie: Yes. So if I'm fasting food, a medical professional, my counselor and my pastor all know that I'm fasting food if it's anything more than about three days. Three days I

still tell y'all. Like I still tell my people if I'm... Because if I'm doing that I'm trying to ask God something that y'all already know about. You know what I mean?

Like I'm already going like, "Hey, I'm pressing in for something here." Or we're group, we're all fasting for something. But yeah, if it's longer, doctor, medical professional, a counselor, a pastor.

Raechel: And I think that's wise.

Amanda: Yeah, I do too. It's very wise.

Raechel: Pop up video. I miss it.

Annie: I do too. I'd love that.

Raechel: I miss it, especially I was never actually allowed to watch it. I know of it but we were not in a house that we were allowed to watch VH1.

Amanda: Shall we binge pop up video, right?

Annie: I have two questions from our friends listening that I think fit in right here. Jay says, "So many churches I've attended skip over Lent. Why is that? And why is it important for me to celebrate it if the church isn't highlighting it? I want to learn more." These are going to go together.

Amanda: Okay.

Annie: Emily says, "How do you get into Lent when you're a Protestant who's never practiced it. I was raised in and still attend the church of Christ. We've never practiced Lent or Advent, have a hard time getting into it when I'm not being supported by my church. It feels lonely." So I grew up Protestant. I grew up Methodist and it's a big part of our-

Raechel: It's a more liturgical denomination.

Annie: Yes, yes And I mean, we were talked about giving stuff up in sixth grade. You know, like we started really early. So how do we do that? If the church isn't celebrating it, the church we attend...

Raechel: I think my very first response is, ask your pastor why? Like my very first response is like, if you're feeling unsupported by your church and you're scratching your

head about why this might not be demonstrated as significant by your church, I would just seek understanding.

Annie: Yeah. Just seek out what they feel about the Christian calendar. Is it part of their...?

Raechel: Yeah. And not in a strong... I mean, just genuinely humble seeking understanding. "I don't know why this is not something that we do here."

Amanda: Right. And to be clear, there's no judgment on that.

Raechel: No.

Amanda: There could be a lot of reasons.

Raechel: Right.

Amanda: It is something that some denominations lean more heavily into than others. And that's okay.

Annie: That's right.

Amanda: If you think about the core of our faith, you know, like the things that are like in the Apostles Creed, that I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and He came, and He lived, and He died, and He rose again, and the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, those things, then, you know, observing Lent is not a core foundational thing for a believer necessarily. It might be very important to a certain denomination or to certain individuals, but this is not-

Raechel: It's not a salvific credential.

Amanda: Thank you. Wow, that's a great way to put it.

Annie: Wow.

Raechel: Sure.

Amanda: But it's true. And the thing that Lent gets at in us is something that we all agree on. The thing that we want when we're fasting at Lent and when we're meditating on Scripture is like Raechel said, to have a larger view of the cross. We're trying to deepen our relationship with, our dependence on, our understanding of Jesus and the Gospel. And that is a lifelong pursuit. That is not just a Lenten pursuit.

Annie: That's right.

Amanda: That is a lifelong pursuit. And so what is I think the reason that the three of us love and resonate with Lent is that it is an annual opportunity for us to do that in a structured way and to really, really focus physically, mentally, spiritually on this thing that is at the center of our faith, which is not Lent, but Jesus. Right?

Annie: Yes, that's right. Pastor Kevin, pastor of the pod, says when you're fasting, which Lent is a version of a fast, he says you're giving up something you love for something you love more. So, Raey, talk to us about like, why do people give stuff up at lent? Why is that part of this tradition? And what are some of the examples that you know people have given up before?

Raechel: Good question. We've talked about this before, obviously, because we love this conversation. I think some of this is opinion. In fact, most of this is opinion. This is us just trying to speculate and think through these things together. So I want to be clear that this isn't-

Annie: This isn't in the Bible.

Raechel: Right.

Annie: It's just a tradition in our faith in the bigger the capital Church.

Amanda: Fasting is in the Bible.

Annie: Yeah, fasting is in the Bible.

Raechel: Because I think one of the convictions that I shared with you that I had last year, Annie, was that I wanted to be careful not to be giving something up for Lent that I should be giving up anyway. So like I want to be giving up things that are good for me, actually.

Annie: Wow.

Raechel: And what I mean by that is if I'm spending three hours a day on Instagram and I take the moral high ground and say, "I'm going to give up my three hours of Instagram for Lent," well, good, but maybe that's something that you should be working out with the Lord anyhow.

Annie: Yeah. But I'll tell you one the... pop up video-

Raechel: I love it.

Annie: One of the things I am doing is changing my Instagram rhythms for Lent in hopes that-

Raechel: It will change.

Annie: ...it changes my... Yes.

Raechel: Oh, habit. Absolutely.

Annie: Yes. So I said to myself, "Okay, part of what I'm giving up is the schedule I have built around my social media in hopes that it refines my schedule going forward."

Raechel: I like that. Because you're right. Like we're looking for these triggers-

Annie: To pay attention to them.

Raechel: What will get my attention and so that I can take hold of my own chin and turn it towards the cross.

Annie: That's right.

Raechel: And my voice got a little quieter because I literally turned my face away from the microphone. But we're looking for the things that will lift our faces to the cross.

Annie: Yeah.

Amanda: Yes.

Raechel: And so if that is like one of the ways to fast is food-

Annie: Sure.

Raechel: And so like if that's food and that hunger and that, like, oh, that urge to go to the refrigerator, whatever it is, okay, let me turn that attention, that hunger towards the bread of life. Right?

Annie: Yeah. Yeah.

Raechel: And then there are absolutely other things, other rhythms that we can create. Again, I just keep going back to what Amanda said, that this is not prescribed. There is no like, this is how it should go. So this is something that you would come to a resolution about through the course of walking with Jesus-

Annie: That's right.

Raechel: ...and going, Not on Ash Wednesday... or Ash Wednesday is fine. Again, not prescribed. But like leading up to Lent, starting to as you're in the word, as you're in prayer, as you're exercising your spiritual disciplines, asking, like, What should I add? What should I take away? And a lot of times, I think that's the important two questions.

Annie: That's really good.

Raechel: What should I take away? And then what should I add? What should I bring into this?

Annie: Yes. Because if suddenly three hours of my day is opened up because I'm not on Instagram,-

Raechel: You're going to fill it with something, Annie.

Annie: What do I do? Yes, what do I do? I mean, I was joking with a friend the other day about fasting.

Raechel: Are you going to watching movies now?

Annie: Yes, about fasting, and we were like, If I don't partner, doing a three day fast from food with lowering my social media, it take every time I want to eat I will open Instagram. And that doesn't walk us towards Jesus.

Raechel: And so it's grabbing hold of your chin and is turning it towards something.

Annie: And it doesn't mean you have to go sit and pray and sit in silence. It means I can turn on music, I can listen to a podcast, I can read a faith-centric book that's pushing me toward it, I can work on my She Reads Truth study. Like there's a lot of things you can do.

Raechel: You have to intentionally ask yourself, What am I making room for?

Amanda: Right.

Annie: Yes.

Raechel: And if you can't answer that question, then we might be in a religion.

Annie: Right. Right. Right. But also, I mean, I have so much respect for people who give up Coca Cola and they're like, "I'm going to not drink a coke." And every time that pings me and I desire that, I go, "Okay, God, I want you more than I want a coke today from McDonald's. But those straw..."

Raechel: But it's coming back to the SO THAT.

Annie: Yes!

Raechel: Like, Okay, I'm doing this So That. And you have to be able to fill in that blank as well in my opinion.

Annie: Amanda, one of our friends listening isn't going to give up anything, but is going to read along with the She Reads Truth study. Is that Lent enough?

Raechel: Deeply.

Annie: Are there rules?

Amanda: Here's the thing.

Annie: Say it. Say it to our Enneagram one. Sorry to call them out. But I know.

Amanda: The answer to that is yes and no. Are there rules? No. Is there a structure that you can follow? Yes. The truth is that every single human is going to do this in a different way-

Raechel: And do it well and not well.

Amanda: ...and succeed and fail in their own ways. But when you think about it too, what you are doing is manufacturing discomfort for yourself.

Annie: Yes. Yes.

Amanda: That is not going to be comfortable-

Annie: Yes, that's right.

Amanda: ...or fun or easy. That's not the point.

Annie: That is not the point.

Amanda: If this is difficult, good job. That's the point. And so I think that if you know in your spirit and in praying and communing with Jesus that what He wants for you this Lenten season is to read along with His word because that is the rhythm that you need, that is the new rhythm that you need to establish. And in order to do that, you are probably going to have to maybe not get rid of one specific thing, but you are going to have to make room, to borrow an Advent phrase. That is lenty enough.

Annie: Yes. Yeah.

Amanda: And I also want to say that I think that those of us... like Annie, you, I mean, for... I've known you a long time, and for several years now at least I've known you to observe Lent, to give something up, whether it be food or something else, to create a discomfort in order to push you toward Jesus. I think that that kind of established rhythm in one's life through the years is actually pretty rare. I want everyone to know that like that takes time to circle-

Annie: This has been part of my life since middle school genuinely.

Amanda: So, I mean, that's a long time.

Raechel: And it demonstrates a lot of self-discipline.

Amanda: That's right. And I think it's wonderful. But I also think that some of us need to know that there are going to be some years where maybe our Lent looks a little bit like yours, and then some years it may not at all. And I think that's okay, too.

Because just as we're talking about seasons of the church calendar, there are also seasons of life. And some of you may feel defeated just at the thought of trying to add something or take something. And maybe what you need is a dedicated 10 minutes of solitude and prayer each morning.

Annie: That's good.

Amanda: Like whatever the Lord is impressing on your heart to do, I would dare to do it and start there. If you fail, then you start back again. It's what we say about Bible reading in general.

Annie: That's so good.

Raechel: I feel like a really important question to ask yourself intentionally is what does success look like here?

Annie: That's right.

Raechel: And if our answer is, success looks like, "I nailed it,"-

Amanda: "I didn't have any sugar."

Raechel: "I didn't have any sugar for the whole season of Lent, success." I would dig on that.

Annie: That's what happened with me with Advent. That's what I'm saying is like... I want everyone listening to know this is what the three of us would do if we were at Mexican restaurant.

Amanda: 100%.

Raechel: Oh, yeah.

Annie: I love this so much. That's what happened with me across Advent is I set this expectation for the end of Advent that was not to get to Christmas or Epiphany. And so what you're teaching and what I'm hearing both of you say so well is like just recognize it's a season and look to Easter. Don't look to your body changing or whatever. Just look to Easter.

Raechel: The healthier me.

Annie: No. Except spiritually. I hope so.

Raechel: Well, and that's the thing. Like the answer shouldn't be, "I crushed it." Then you have completely missed a point of Lent and Easter. The point is I would say plan to succeed, expect to fail. That's where we see our need. That's where we like... I don't know like probably like a self-help coach would not say those words.

But to me success is becoming more aware of my need, becoming more aware of my lack. And one of the things that we lack the most, you, me and... like the three of us, I'll speak for us, we lack lack. We lack so little. And so we manufacture this lack so that we can remember what actually matters.

So, at the end, if our success looks like even if it's manufacturing lack so that we can see what matters, so that we can see what has been done for us because of what we do lack, that's the goal.

[00:29:00] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, [Third Love](#). Y'all know what Third Love is all about. Not just flighty one day a year love, that romance movies in elementary school Valentine Party show us, but the kind of be a good friend to yourself, know what makes you feel comfortable and confident type of self-love.

And Third Love is here to make sure we get cozy, comfortable loungewear and intimate gift sets that we'll love. And since they hold stronger and support longer, they'll love us right back. So as far as a shopping experience goes, Third Love has thought of everything to make it as smooth and easy one. That's what I love about shopping with them.

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So I ordered a bunch of beautiful stuff from Third Love with some Christmas money and some of it got lost in the mail. And y'all, so quickly Third Love jumped right in, made it right, and sent me new stuff. It was amazing. I love every single thing I have from them.

Third Love has a perfect fit promise that says "you'll love your fit guaranteed and if not, exchanges and returns are free for 60 days." And they love to give back just like y'all do. Third Love is the largest donor... Listen to this y'all. The largest donor of undergarments in the US. Partnering with organizations across the United States, Third Love has donated over \$40 million worth of bras to help people in need. Isn't that awesome?

Feeling is believing. Upgrade to everyday pieces that love your body as much as you do. Right now you can get 20% off your first order at thirdlove.com/soundsfun. That's 20% off at thirdlove.com/soundsfun.

Sponsor: Here at That Sounds Fun and at the That Sounds Fun Network we love learning new things about podcasting and continuing to improve in the work that we do. And that's why we are so glad to learn about [Anchor](#). If you haven't heard about Anchor, it's seriously the easiest way to make a podcast.

Let me explain. Not only is it free, yeah, that means you paid \$0 for it, but it has simple-to-use creation tools that allow you to record and edit your podcast right from your phone or computer. And Anchor will distribute your podcast for you. So people will be able to hear your content on Spotify, Apple podcasts, and all the other platforms that they love listening on.

Anchor even has ways that you can monetize your podcast with no minimum number of listeners. It's everything you need to create a podcast in one place. We hear from people all the time who have great ideas and are looking for how to get their podcast started. Well, Anchor is what we use all across the That Sounds Fun Network. And we are just huge fans of how easy they make it to create a great podcast.

So just download the free Anchor app or go to anchor.fm to get started. Again, that's anchor.fm or you could download the free anchor app.

And now back to our conversation with Raechel and Amanda.

[00:32:00] <music>

Amanda: There's something I want to say to all of us at this table and listening. Just by way of encouragement, you asked, Annie, about expectations around how to do this and do it well. What does it look like to do Lent? These are all really good questions. And they're important because you're interested and you want to know and you want to do it and you want to do it well, do it right.

The thing about Lent that I think really gets to me on like a deep heart level in a different way than Advent is that Advent to me there are still some expectations that I can't shake, because I'm wanting to celebrate, you know, the birth of Jesus on behalf of myself and my family or my friend. Like I'm wanting the season to feel like Christmas. I'm wanting it.

Even my rhythm of Bible reading and reading the Christmas story and all the prophecies and all of that, there is something celebratory kind of about it all. And it's good. With Lent, the thing about Lent is that the foundation, whole premise of Lent is that everything's a mess.

And so what I want you to hear is that not doing Lent exactly right or Lent the season not meeting your expectations or it feeling different than you wanted it to feel, that's part of the message of the cross is everything's a mess, including our own hearts. And nothing's going the way it's supposed to go.

Death is not supposed to be... I mean, COVID, are we really still fighting this battle? And we are. We are. I mean, Annie, you just prayed at the start of this episode before we hit record for an end to COVID and it dawned on me that I haven't even prayed that prayer in a while because I'm so tired of asking. And it just feels like, well, this is just the way things are now, you know. And so I'm encouraged and I'm emboldened just by our prayer.

But that's what Lent is about. It is about acknowledging and seeing, really seeing. And it takes us several weeks to really see the state not just of our world, but of our hearts and of ourselves apart from Jesus. So that when we walk into Holy Week and we start to read the stories that we've read a lot of us many times before of, you know, Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane and the last supper with His disciples, and then the crucifixion, this brutal horrific thing that really happened in space and time that it means something to us. That we understand I get it. You know, on whatever level we can I get why this had to happen because this is a mess. And Jesus is coming to make all things new. Has come, is coming, will come. Like the difficulty that we're all talking through is kind of the point.

Annie: This is it.

Raechel: It's good.

Annie: Even the thing I feel in me of like, "Are we doing this right?-

Raechel: How do we get this right?

Annie: Yeah, yeah. Even that right now I'm feeling in me is like, This is Lent. This is what Lent is supposed to feel like. How do we bring our faulty selves-

Amanda: That's right.

Annie: ...in a broken world to a holy God?

Amanda: That's right.

Annie: And no other time of the year reminds me of all those things like the 48 days of Lent or whatever.

Raechel: It is not anything close to about us presenting are slightly shined up selves to Jesus.

Annie: Oh, Lord, listen-

Amanda: It's not self-empowerment plan.

Raechel: It's just so deeply far from that... It is not about that.

Annie: It is that different the older y'all got? Because I'm like, I can't do that anymore to the Lord.

Amanda: The pretending?

Annie: Yeah. I just feel like I used to be able to shine up a little bit better before I-

Raechel: Tada!

Annie: Yeah. And I don't have it.

Amanda: I don't know what it is, Annie. Well, you know yourself more.

Annie: We know too much?

Raechel: I know too much about myself to think that I'm going to fool... I think I used to be able to fool myself and now I can't even really do that.

Annie: That's it.

Amanda: And so I'm like, "Oh, you've known all along."

Raechel: Which is maybe also a little bit what Lent is about, thinking we can fool ourselves but we can't really do that.

Annie: Right. One of our friends asked, How do you come up with your ideas for the Lent and Advent studies? Parker. Asked that.

Amanda: Hey Parker.

Annie: And y'all Parker is in middle school. This is her question.

Raechel: Parker!

Annie: She would like to know how you come up... So she's like, "Living with the Lord is good." How do you come up with the ideas of Lent and Advent? And what are we studying in Lent through She Reads Truth? Let's talk about why y'all pick this book.

Raechel: Yeah. Well, I mean, Advent and Lent are very different for a number of reasons. But even our approach. I mean, typically Advent we use those traditional Advent scriptures, and we look at them in a little bit of a new way. Advent is both ancient and new. And that's what we try to do every year.

With Lent, we historically almost always try to tackle a longer book of the Bible, and then we like to end it with like a Holy Week, sometimes Holy Week in real-time. So good question, Parker. We have done lots of books of the Bible in the past, but this year we are doing... we are doing... we're going to be reading, experiencing the book of Ezekiel.

Annie: It's such a hard book.

Raechel: Uh-huh, it is.

Annie: It is.

Raechel: I have been-

Annie: The death of Ezekiel's life Day 22. That's the one I was telling you about.

Raechel: I know. Here's my very high-level take on the book of Ezekiel. And I've been reading it over the last couple of weeks because we read it pretty close to in line with the community. But because we have a podcast and that kind of thing, we're a little bit of a head.

Annie: It's great. Our friends listening are listening to y'all's podcast.

Raechel: But Ezekiel is a prophet... Amanda, actually I want you to tell us like the big picture stuff. But here's my little-

Amanda: I am the foremost scholar.

Annie: You are.

Raechel: That's what they tell us. Here's the little Raechel Meyers take from my reading is that, I mean, really like chapter 13 of Ezekiel where God is just going like, "The people who are supposed to bring you to me are not bringing you to me." Your pastors are telling you everything's fine, everything's fine, everything's fine. And God just says, "Everything is not fine."

To me, that's sort of what's happening. That's like the theme of Ezekiel. And it is a long... 40 chapters? 45 chapters?

Amanda: 48.

Raechel: 48 chapters of God saying, Y'all, everything is not fine.

Amanda: Everything is not fine.

Raechel: Like he talks about, you know, whitewashing the walls that... Like who cares? Why whitewash the wall? Because the hurricane is going to come. And how's that whitewash going to stand up to a hurricane?

Amanda: You're fooling yourself.

Raechel: You're fooling yourself. And not only are we fooling ourselves, but like in this case, he's going like, "Your pastors are fooling you if they're telling you that everything's fine." Instead, we need to be saying to each other, Everything is not fine. And then it's the invitation. Not even the end of Ezekiel, even like chapters 36, 37 when Ezekiel looks at the valley of dry bones and says, "Can these dry bones come to life?"

Amanda: Isn't that what we're all asking?

Raechel: I'm holding my whole world up to God this week and going, Can these dry bones come to life?

Amanda: Can you really do this? And not just can you because I believe that even God's people in the context of the book of Ezekiel, Ezekiel is an exile among exiles. He is exiled in Babylon. It's his 30th birthday. That's the year he was supposed to become a priest in the temple in Jerusalem and instead-

Raechel: Like his whole first 30 years were-

Annie: Pointed towards this.

Raechel: ...working towards "you get to be the priest."

Amanda: And now here he is in Babylon. And then it gets crazy immediately from the start, from the jump in chapter one because he sees what's essentially it's a vision and it is like trippy. It's a vision of the glory of God and He's like, "What is God's glory doing in Babylon?" But God's glory has left the temple. Like the headline is things are really, really, really bad for God's people because of the choices that they have made, and the false gods that they are worshiping, and the way that they have turned from God.

And so the headline here is that things are really bad, God is still a holy God, this is not okay. And the entire book it's really dark. I'm just going to go ahead and tell you it's really dark. Now, you're going to be glad you're reading with us because She Reads Truth what we do is curate Scripture so that scripture can interpret itself. So we will read straight through the book of Ezekiel. I'm sorry to tell you we're not going to edit out any chapters.

Raechel: When Amanda says we curate this, that does not mean we pick the parts that we want.

Annie: That's right. You're not editing and adding to.

Amanda: Correct. What it does mean-

Raechel: We read the entire book.

Annie: That's right.

Amanda: What it does mean is as we're reading some of these really dark parts, you're also going to be reading from the Psalms, or from the New Testament, or some of the words of Jesus. Like we are trying to connect the dots here because the book of Ezekiel is about God pursuing His people, even though they would look and go

like, "We are so far gone. We know that you can resurrect, that you can bring life where there is none. But are you going to do that for us? Can these dry bones that is the house of Israel, can these dry bones live?" Not just any old dry bones but these that have done some things?

Annie: It's why graves to gardens, that song, resonates. It's why it's doing what it's doing.

Amanda: Yeah.

Raechel: Yeah.

Annie: It's everybody wants to believe that God can do that.

Amanda: And not just can, will He with me? Because I can't tell you the number of times that I have known known, like know that I know that I know, down deep in my knower... Is it you that have a knower?

Annie: Yeah.

Amanda: That's you. That down deep in your knower you know that God can forgive, that He can give life and that He is full of grace. But is He for you, Annie Downs? You know, there have been times where I'm like, "I know that you can for everybody else, but I just don't... I know too much." And so that's what the book of Ezekiel...

I was listening to Nancy Guthrie, God bless her and her wisdom, but she has a podcast called *Help Me Teach the Bible*. And she really did have an Ezekiel scholar on her podcast to talk about like...

Raechel: Like has dedicated his life to like-

Amanda: His dissertation was on it. And then-

Annie: Wow.

Amanda: I think he's from Scotland. Beautiful accent. He was studying Ezekiel-

Annie: We'll link to it.

Amanda: Yeah. Starts the D his first name. And he was saying that if you're asking like... it's okay, first of all... let me back that up a little bit. It's okay to ask questions to Scripture. Scripture can't say no to your questions. But it is important when you're

reading a book like Ezekiel that you not get, like, the question about his wife? I don't know. I don't know the answer to the question.

And so it is important that... he described the book of Ezekiel as an impressionist painting, which is interesting, because that's essentially what we have on our art before I had made that connection... or he had made it for me, let's be real, that you have to still see the whole when you're seeing... You can see like, Yes, see the individual parts and strokes and the things, but then also don't forget to back up and see the whole and how it works together.

And it's not going to look precise to us. It's not necessarily going to look like cause and effect. But that's what we want, but that's not always what we get.

Raechel: And that's often what we're just talking about wanting out of lent, cause and effect.

Amanda: Right. But what happens in Ezekiel, Annie, and to Parker's question, one of the things that we're very excited about with the book of Ezekiel for Lent is that the book essentially is the gospel and a really long, difficult, but still full of hope Old Testament book. And you even at the end of the book the Ezekiel's vision is of a restored creation. Not just Israel, but creation.

So you start thinking of, you know, the New Covenant and the gospel taken not just to the Jews, but the Gentiles—to us, those of us at this table. That the gospel is for everyone. And so you see a lot of those undertones or foreshadowing in Ezekiel. And the spoiler is that he can bring the dead bones to life. And He does.

Annie: And he does.

Amanda: And He will.

Raechel: And I think Amanda, you and I were talking earlier this morning about this. You were like, "If you're going to read the book of Ezekiel..." and you had a different way that you were going to finish that sentence. But I just said, "You have to read the whole book." Yes or no? Sure. Like, please, just...

But yeah, if you're going to read the book of Ezekiel, three things. I think read it for Lent. I think read the whole thing. And I recommend reading it and community. I think all three are going to be a really good way for you to get a good grasp of what... not what we can get out of Ezekiel but like what is Ezekiel saying.

Annie: Yes. Okay. Hannah asked, "I'm going to be leading a small group of women through the Lent study."

Amanda: Oh, God bless you, Hannah.

Annie: Do you have any ideas of how to make this really special for them?

Raechel: Be prepared to have more questions than answers.

Annie: Tell the truth. Yeah, Hannah, if you don't know the answer, you don't have to come up with it.

Amanda: I'm going to plug something here. Something that I think is super helpful for a book like Ezekiel and for a lot of books in the Bible is to watch the BibleProject videos.

Annie: Yes!

Raechel: They're great. So helpful.

Amanda: We love the BibleProject, guys.

Raechel: We love them, too. And it is really helpful to give you an overview. And I think that's going to change the way you read it. If you've never watched one of their videos, you're going to want to screencast it so everybody can see it.

Annie: They're so good, yeah.

Amanda: And that's part of the understanding is they kind of diagram it out for you. And it's wonderful. And then I think just try not to get bogged down in the details. I think I would be prepared to have a pretty significant prayer time. Save some time in each of your gatherings for prayer because this book and this season are going to do some work in your hearts. And you all are going to want to walk through some of that together.

Raechel: Also, Amanda, you mentioned Nancy Guthrie. And her podcast is called *Help Me Teach the Bible*. And the audience for that podcast is specifically for people who are teaching the Bible.

Annie: Wow.

Raechel: So if you are wanting to lead a small group, especially something like the book of Ezekiel, I think we listen to the episode that Annie will link.

Annie: We'll link to it, yeah.

Raechel: Because it is specifically like, How do I teach this? How do I format it?

Annie: Wow. I'm sorry to tell you I've never heard of Nancy Guthrie's podcast. I can't wait. I'm going to subscribe right now. I do not have my phone on me during the podcast.

Amanda: It's been around for a really long time. So anytime you find yourself entering into a new book, where you're leading a group, you can likely find an episode.

Raechel: It's a good resource, about everything covered.

Annie: So this makes me think of our friend Parker, one of my MiniBFFs. And there's a couple of people in-

Raechel: We need something other than Mini. Because like middle school-

Annie: She's like a middle BFF.

Raechel: Like a medi.

Annie: She's a second actually. A medi. There are a couple of people who are saying, "How do I get my kids involved with Lent?" What does that look like in, you know....?

Raechel: I actually want to turn that to you, Annie?

Annie: How to get kids involved?

Raechel: I will because you have so many MiniBFFs.

Annie: I know. We do.

Raechel: Have you like-

Amanda: Well, and you did this when you... you observed Lent when you were young?

Annie: Yeah. You know, we tried... when we were in middle school and high school, it was things like, "I'm giving up chocolate." And it still matters.

Raechel: Sure.

Amanda: I think it does.

Annie: Because if nothing else, it was a practice.

Amanda: That's right.

Annie: It was a "I can do this." I remember my friend Ann and I gave up TV one year at middle school. I was in eighth grade, she was in seventh grade, we're like, "We're not going to watch TV."

Amanda: That's pretty amazing.

Annie: It was really hard. And I didn't do it 100% correctly, and I didn't like flying colors anything. So I think when you're younger, there's a practice of can we teach children? You can actually not get everything you want and survive and thrive.

Raechel: And having it be an invitation and not a mandate.

Annie: Invitation not a mandate.

Raechel: That is really important.

Annie: Yeah. I never felt mandated. I felt very invited. Like because it was our church. It was my family.

Raechel: I think it was Chris Caine, who told us last year, she was like, "It was pretty litigious in our house about the Lent rules."

Amanda: Just spitballing here, I think that there are some other things that come to mind. If you really want to involve your kids, I think you could... You know, we talked about adding things. I mean, depending on how old they are, I think just understanding the link like we are looking ahead.

I mean, you could even do a paper chain and say... You could add a prayer. Just a short prayer with him every day and just say, "We love to pray together as a family anyway, but you know what we're going to do during Lent? We're going to make a

point to say a prayer. And maybe because that lent is about the cross, it could even be "We're going to just each confess something. We're going to confess the sin together. And we're going to read..." You know, is it 1 John 4:9, those who confess, he is faithful and just to forgive them their sins? I mean, even just something tiny. I think it's the practice of we all fall short that's what the cross is for. That to me, for small children-

Raechel: And like model connecting and repentance.

Amanda: Yeah. For small children, I think that it's that.

Annie: Because we want to be so careful with food, I mean, all that kind of stuff with kids. I think making a paper chain sounds great. Because am I remembering that normally at Christmas you start with the full chain and you break off pieces as you go, right?

Raechel: Yeah.

Annie: You make it shorter-

Raechel: The countdown.

Annie: The countdown to Christmas. So there really is something unique-

Raechel: You could build up to it.

Annie: ...about Lent being building the chain till Easter.

Amanda: You could build it up. You can even write a prayer on the thing and-

Annie: That's what I was picturing too. Writing a prayer on the little loop de loop. Well, you need a stapler and a pair of scissors and some construction paper.

Raechel: Done.

Annie: That's brilliant. That's a great idea. Do y'all want kids involved in Lent? When you're thinking about kids, do your kids?

Raechel: Here's the thing. Yes. The answer to that is yes. I think about the book that we're reading at She Reads Truth as a community for Lent. Ezekiel is... I mean, you've read part of it. It's going to be offensive. And I truly-

Annie: It's not G-rated. It's higher.

Raechel: It's not. It's going to be offensive. I don't even know that I would like have it playing in the car. Which like, "Okay, well, we'll go into the Scripture." You know, then people can have opinions about that. That's fine. But we're reading it we're reading a book that is actually offensive to us, because it's God describing what's offensive to him. And so that's why we're reading this. And that's why it's actually really important that we're reading this. Now, I don't know that I'd have a kid read it.

But your question is probably less about should kids read Ezekiel with their parents, but also should they participate in Lent? I think absolutely you can participate. Like the church is not started at certain age. Like the capital C Church is f-

Annie: Holy Spirit. There is no junior Holy Spirit.

Raechel: Right. So everybody is a part of the church. And so, yeah.

Amanda: And the 10,000-foot view of lent is we're getting in that space where we're anticipating that the cross. We use that imagery a lot of times that we're walking to the cross. Like this year we say, you know, we're going to walk to the cross with Ezekiel as our guide. And that's going to be the way that we approach the cross too this year.

But whatever you do for Lent, you are walking toward the cross. And I think even just to talk about the coming, you know, the Easter and Holy Week and the message of the gospel every day for 40 days is a lot when you're talking about kids. And so you may find other books. Maybe we can find some for you to link to.

Raechel: Something that comes to mind right now as I'm just thinking about kids and Lent, kids love to talk about what's not fair.

Annie: I do. I still do.

Raechel: But we know that the ultimate injustice in the whole world across time and space was the cross, the ultimate injustice because a righteous man was killed on behalf of the unrighteous.

Amanda: Creator God murdered.

Raechel: And so I think that's an actual really good way to talk to kids about Lent. Like if you're making this chain, maybe some days you're writing prayers, maybe some days you're confessing something. I think writing the thing that's not fair, just laying it down. "This was not fair today." And that helps me a little bit more understand what Jesus did on the cross. He did a not fair thing. It was unjust.

Annie: If I could release a word from our language and let it float away, it would be fair and unfair. I'm like, Nothing is. Nothing is fair. So if that word is what comes to my mind to say, I try to stop myself and say, "What's the better word?"

Raechel: That's good.

Annie: Nothing often feels fair to anybody.

Raechel: My kids aren't allowed to say that.

Annie: They are not to say it's unfair?

Raechel: No.

Annie: Oh, great. Neither is your Annie. She doesn't either. She doesn't either.

Raechel: But it's what kids like to say.

Annie: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

Raechel: And you know what? It's what Raechel likes to say. "That's not fair."

Annie: Same. Same.

[00:53:24] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about one of our amazing partners, [Art of Tea](#). Y'all, we love tea around here. Tea is a part of my routine every single morning.

Since I'm not looking for a hot beverage to give me energy, I mean, y'all I wake up like this, I love that teas offer naturally caffeine-free options and flavors. And my Chai day Friday treat is something I look forward to all week. Yes, I know it has caffeine in it, but it's like a manageable amount for your girl AFD.

Whether you're like me and love tea or you're trying it for the first time, the absolute best teas from around the world are at artoftea.com. Taking care of ourselves is important and drinking tea is a great way to improve your health. Tea is well known to reduce free radicals in your body and I think a warm cup of French lemon ginger tea just brightens your day y'all. I know it does for me. And it's supposed to be good for my voice. Thank you very much.

Well, I have some with me on the That Sounds Fun tour coming up in February and March. Yes, yes, I will. So let me encourage you to take a step toward taking good care of yourself both physically and mentally by checking out the amazing assortment of teas at artoftea.com.

And if you're new to tea and aren't sure what you're like, you guessed it, you get to take a tea quiz. It's a personalized recommendation that you'll get from that. You'll get to answer fun things like, What flavors do you love? What flavors do you hate? Spoiler alert. I hate lavender. I feel like I'm drinking bathwater. So I would say that on the quiz. And then you get personalized recommendations.

Upgrade your tea collection this year by going to artoftea.com and you'll get 20% off your order. You guys, do it. Use my promo code THAT SOUNDS FUN. That's artoftea.com and use the promo code THAT SOUNDS FUN and get your 20% off. Prepare, prepare yourself to fall in love with their tea.

Annie: Hey friends! I'm so excited about heading back out on tour in February and March of 2022. That's right, we're taking the That Sounds Fun Podcast on the road. Not only will there be an awesome special guest at each stop who I'll be recording a live podcast with, but we'll also have comedy, new friends, fun coaching exclusive content, confetti, and dare I say it, fun. So much fun.

I can't wait to see you at one of those tour stops. So be sure to grab your tickets at AnnieFDowns.com/events. The only thing that will make it more fun is when you're there.

And now back to finish up our crazy, good conversation with Raechel and Amanda.

[00:55:52] <music>

Annie: What are y'all hoping for Lent?

Amanda: Personally or...?

Annie: Yeah. Have you thought about how you're going to spend your time, if you're giving anything up, how you're observing the season?

Amanda: Yeah. I haven't landed anywhere. I've thought about it. I mean, what I want is to see the cross from a different angle than I've seen it before, I think.

Annie: Wow.

Amanda: If lent is walking toward and approaching the cross, and if we picture ourselves, you know, at the foot of the cross... I've been a believer since I was a little girl. And I just want to see... I don't know if it's that I want to see more or... Because really I think that God in His kindness just lets us see glimpses when it comes to our own sin.

Like I don't know that we often get the really bold, no holds barred images that Ezekiel gives to the Israelites. I mean, I think sometimes. But I just want to see Jesus. And I want to say it differently but I want to qualify that. Because Jesus is who He is who He is.

Raechel: That's right.

Amanda: But my understanding is not nearly full of who He is.

Annie: I mean, that's true of all of us, right?

Amanda: Right. Right.

Annie: We've known each other a long time. And yet if we spent an entire season learning about the other people, we would learn a lot.

Raechel: If you spent 40 days fasting, and every time you got hungry you're like, "How can I know Raechel more?"

Annie: I would learn a lot. Even if I wasn't on Instagram or wasn't eating chocolate, or wasn't watching TV-

Raechel: You would be seeking me.

Annie: I would be wanting to know you.

Raechel: "Hey, Raechel, I want to know more about you."

Annie: So I think that's really valuable thing to not have anyone feel that because they've known Jesus this long there's not more to know, or because you are new to this there's too much. That's not true either.

Amanda: And I really want to not have any ulterior motives.

Annie: Me too. That's what I want.

Amanda: I think sometimes I back away from Lent, if I'm honest, some of the really personal practices of Lent, because I don't trust myself to do them for the right reasons.

Annie: Right.

Amanda: Because when it comes down to it, I don't know why I'm giving up the thing that I'm giving. I'm just doing my best. You know, I'm trying to listen to the Lord and I'm trying to lean in, and all of the things we say. But I think I want my heart to be as pure as it can be by the grace of God. And I want to see Jesus differently.

Raechel: When you asked the question, Annie, my immediate thought was like, I immediately wanted to go talk to my husband. I want to have an offline conversation where it's just... Because I haven't necessarily resolved what I want to do for Lent. Not even necessarily. I have not resolved what I want to do for Lent-

Annie: Me neither.

Raechel: ...how I want to spend that time. And like Amanda, I also shy away from a specific practice sometimes because I worry about heart motivation. And I think that there are good and bad things to that. Right?

Amanda: Well, it's kind of the point.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Amanda: We know our hearts are a mess.

Annie: That's right.

Raechel: But I am grateful to have friends and spouse who like I can have that accountability and that deep dive offline. This is so private, I want to keep it between me and Jesus, but I also need a person here to know.

Annie: Yes.

Raechel: Where it's not something that I want to say on a podcast. You know?

Annie: Yes. I haven't sorted mine out yet either. But I think an important thing...

Amanda: Pop up video.

Annie: I think an important thing y'all are saying that everyone needs to hear is just because you don't trust your motives doesn't mean you don't do the practice.

Raechel: That's good. Yes.

Amanda: I mean, otherwise, we would never do spiritual practices at all.

Annie: We would never do anything spiritual. That's right. That's right.

Raechel: Why am I reading my Bible if it's not for the purest of heart?

Annie: That's right. That's right. Right. Because I think sometimes I will let my-

Raechel: Because I think sometimes we do things to habits and we're saying the same thing.

Annie: That's it. That's it. And I will let myself out of things because I... Well, I shouldn't fast one meal this week because... because I can't trust my spirit. What about my heart?

Raechel: Because it would be out of place of legalism.

Annie: No, just practice it. Practice it. And so it has to be this balance of-

Raechel: It's discipline

Annie: ...our walk with Jesus is our yoke is easy and our burden is light. And if this is hard, good. Because can we just get tougher?

Raechel: That's good, Annie.

Amanda: And you know what?

Annie: It's not rude. I don't mean it to be rude.

Amanda: No.

Raechel: No.

Amanda: I think that that is... We exercise our bodies, you know, sometimes, we exercise our bodies to get stronger. We don't expect our bodies to get stronger if we don't exercise them and practice certain, you know, movements or whatever.

Annie: And the classes you go to that push you so hard and you're like, "This is too heavy for me to lift." And then you lift it or whatever and you go, "I did it."

Amanda: Or you don't, and then three weeks later you do because you kept trying.

Annie: That's it. So when your spiritual life feels that way, good.

Amanda: Yeah. I mean

Annie: It means you're getting stronger.

Amanda: Yeah. I have a thing I was gonna say.

Annie: Sorry.

Amanda: No, no, no, no. It'll come back if it matters.

Annie: I'm sorry.

Amanda: No, it's not your fault.

Annie: I get real passionate about us offering to our friends listening the balance of a walk with Jesus. That it is not going to be easy all the time. It is not always going to be hard all the time either.

Amanda: That's right.

Raechel: And knowing that your audience is so broad-

Annie: Oh, totally, yeah.

Raechel: ...that we cannot speak to every circumstance.

Annie: That's right.

Raechel: I mean, we can't even begin to care well for an individual which is why one of the first things that any one of us would say is do this in person with people who can look you in the eye and who know you and care about you.

Annie: It's also why the She Reads Truth community matters because they get on the app, they can get on the website, there's a place to chat with people. Like that's part of it.

Raechel: Yeah, absolutely. And even at She Reads Truth community, we say, Have a church. We're not that.

Annie: Yeah, please do.

Amanda: There's just no replacement. There's no replacement for what is happening right here at this table. Because we are each other's in-person people-

Annie: I mean, we were praying hard about something four hours ago.

Amanda: That's right.

Annie: We were not here together.

Amanda: That's right.

Raechel: Literally y'all got a text from me that said, "I have to go to battle and it has to be spiritual battle. Draw your swords." And y'all prayed for me. And that was completely, I mean, out of nowhere, but I knew I can count on you. But that's the kind of thing that you get when you know a person.

And so like Annie and Amanda and I right now hold very carefully the words that we say that y'all are listening to because we want to be really careful not to recommend anything that isn't-

Annie: That's right.

Raechel: We don't know you but we love you.

Annie: Yeah, yeah. That's it. That's it. That's why the real life matters.

Amanda: It really does.

Annie: But we're growing this year. I mean, as a community, we're actively pursuing deepening our faith.

Raechel: Yes. I love that.

Annie: And that may feel like a workout class. Ezekiel is not reading John.

Raechel: No.

Annie: Ezekiel is not reading John. This is going to feel like you're lifting weight and it just makes your arms tired.

Raechel: You know what though? I've been surprised... Over the last couple of weeks I've been going through it, and I expected it to be way more laborious than it is.

Annie: Yeah, yeah. I don't think it is hard to read.

Raechel: No, no, no.

Annie: It's like, Holy cow!

Raechel: Yeah, yeah. But even that, I feel like I've come out of it in different times that I've been reading not feeling as heavy as I felt focused.

Annie: Yeah, that's interesting.

Raechel: Or even invite like... I just feel beckoned when I read Ezekiel. Like, come to life, come to me. And we don't hear enough "Everything is not fine" because everybody wants everything to be fine. And so when God says to me through His Word, "Raechel, everything is not fine. Let's not even pretend. Only I can make these dry bones come to life. Come to me and live full life."

Annie: Yes.

Amanda: That's right.

Raechel: Then it is kind of a lot like John.

Annie: Yeah, there you go. You know what? You win. Amanda, so we go through Lent so that we get to Easter.

Amanda: That's right.

Annie: Can you finish this up just by telling us a little bit about Holy Week and Easter? Will you just define Holy Week and talk about why Easter matters so much?

Amanda: Yeah, Holy Week is the week leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus. And so what we like to do at She Reads Truth, we're reading through the book of Ezekiel, but we will finish the book of Ezekiel. We will end on Friday. That Sunday-

Raechel: Saturday is just a regular grace day.

Amanda: Saturday's a great day. Sunday is Palm Sunday-

Raechel: And wait, when we say grace day for those of y'all who are not familiar with She Reads Truth, every Saturday, when we read as a community, we call it a grace day. So there's not a huge reading on Saturdays because we get a little bit of grace. We all need it. It's the catch up day or reflection day, whatever that is.

Amanda: That's right.

Raechel: And then Sunday's as She Reads Truth are typically what we call weekly truth where you would pick something out of the reading from the week before and memorize it. And what Amanda's saying is for Holy Week, we get things... we change it.

Amanda: Yeah. So on Sunday, that Sunday is Palm Sunday, which is a week out from Easter. So this last week of the reading plan, we will be finished with the book of Ezekiel and we will go to the New Testament and we will walk with Jesus to the cross.

So we read it kind of in real-time for like what was happening on like Palm Sunday with the triumphal entry, and then Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday, Thursday. And so you get like the Garden of Gethsemane, you get the anointing of Bethany, you get the last supper, and you get on Good Friday we will read about the crucifixion. And on Holy Saturday, Jesus is in the tomb, and we will read. And then on Easter Sunday, we will read the story of the resurrection.

And so this entire seven weeks of Lent, and as we would as with reading any book of the Bible, we know we have this great gift of Scripture. And we know that the book of Ezekiel is God's truth, and that it sits among the full story of the Bible. What Ezekiel tells from one angle and in one context kind of the gospel near the narrative of redemption, we get to actually see walked out in Holy Week.

And so when you get to Easter Sunday, that is the ultimate feast day. That is the day where we rejoice in the triumph of the cross. The cross is a horror but is also a triumph. Because though it is the greatest injustice ever to ever take place in the history of the world, it is also the greatest victory because Jesus walked out of the grave and put death to death, as our friend Andrew sings.

And so that is what we're after. In all of Ezekiel, we are just understanding the depth of what is happening in Holy Week. As Jesus says, all of Scripture is about me. All the prophets, including Ezekiel, right, they are teaching, they're prophesying about me. Now, do we hear Jesus' name in Ezekiel? We do not. But we can see Him coming. We can start hearing that heartbeat, right?

Raechel: That's right.

Annie: A rhythm we have here at That Sounds Fun is we do not record or release shows during Holy Week. We go a little bit quieter, we get a little bit more reflective. But for our friends listening during 2020, I read on each day Sunday through Sunday, I read and we released what happens in Scripture that day. So you can go back to 2020. If you want to listen every day of Holy Week, I read the Scripture to you in 2020.

Raechel: I love that.

Annie: But yeah, we just go a little bit quieter.

Raechel: And for our popup video, church calendar joy, Lent ends not on Easter Sunday. Lent ends on Holy Saturday.

Annie: Yes!

Raechel: And Easter Sunday kicks off. What does it kick off, Annie?

Annie: It kicks off Eastertide.

Raechel: Easter time.

Annie: Which is a season of feasting that goes longer than Lent. Is it two days longer?

Raechel: I think so. Yes.

Annie: It is two days longer than Lent.

Raechel: Yeah.

Annie: Easter Tide starts on Easter. We will party for 50 days.

Amanda: It goes through the day before Pentecost. And Pentecost is the seventh Sunday after Easter. So it barely beats it.

Annie: It's literally two days.

Raechel: Two days, yeah.

Annie: It's literally two days longer.

Raechel: I love that.

Annie: That is one of the kindest gifts from God to me in my brain is the idea that for my personality, for me, knowing that you suffer for a while. I mean, that's what Scripture says. For a while you will suffer, but the longer story is the one of celebration. That's the longer story is the one of celebration.

Raechel: Lent is long, Eastertide is longer.

Annie: That's right. That's right. Okay, Raechel, let's talk about getting the study books.

Raechel: Yeah.

Annie: The code for our friends is TSF LENT.

Raechel: That's right.

Annie: And that's 15% off anything in the Lent store on She Reads Truth. So the He Reads Truth, the She Reads Truth books.

Raechel: Yeah. That's at shopshereadstruth.com.

Annie: Perfect.

Raechel: The books are really... Well, first of all, they're beautiful.

Annie: Beautiful!

Raechel: I mean, Amanda talks about the abstract painting. And that's what we've got here. But I find the study books to be especially useful during Lent because it is a season where I want to be more offline. Whether that's the thing I'm giving up or not, there is everything that we need to engage with God's word. And the book of Ezekiel, which is part of God's word, for the season of Lent is already just printed right there. So I never have to power up the screen. That's something that's really meaningful to me.

So Amanda mentioned the curated scripture. So we get the book of Ezekiel, but you're getting Psalm and Revelation and Micah. And it's good.

And I was actually looking through the book today and the very final scripture on the very final day on Resurrection Sunday, it says... Psalm 16:9-11 says, "Therefore my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices; my body also rests securely. For you will not abandon me to Sheol; you will not allow your faithful one to see decay. You reveal the path of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy; at your right hand are eternal pleasures." That's what we're working toward.

Annie: That's it. That's where we're going.

Raechel: The eternal pleasures.

Annie: Yes. The good part is longer.

Raechel: As we give up the temporal pleasures-

Annie: That's right.

Raechel: ...that's where we're heading.

Annie: We're giving up the temporal pleasures because there's eternal things.

Raechel: Because His right hand are eternal pleasures.

Annie: Yeah. Oh, man, I can't wait to do this season with y'all. Thank you for how you lead us through this. Raey will you pray for us as we end?

Raechel: I'd love to. Yeah. God, thank you, thank you, thank you. Sometimes when we bow our heads to talk to you that's all that can come out. And usually following that is help. So God, thank you and help us. That is what we want today as we just bow our heads before you and that is what we want for this season of Lent.

We want to thank you for your finished work that is secured in heaven for us. And we want to ask for help. We want to ask for help in how we can see the work that you did more clearly. We want to see the freedom that you've bought for us more clearly. And we want your help in walking in the freedom that you bought for us.

Lord, help us walk not so that we can feel more sure about what we're able to do. Lord take that away from us. We ask for your help to seek you with even a fraction of the way that you perceive and pursue us. Help us to see you in Lent. Lord, we thank you and we ask for your help. Thank you for your son's blood. In your name. Amen.

[01:11:56] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, don't you love them so much? What a gift! What a gift! That prayer, that truth. Lord, I love them so much. Gosh! You guys, visit shopshereadstruth.com to pick up your copy of the Lent study for this year. Don't forget you can use the code TSFLENT. That's the letters TSFLENT to get 15% off anything in the Lent collection.

And make sure you're following Rachael and Amanda and She Reads Truth and He Read Truth for amazing content. And tell them thanks so much for being on the show. I cannot wait for us all to jump in together on this Ezekiel study.

Remember, you need to go get it spiral-bound. I love my spiral bound. Once you get the book in the mail, go order that from shopshereadstruth.com. And if you want to see how to get it spiral-bound, there's a tutorial and my Instagram story highlights. It's called Spiral.

If you do anything else or maybe you guys know I'm embarrassingly easy to find, even when I'm doing my makeup in the mornings now. What is wrong with me? Annie F. Downs on Instagram and Instagram Stories, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that is how you can find me.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you. And I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me... What sounds fun to me today? Well, I'm scared to say that I want to get under my blanket and read a book because last time I did that we got snow and I got stuck at my house. So I would like to say what I've already said recently, I'd like to be on the beach. Maybe that will make something happen. I would like to be on the beach where it is warm, reading a book.

Have a great week friends and we will see you back here on Thursday with one of my favorite pastors and favorite teachers, Ben Stuart from Passion City in DC. His new book, *Rest and War* is coming out. Y'all are going to love this conversation. So we'll see you back here on Thursday.