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**Annie:** Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you today. I hope you had a great weekend. We've got a great show in store.

But before we dive into today's conversation, I want to take a moment to share about one of our incredible partners, [Pine Cove Summer Camps](#). Pine Cove is excited to announce they're opening a new overnight youth camp in Georgia, let's go!, the Pine Cove Springs.

So my official stance on summer camp is love. I love camp. I grew up going to multiple Christian summer camps and had some of the most formative experiences of my life during those weeks. I think it's so important for kids to be in a safe environment where they will not only hear the gospel, but they will also see it lived out all around them through the college staff and community at camp.

Pine Cove is a Christian camp with over 50 years of experience and overnight youth camping. They're bringing Christ-centered, others-focused, and seriously fun counselors and activities to their new overnight youth camp in Georgia, serving fourth through eighth-graders.

Start a new summer tradition for your child at the Pine Cove Spring this summer. Check out [pinecove.com/springs](http://pinecove.com/springs) and use the code TSF250 for \$250 off a first time overnight youth camp registration at the Pine Cove Springs. Again, that's [pinecove.com/springs](http://pinecove.com/springs) and use the code TSF250 for \$250 off.

**Intro:** Today on the show I get to talk with my friend, your friend, one of the voices that speaks into all of us in so many ways, Jennie Allen. She's been a repeat guest here at That Sounds Fun way back on Episode 44 and on Episode 201, if you want to go back and listen to those.

Jennie is a New York Times bestselling author of *Get Out of Your Head*. Not casually New York Times bestselling author, I'm talking number one Christian book of 2020: *Get Out of Your Head*. Y'all got to read that.

And she's the founder of IF:Gathering, a discipleship ministry that reaches a million women a year. And she says the number one question she's asked online is: how do I make friends? So that's what her latest book explores. It's called *Find Your People: Building Deep Community in a Lonely World*. And it releases tomorrow. So excited, y'all. I love this woman.

And if you don't already you will by the end of this episode. So here's my conversation with my friend, Jennie Allen.

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**Annie:** Jennie, welcome back to That Sounds Fun.

**Jennie:** Annie Downs, always a pleasure to be here.

**Annie:** Always a pleasure. You were here in 2017, 2020. It's like you do a little bit of a round and you come on back. And so it only makes sense in '22 that you're back.

**Jennie:** Post-COVID. Here we go.

**Annie:** Yes. Yeah, because last time it was right before.

**Jennie:** It was right before. That's what I was going to say. Yeah. It was probably a month or two before everything shut down.

**Annie:** Yes. I mean, my first question is tell me what you know about God now that you didn't know then?

**Jennie:** Oh, man. Well, we've had a lot of words in these few years together. I feel very confident that humans know nothing and God knows everything. And that has probably been the reality check of the last few years. All of us, is just constant confusion and realizing too that a God who is above all of it is not worried and in control.

And I think that's probably the only thing that has brought comfort to those of us that walk with Him is like, "Okay, we're okay, but we're not okay because everything around us is okay." And I think that's been more true of all of us than ever before.

**Annie:** I know, we can hold that globally. It's a little bit easier for me to hold that globally and go like, "I don't know what God's doing on the planet. I don't know why the diseases happen that happen. I don't know why this, that, the weather or whatever." But how do we hold that in our personal lives of feeling like, I thought I knew what God was going to do and He did it, or I thought He was going to heal and He didn't. I sat with a group of friends the other day and every single person said, "My life has not turned out the way I thought it would." Every one of them, Jennie.

**Jennie:** I mean, I think that is the reality check of the world right now. I think we're all disappointed by many things. And there are things that have been thrown our ways in our life personally, in our families, in our friendships that we can't make sense of. The greatest thing that we have, I think the most important thing that we hold is perspective. As a person who follows Jesus, that is not okay.

I was just reading the verses about Jesus. And He's doing the Lord's supper with His disciples for the first time. And when He says, "I won't take this cup again until I'm in heaven with My Father." And honestly, there was a hope set before Him.

In the next few verses, Peter says, "I'm never going to deny you," and all the disciples say, "We'll never deny you." And then of course they do that night. Judas has betrayed Him and walked out, taking the silver for His life. All these horrible circumstances are around Jesus and He says, with hope, "We will drink this cup again, but we're going to drink it in heaven together." And I think perspective is our anchor. It is what we know to be true.

One of my best friends Sara Henry, who I believe you know,-

**Annie:** I love Sarah.

**Jennie:** ...she had a massive stroke at 35. And I kept in my mind a picture of us in heaven across from each other at the table and she's laughing really hard. And I felt like God just gave me this image of her and have been fully restored and laughing. Because that may have been the only hope she would have on Earth, right?

The story is still... you know, many, many years later, almost 10 years later, her story is still not tied up with a bow. But there is that hope that one day it will make sense. It's just not now. And I think that's just not enough for us on most days but it could be I think if we really let that soak in.

**Annie:** I mean, it almost has to be, right? I mean, it doesn't feel like enough, but it just has to be. Because the line I have to draw in my own head and my stories, but also in global stories is this doesn't feel like enough to just believe that God knows and that there's a better story coming. And so my cynical self can say that's just excusing God from doing what could be right by me. But my genuine self is like, but isn't that faith? Like, isn't faith believing that God is doing what we don't see him doing and He knows more?

**Jennie:** I mean, I think it's okay too to wrestle with that. I think it's okay-

**Annie:** Yeah, I hope so.

**Jennie:** Yeah. We have had a lot of words in the last few years because I do feel like even if... You know, I'm really good at playing God. I mean, pretending to play God. I'm doing it all the time as if I'm good at it. And I'll play out like, "Okay, I get it, you want your glory, so you're going to allow suffering. Okay, I get it. You want everybody to need you and not things on this earth, so you're stripping a lot of those things away. Okay, I get it."

Like I'll literally forecast what I think He's doing. But honestly, we have no idea what He's doing. And so that in itself is a reason to trust that we don't have another option. You're right. There's not another place we can go. Where else are we going to go?

**Annie:** Where else do we go?

**Jennie:** Yeah, there's not another hope. And so there's a little bit of stuckness to these years in a sense of I'm stuck with God, because I don't have another hope. But man, I'm stuck with the one that could fix these circumstances.

I'm in the car with Him. I'm able to talk to Him. I'm able to be in relationship with Him. And He can solve that difficulty or that waiting or give me what I want immediately. He could do it. And we know that because we've all seen Him do it. We've all seen Him absolutely part of the Red Sea in people's lives, sometimes in our own lives. Why is He not doing it?

I think there's a little bit of He's okay with us not knowing. I think about Job, I mean, that whole book, I was like, He did speak but His answers were things like, "I am the one who stops the ocean and says it can go no further." It wasn't "and this is why I allowed all these bad things to happen." But one thing I love about Job, but I think it's really important to remember in a conversation like this, which way to start out our-

**Annie:** I didn't mean to. Two Enneagram sevens.

**Jennie:** I'm like, where's the little fun part? But what's cool about Job is at the very beginning of Job, it's the enemy that wants to tempt him.

**Annie:** Right.

**Jennie:** So the plan was devised by the enemy. Now, God absolutely knew the plan, allowed the plan, gave him permission to go and put poor Job through all these things. But it's very important to remember it is not God who delights over evil in our lives. He is a God of goodness, and everything good comes from Him.

So when we're suffering, when we're waiting, when we're going through something, it's not that God... Sure, certainly God has the power—I believe in a very powerful God—that can cause anything to be in motion. He turns the hearts of kings, Scripture says. So He can cause anything to happen.

But if he doesn't, there's a sense of shaking our finger at God when reality is, you know what, there's an enemy who hates us, who seeks to kill, steal and destroy from us. And if God is allowing basically what He's saying in the ocean, "I'll stop it here, I'll let suffering come this far, but I won't let it go any further."

**Annie:** Wow.

**Jennie:** And then you see a promise throughout Scripture that suffering produces character and hope, and that blessed are those who mourn. And there's a sense of backwards way of God that is actually causing good in our lives. And so yeah, it's just not fun, but it's absolutely true

Think of the most spoiled brat people you know, and it's like everything went right for them, right? Those are the people we don't want to be friends with. No offense, if you're out there, just note about yourself, have some depth about yourself.

**Annie:** Do some self-awareness work.

**Jennie:** It's hard. People that are just rosy sunshine all the time. That's not who you... You want to be with the people that have battle wounds. You want to be with the people that have suffered and gone through stuff that you just look at them and you can throw your heads back together and know, hey, yeah, this is hard.

**Annie:** I mean, I think that's one of the things you've modeled really well for me and our extended friend group is there's been a time recently where you and I kind of said, like, "This is who we're in battle with. We aren't going anywhere because we've already been through all this together and we've survived-ish so far." Right?

**Jennie:** Yeah.

**Annie:** So for our friends listening who feel like they're in one of those seasons, maybe a Job-like season, I mean, your book, *Find Your People*, that's what I'm about to ask you is how do you find your people when you're suffering? How do you find your people?

**Jennie:** Oh, I mean, suffering is one of the hardest times to find your people. But if you'll trust me and the way that God's called us to live with this, it could be the most powerful time to find your people because what we're all craving is connection. We're all craving it right now. Physically, emotionally, spiritually we are craving connection with other people.

Kurt Thompson says we come into the world looking for someone looking for us, right? That we are born as an infant into the world looking for someone looking for us, and that never goes away. So if all of us corporately, humanity right now is looking for someone looking for them, then we can be those that go look. We can be those. Now, what's hard is, I mean, you started this whole thing with suffering-

**Annie:** You're like, "Annie!"

**Jennie:** But what's difficult about that is that there is a sense of suffering, even having the energy to lift our hand to text a friend, right? We're so exhausted. And I think a lot of us feel like we're in that place right now.

But if I told you that, three months from now you could be around a fire with three other people that know you and you could be crying and you could be lovingly crying, not just crying like really cute, and wiping away a tear and being vulnerable, but not too vulnerable, but weeping about whatever is going on in your life and not making sense and not having a bow and they would be safe to you, would you pay whatever you had to get to get to that moment?

Like would you say, "I will do whatever it takes to get to that moment where I would have that little group of friends around a fire where I would feel that safe with them?" And most people listening would say they would. And yet the cost of that are many things that we don't like. There are many things that are hard for us, especially seven.

The first chapter of the book is about a panic attack I had months after writing the book and at the end of editing. And I felt like in writing the book I had lost all my people, which was super ironic. Like a lot of times you feel panic or anxiety or things like that. This was me on all fours in my closet and I could not... It was the

whole I needed a brown paper bag. I could not breathe. The only words I could say were, "Help! Help!" And I was just crying out to God because nobody was home.

And it was truly like in a lot of ways I had been put in a place where I was in conflict with people I was close to. I felt like all the people closest to me were gone. And that next morning after that, I got a call from one of my good friends that I felt like there was kind of a distance between us. Ironically, she was all over the book. So you can imagine what the enemy is doing in my head. I'm losing all the people I just wrote a book about.

**Annie:** They were my people.

**Jennie:** They were my people. And now I'm going to have to go talk about it on podcasts and stages and I've lost them all. I did this thing that I recommend people do, which is to be honest. You know, to say, "Hey, I've been going through some stuff. Could we get together tonight and talk?"

Now, mind you in my heart I feel distant from her, I feel cut out from a group that is gathering without me a lot because I've been gone in writing. And so it was super vulnerable. So I call them and that night I just say, "Here's where I am. These are the conflicts in my life. This is going. I had a panic attack last night. I am genuinely scared." Everything about that was awkward and scary and miserable if I'm candid. But I also know that everything about that brought me back into relationship with them.

So to answer your question, us being honest about what we're going through and what we're feeling is horrible and hard. It goes against our nature to say... In fact, it even goes against some of the rules of relationships. Like you don't want to be too needy. Because I basically was coming to her and saying, "I need our friendship back. I know I've not been a good friend, but I need you back."

And it was funny. When I got out of the car that night, I'll never forget it, one of them looked at me and said, "I just want you to know I never felt closer to you." And so in doing what I was afraid of, which began by answering the phone the next morning, because when I'm down, I want to process it to the point where I could just say, "Oh, y'all, I've been going through something. It's been kind of hard." Not snot-nosed "I'm hurt. I feel left out of it." That is not me. Like I want to have a put-together answer.

And yet, I think authenticity in being honest about what we're going through actually brings about the relationships we're craving. But sometimes you even have to be honest about how that person has let you down or what you need from them.

[00:16:09] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, [Liquid I.V.](#) One of the things we make sure we keep well-stocked on the bus when we head out on tour is plenty of Liquid I.V. We want to stay healthy and hydrated so we can have the most fun when we roll into your town.

One stick of Liquid I.V in my water bottle hydrates faster and more efficiently than water alone. Liquid I.V has incredible hydration flavors like watermelon, lemon lime, strawberry, Pina colada, and more. In fact, we're sharing some Liquid I.V with all of the VIPs at each tour stop because we love it so much.

I'm a morning time Liquid I.V user, just added it into my water bottle because it helps me recover from workouts and it just generally helps me feel my best so I can tackle the day ahead with energy and focus, especially when I go for, like I did today, that energy multiplier, the lemon ginger flavor, watch out!

It contains five essential vitamins B5, B5, B6, B12, and vitamin C, and three times the electrolytes of traditional sports drinks. It's made with premium ingredients and it's non-GMO and free from gluten, dairy, and soy. But in addition to tasting awesome and supporting my hydration goals, Liquid I.V is on a mission to change the world. They've donated over 19 million servings globally. Ain't that awesome?

Grab it Liquid I.V in bulk nationwide at Costco 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 when you use the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN at Liquidiv.com. Experience better hydration today at Liquidiv.com, promo code THATSOUNDSFUN.

**Sponsor:** And I have one more amazing partner to tell you about, [Third Love](#). I don't know about you but for me, a new year or a new month provides a good time of reorienting our lives around the things we value. Like I'm trying to focus on staying hydrated every day to care for my body and I'm trying to read a chapter from Proverbs every day this year because I want to continue to pursue wisdom in my life.



And funny enough, another way to keep connected to your values of caring for yourself well is by taking a page out of Third Love. See, Third Love knows comfort and fit are essential to feeling your best, which is why they designed the kinetic sports bra to support you every step of the way. Third Love's kinetic sports bra is your new best friend, designed with unmatched comfort and support for everything from a high intensity workout, getting on that peloton, y'all, or your casual weekend errands.

It's available in 22 sizes, tons of gorgeous colors, complete with bat closure and adjustable straps for flawless fit, support, and comfort. Third Love does comfort so you can do you. Their bras, underwear, activewear and feel good all day wear are designed to hug better, hold stronger, and support longer.

Third Love obsesses over each stitch so you never have to think about how something feels, looks, or wears. The 100,000, you guys, 100,000 five-star reviews don't lie. I'll add mine on that too because my PJs from Third Love are absolutely beautiful and so comfortable.

Third Love makes it easy to find a bra that actually fits with their fitting room quiz. We love a quiz. The fitting room quiz is like a personal shopper but better it focuses on size and current fit issues and your personal style to find bras and underwear that are perfect for you.

The fitting room has helped 18 million women find their true bra size and you could be next. Feeling is believing. So 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](https://thirdlove.com/soundsfun). That's 20% off at [Thirdlove.com/soundsfun](https://thirdlove.com/soundsfun).

And now back to our conversation with Jennie.

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**Annie:** I've been thinking about friendship lately and thinking about when it's my turn to go first and when it's someone else's turn to go first. What's your take on that? When is it our turn to go first and step toward and when is it someone else's turn to go first?

**Jennie:** Do you know what I'm going to say?

**Annie:** Yeah, I think so.

**Jennie:** It's always our turn to go first.

**Annie:** It's always our turn to go first. I know I know. I know. It's always our turn.

**Jennie:** People hate it. But you want friends, you better learn to initiate. You will not get asked. I told you about Sara Henry and I'll tell you another story about her. So she's sitting on my bed, she moved to Austin. A few months prior she had... I was her friend because we had grown up together in Arkansas. But she did not know people in Austin.

And she looked at me, she was like, "Nobody's inviting me. Nobody's including me." She was just kind of doing that whole pity party thing. I looked at her, I was like, "You're not going to have friends unless you invite them." Girl sits there and invites people for the next few years of her life. I mean, she had better friends than I had - and I was a pastor's wife that lived there way longer than her.

She connected with so many different groups of people, then she has a stroke. We're all in the waiting room together. 25 people are in the waiting room, her friends, in Austin that she's now made in two years. And every one of them is saying, "My best friend Sara. My best friend..." And I'm like, Uh-uh, no. First of all, I'm her best friend."

**Annie:** "You did not know her when you were children."

**Jennie:** Yes, yes. But the reality is that served her over the last 10 years because that whole sisterhood has been around her and helped her day in and day out of her life. Like all of us have played a different role in her life. And so to say that we don't need people is absolutely heretical. It is not true. You can say that. It is a lie from Satan. I'm going to be bold about it.

I am so bothered by this independent thing that has crept into our culture and into even Christianity and even into solid, awesome people that love God. I asked my office when I was writing this book, I was like, "How many of you when you need something, when you get stuck in a problem you ask for help?" None of them raised their hands."

**Annie:** None.

**Jennie:** That's my team who I disciple, who I actually feel like we do live together. I mean, we had a come to Jesus that day and we continue on to that subject, because that is not how we're supposed to live. Like you're supposed to come to a problem and

you're supposed to be in community that can come around you and help. But yeah, it's not working that way. And then, of course, the pandemic has only made it worse. So we're going to have to practice things we've forgotten how to do and maybe never knew how to do before.

**Annie:** My friends and I were just having this conversation, Jennie, because one of the girls in our friend group tested positive and was really sick. And so everyone was saying to her on Marco Polo, "Hey, what do you need? What can we do?" And she was like, "Oh, I ordered food from the grocery store and I got..."

So I haven't asked anybody to take me to the airport in years because I either drive and pay to park or I take an Uber and pay for that. So we have stopped needing help from each other because we pay for help from strangers.

**Jennie:** Can I give you just a little bit behind that? Like why? Because-

**Annie:** Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I want you to talk about it. Is it a privileged point of view that we don't have to get help?

**Jennie:** 100%. And the reason this book exists is because I was in Uganda, Rwanda, Haiti, even I write about Italy in Europe and these places. And I'm watching people do life together day in day out. They have huts with no front doors. They don't even have a door, more or less a lock or alarm system or a fence.

**Annie:** Right.

**Jennie:** They've got to go get water every day and they walked down. And I'm watching, in Uganda, in their beautiful African fabrics, absolutely gorgeous, these women walking down absolutely rolling laughing together, having a ball. And I'm looking at them going, "Oh my gosh, we are completely missing it."

And that was five or so years ago to where I marked in my head, "This is going to be one of my next projects," because I want to study throughout history, throughout cultures what do people do, because there was not loneliness on the scene in a big massive way in history until the Industrial Revolution. And that still only exists in the West. So 80% of the world even today lives in villages. Throughout history, all of history people have lived in this size network of people.

**Annie:** Right.

**Jennie:** And that is where we find ourselves today in a very different setting. And so what broke my heart is, of course, you didn't ask anybody to pick you up because Uber, you know, it's easy and you can afford it. And so, therefore, I don't go ask my neighbor to borrow their ladder, I buy a ladder. I use it once every five years but I buy a ladder at Home Depot. And this was all by design.

And what everybody needs to know is the system is so broken around us that it honestly put me... Like in my research stage of this project, I was in depression. And I genuinely thought, I don't know what kind of call to action I can even give to break the cycle because it's so broken. And this is pre or in the midst, the early parts of it, not even knowing I'm going to be in that for two years. So it's so terribly broken.

My neighbor across the street when they moved in, their air conditioner went out the day they moved in.

**Annie:** No! In Dallas?

**Jennie:** Yes. And we were standing in the front yard. And Zac had a little window unit upstairs and so he goes and gets it. And they spend so much time together setting that air conditioner unit. And those guys still go to coffee all the time and are such good friends.

The fact that he needed us, the fact that he borrowed something from us that he could have bought, put them together for a day working on something together. And I just think those are the choices we have to start making.

**Annie:** Because it feels like the more independent you're able to be financially the more independent you choose to be socially.

**Jennie:** You know Pastor Charles, right, from Africa New Life?

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Jennie:** He and I were talking, specifically when I was researching this, and he said, "Jennie," he said, "Even in Rwanda right now the wealthy people have built fences, gotten dogs, and separated themselves because they have everything they need. And now they protect themselves from other people." He said, "Almost without a doubt resources bring about isolation." He said, "I've seen it in the US all the time, but in Rwanda, it breaks my heart because we are so communal in the way we live, to see people as they get means pull back and separate themselves. It is so sad."

And he feels sorry for America. He's not sitting here thinking, "Wow, America, you have everything we need or want." If anything, he's going, "You really are missing a way of life that has been forever." And we don't even know that we're missing it."

**Annie:** Right. Right. Okay. So talk to our friends who are listening, Jennie. I mean, we just did a podcast survey and we know that we are 50/50 just about married and single. And so half the people listening are living with the family in married, maybe have kids, a little bit less than half of our listeners have kids, and the other half may be living by themselves, maybe living with a roommate.

How do we restrain ourselves when the world is teaching us there is a lot of strength and good in being an independent woman who does not need other people? What does the gospel say? And how do we reorient our lives to live in a gospel way in this way?

**Jennie:** Let me start with a story. So when I was researching, one of the things I thought was hysterical was in the 90s... It's not hysterical. It's absolutely depressing. But it's ironic. So in the 1950s, there was a man that did a study on... basically he was a marketer, and he was trying to figure out how do we sell more goods. And he built the idea of what's called now the nuclear family. So this was not an idea prior to 1950. They defined-

**Annie:** They didn't even say nuclear family before 1950?

**Jennie:** Not in the way that we know it now with two adults and two and a half kids. That was what they defined as a nuclear family. Prior to that, what the family meant was aunties by bio or adoption, right? Like me sitting there auntieing my daughter before we even get on the show. Like she's spoken into my kids' lives, she has an auntie in their lives.

We view life this way. Actually, our kids have a lot of people they call auntie. And I say auntie, not auntie. Some people are bothered. But that is the right way to say it. If you talk to anyone that is from any culture just about, they say auntie, right? So aunties, uncles, friends, for sure, when you see the Bible talks about widows or taking care of orphans, there's a sense of adopting them into your family. Like the family unit was very big.

In fact, most people took care of their parents in their home or nearby. Most cultures even today do that. You look at the family as, you know, potentially 20 to 30 people and you never left more than 20 miles from where you're born. So you

worked with these people all your life. And that family unit was very broad and very big.

Well, in the 1950s it all changed when they defined a family as being two adults and two and a half kids. And why they did it was to sell goods. So they wanted to sell a toaster to every two adults. And that was their big marketing plan. That's why everything changed. That's when it all changed.

**Annie:** No! Because of toasters?

**Jennie:** Because of toasters.

**Annie:** Toasters ruined my life.

**Jennie:** It worked. So everybody bought more toasters. And I got chill bumps thinking of how we could change this. Because I've seen it change in my own life, viewing the world completely differently and how it's always been viewed. That's the thing. When you go back and study the history, I've done it, from Adam and Eve till today, when you go study the history, people were happier.

And I'm not saying village people are perfect. You'll appreciate this. My Brother in law Tony, basically he and his family have lived in a village for the last 12 years, and his comment when he heard about my book premise, he was like, "Well, you know, sometimes you show up in a village and they're all cannibals." All right, Tony, you said it.

But it's true. I mean, we're not trying to say idealize village living as the end all be all, is the gospel. It's to have Jesus in our innermost relationships. But the whole Bible, let's just take that, the whole Bible was written about relationships. Beginning in the garden and ending with the church gathered in heaven, there is a communal... The whole thing is a communal story. It's a communal God created communal people, and working through and in those communal people to reconcile God to them and then to each other. It's a story of Scripture.

So this idea that we live alone and this independent thing we've got going in America is so broken. I truly am praying. And I know this sounds crazy. But Annie, I'm so bothered by this that I am praying for a revolution in the way we do this. And I'm not expecting it to come just from this book. But I hope it comes from people realizing, "Oh, the scales walling off of how we've been living and how utterly depressing the quarantine was, like how ready we were to have a dinner party again and to invite people over to a fire.

I just hope people are craving it and not feeling like it needs to be an addendum to their life. But really what I advocate in the book is we really build more of a village type existence where... So to your single friends, to your married friends that are listening, there should not be such a divided factor in that, right?

Like, if anything, some of my very best friends, you being one of them, are single because they have time to come over and talk to me late at night while, you know, my kids are in bed. And I have to get a babysitter if I wanted to leave. That was my kids' childhood. I had so many single friends that came and we would just hang out and stay up late talking or watching shows because they had availability. This was how it's supposed to be.

And then not to mention, Auntie Tasha for my son Cooper, Auntie Natasha sends him presents every Christmas with box. She is in his life, in his ear bossing him around, telling him how to act, what to say, what to not say. She is part of our family.

And when he sees Auntie Tasha, he is not just crazy about her. He's also respecting of her. And what you see is a world where the best parts come from the most unexpected parts. I am so over this idea that your two to five best friends, which you do need, are supposed to be in your same life stage, doing the same thing you do. I hope that part's over for us because it's not working and it's not lasting.

**Annie:** Well, I think after you get out of your 20s, it's very hard for you to have your five best friends be just like you. In your 20s, it's a little bit easier. Like when I was at college, all my best friends were college students at Georgia. And so we all were really similar.

But once you move out of 25, it feels like then you have more of a choice of is this person that was close to me when we were in college, that we still live in the same town, but they got married or I got married and had kids, are we still close? Can we still find common ground that made us so close before? Or does this one life change affects everything?

**Jennie:** And I would say to that, there are, you know... Basically, what I did was I looked at village life and I looked at Scripture and saw how people thrived in community and what were the five practices we can apply wherever you are to your life that you could actually live in deep relationships.

And what I found was it had less to do with what you had in common and more to do with things like proximity and vulnerability and having a shared mission together, which is what most of those villages had, because they were... Most villages even today on Earth work together for survival. And so we don't have to work together to physically survive anymore. But if we're honest, we should be working together to emotionally survive right now with anxiety and depression.

And so if we can be honest about that and start to let our guard down, you know, what I say is that is the hardest thing you will do, but it's probably the most effective thing you will do if you have friends. Now, the problem with all of this is that people are horrible.

**Annie:** Right. Humans are terrible in general, maybe being the chief of them all.

**Jennie:** Let me just lay this groundwork first, is, number one, people are going to disappoint you. All of them. All the people. Number two, you will disappoint all the people too. That is two truths you can count on for sure. If you have never disappointed people or they have never disappointed you, then you have had shallow relationships that have probably changed year by year and you've probably never had long-term relationships.

I tell my kids, "You do not know if somebody is your good friend until you've been through conflict and gotten to the other side."

**Annie:** Wow.

**Jennie:** Because it is 100% sure. If you do life the way we're talking about, the Bible talks about, the way we're talking about this book, if you do life in this way, you will get to a point where there's conflict. And so how do you get through that? The problem with our day, another problem is we can walk away really easily. We can just say, "You know what? That got too messy. I'm going to set a boundary." We even have a book for it, right?

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Jennie:** And again, I'm all for boundaries, but we set them so quickly and so high that we never actually forgive people and we never actually stay in relationships very long. Because as soon as it gets difficult, we justify a boundary and then we never get through to the other side of what it could have been.



Two of my friends that I write about in the book got in a huge fight on the other side of turning the whole thing. And I mean, they've genuinely both at different times told me, "I do not think we can get through this. I don't think this is going to reconcile." We sat down four to five times for them to reconcile.

**Annie:** You in the middle of it, too?

**Jennie:** Oh, girl, I was all in the middle of it.

**Annie:** Oh, Jennie.

**Jennie:** I'm like grabbing them by their arms and I'm like, "Sit down. We're going to work this out." I love them both so much. Anyway, I think there was just genuine satanic attack against them. It was so confusing what was happening and how confused they were about each other. But they stayed and they kept working. It was funny. Recently, both of them have looked at me at different times and said, "It's better than it's ever been."

**Annie:** Wow.

**Jennie:** And it's just they weathered something together and they learned they could and it gave them more confidence in the friendship to know, "Okay, we can disagree, we can be hurt by each other, and we can get to the other side." But honestly, that's probably one of the main reasons this is hard for people.

[00:36:52] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about one of our amazing partners, [Everlywell](#). What if you could use science to discover more about your body all year long? Give yourself more clarity and better understand your health and wellness with Everlywell at-home lab tests.

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And now back to finish up our conversation with Jennie.

[00:40:26] <music>

**Annie:** I'm thinking of a relationship in my life too where a friend and I got in a conflict and I thought, "We're never going to recover. We're never going to fix this." And then another two of our friends had a falling out totally different than us and it made us go, "Hey, I'm glad that's not us. Can we fix this?"

**Jennie:** I love it.

**Annie:** Right. We're like, "I'm seeing what's happening over there and I don't want that to be us. Can we just talk about us and make this right?" So even staying when we could have left. We didn't really stay when we could have left. But we stayed in our friend group when we could have left and it led us to see what we didn't want, you know.

**Jennie:** Yeah. I mean, this is a mess. This is hard for people.

**Annie:** It's such a mess, Jennie.

**Jennie:** This topic is so painful. It was so painful for me to write. It was so painful for me to live. It's hard to do, to live this way. But I think my biggest hope in the book is that people will be so convicted. And so far that's been true. That it doesn't matter what part and it doesn't matter if we have to initiate and it doesn't matter if that friend disappoints us. We've got to do it.

This is life. It's not a part of life. It is life. The only thing that will last into eternity are people and God. Like the word of God and God. So we've got to figure this out and enjoy the life that He's given us. I think everybody's craving it, but they're afraid to crave it because it's not worked out for them, and they felt like they don't know how to make it work.

It was funny. One of the things I did in the book, I was reading it on audio not long ago. It's one of the last things you do. And my producer was, I'd say, in her 60s. And I'm reading it and I stopped while I'm reading and I start giggling. And I'm like, "I'm so sorry. This sounds so elementary." And she says, "Jennie, I need this. No one ever taught me this."

And I'm thinking to myself, we never had a class. In first grade, we ever had a class that said like, "Hey, this is how you be a good friend. This is what you do when you get into conflict..." We never got that class. And so, so much of it is just holding people's hands and saying, "You know what, it's still going to be hard but I'll take the guesswork out for you."

And here is literally what you say. This is how you apologize. This is how you reach out to someone and say, "Will you be my closer friend, my deeper friend?" Because it's all awkward. I just don't think there's any, beginning to end, the whole thing, finding our people, keeping our people. It's all awkward and hard and also really fun and the best part.

**Annie:** Right. Okay, you said "if" a couple times. Can you talk about "IF" for a second?

**Jennie:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Are we going to get to talk about this at IF?

**Jennie:** Yeah, we are going to talk about it.

**Annie:** Tell me what the theme is this year for us.

**Jennie:** So it's basically that there is a God that will be victorious. And what I mean by that is, I was listening to a song. I think it's *Reckless Love*. I don't know who sings it, sorry.

**Annie:** Cory Asbury. He's wonderful.

**Jennie:** He's wonderful. I was saying, I'm sitting here listening to the song before I go up to speak one time and it says, basically—it's an incredible song—that there's no mountain He can't climb up, there's no wall He can't tear down. There's no... What are the other ones? Lie that He can't break down. And so he says these lines in the middle, and I'm sitting there singing those songs, and I'm like, "I want to believe that's true, but it feels like it isn't true."

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Jennie:** It feels like I'm looking around and the lies are bigger, and the mountains are higher, and the walls are more indestructible. And it just doesn't feel like God's defeating these things.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Jennie:** So that actually was how we formatted IF. So it's lies, mountains, walls... and then what's the other one?

**Annie:** That's amazing.

**Jennie:** You can look on the website. I mean, my hope is I'm imagining we enter a little bit hopeless and beat up and we come out realizing even if we're still in the midst of these things that God is bigger than them and He will, in the end, defeat them and that we have more power than we think we have and that we don't need to live as victims to these things that God is doing.

**Annie:** Right. People can still sign up for IF.

**Jennie:** They can.

**Annie:** IF:Local are still going... Man, you know how I feel about IF:Local. I love them so much.

**Jennie:** I know. They're my favorite thing on earth. They're so amazing. Gathering all over. We've got 3,000 or so, so far. I mean, it's just wild. And we've got them all over the world. Hundred and something countries will be represented there. It's beautiful.

**Annie:** Do you have an update for us from the pastor in Afghanistan? Are y'all still in communication?

**Jennie:** Yes. In fact, it will be one of my favorite parts of IF this year.

**Annie:** Oh nice.

**Jennie:** If you can imagine it being even better than last year. I mean, Pastor X shared last year and brought the house down. And then we did a one night event that was incredible about what's happening in Afghanistan. And one of the people that he works with that's on the ground in Afghanistan were telling her story, and-

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Jennie:** Just the real quick part is that she was outside of the country. And while everybody was leaving the country when Afghanistan fell to the Taliban, she went back in and is still there today. So she is risking her life minute by minute to bring Jesus and hope. It's so good.

**Annie:** I can't wait. Ever since your podcast, which we've shared a ton, but I will make two again here, ever since your podcast you released with Pastor X, where he's giving like an update on what has happened since Afghanistan fell and what it's like for Christians and for women, I mean, you know, I have that piece of paper on my wall where I write what I'm praying every day.

I mean, I look at the word Afghanistan every day. So I'm always like, "Oh, man, I want an update from Pastor X because I don't want us to forget that in the last year our brothers and sisters in faiths life have changed drastically in Afghanistan. It looks like it's going to happen in other countries like Ukraine. I mean, it's changing globally. And we are able, again, to isolate from that and pretend like it's not our lives, or we can care. And I'm so inclined to isolate that I want to force myself to care.

**Jennie:** And they want us to care, right?

**Annie:** Oh my gosh, of course.

**Jennie:** Like this woman in this interview risked her life and giving it.

**Annie:** Oh my gosh.

**Jennie:** I mean, it was sweet, Annie. Like the next morning, she's like, "Can we change this and change this?" She realized in giving us that conversation that she was even further risking her life, which she says she expects to die. When she went back in basically, the security team said, "Hey, you realize you're going back to die?" And she understood.

**Annie:** Oh my gosh.

**Jennie:** And so that's her reality. And so she risked her life. And when I asked her why, I asked her toward the end, I said, "Why did you do this? You knew this would risk your life to do this." And she goes, "I didn't want to." She said, "I talked to my

pastor and I said, 'Should I do this?' and he said, 'Will more people love God? Will more people risk their lives like you for the gospel?'" And she said, "I think they will." And he said, "Then you have to do it."

The hope for them is that they're encouraging and building up our faith. I mean, that's what I love to say. I feel accountable to her risking her life so that my life would reflect the same values, even though I'm not risking my life today. That I would live not holding on to things in this earth.

You know, I think that's what they pray and Pastor X prays is that the West would catch fire the way that the Middle East has. I mean, for people that don't know, it's the fastest-growing church in the world in Iran and Afghanistan.

**Annie:** It's unreal.

**Jennie:** And I would say, based on the Intel we're getting out of Afghanistan, the church is still doing just fine.

**Annie:** Really?

**Jennie:** I mean, yes, people are losing their lives. Yes. She said, "We find people missing every day." She's like, "There are new people that have been taken to be a child bride or have taken to be tortured or killed. Like every day." She goes, "That is part of our reality." But she said, "There are people getting saved every day." And she said, "What's being exposed is a desire for Jesus in another way." And we get to get that hope.

**Annie:** That's why every time I hear stories through you of them it makes me assess what feels hard in my life. It is hard in my life. My life is not... I mean, we're allowed to have hard things in our lives. It puts it on a very real spectrum that is a hard spectrum. And it is okay that my life feels hard some days. But it reminds me like, man, there are people doing way different things for the gospel that I'm doing.

**Jennie:** Well, and what you'll hear in her voice is she just says a matter of factly like, "Yes..." I said, "How can we pray for you?" And she goes, "I pray..." She says it real matter of factly, "I pray if they kill me it will be fast." Like my whole team in the studio was like, "Oh, what just happened?" Anyway, it's absolutely beautiful and amazing.

And you know what? What I love about them too is one reason she wanted to go back was she did not want to leave and abandon the believers that couldn't leave.

And so this idea of life is better for us, I just think we've got to dispel that because they're sitting there clinging to each other, worshipping God together, hiding the Word of God and taking it to places, and they're happy.

When you hear the interview, you're like, "She loves her life. She believes she's doing something so important." And I think deep down—Pastor X was on the call too—I think they feel sorry for all of us, which I think is amazing. And I think we should definitely lean into that because maybe they know something we don't.

**Annie:** I mean, in the truest sense, they've found their people and they aren't lonely.

**Jennie:** Yes, they found their purpose and they know their purpose. And they know heaven. They can smell heaven. It's just right there. And they're okay with that. It's beautiful.

**Annie:** Yeah. Well, when this episode comes out, it is the day before your book releases, so everybody can get the book tomorrow, *Find Your People*. It is available. Jennie, is there anything we didn't say that you want to make sure we cover?

**Jennie:** I guess the one thing I would say at the end is just to hug... If I could hug you through the microphone and tell you, This is hard and it's okay that it's hard but this is worth it. Because I do believe that it's possible to be around that fire crying your guts out. And I know that because that was me. And that was my story. I had to start completely over. But I have those people. And how I'm grateful. And I want that for everybody listening too.

**Annie:** Well, I'm excited. As I'm sitting here, I'm thinking, Man, I want my book club to read this book because I want us to have the conversation of like, "Are we living in the right houses?" I'm like, "Are we living close enough to each other? And are we thinking enough?"

**Jennie:** I hope I catalyze the hard conversation. Like I hope groups of friends will read it together and be like, "Okay, are we doing this well? Are we doing this right?" Because even if you have your people, I think we can do it better. I mean, it's so much more fun.

I mean, when I went to Italy and saw all these people in this grocer like sitting together, all these men were smoking together at the front counter and talking for hours, and all these women were sitting at little cafes together with their kids crawling all over them, I was like, "I think we could just learn a lot from just doing life a little slower and a little more connected." And yeah, it starts with small



choices and running errands together and borrowing things and having people into our home and our mess over and over again.

**Annie:** That's a good lead in for our last question, Jennie Allen. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you?

**Jennie:** Oh my gosh, you know what sounds fun? So my oldest two kids are in love right now.

**Annie:** Not with each other. They're each in love with a person.

**Jennie:** Another person, yes. And so my family it feels like it's growing a lot. Post-book, post-IF, in middle of March for spring break, we are all getting away to a little house. And I cannot wait to all be together. I don't even know what we're going to do-

**Annie:** Even the bonus new ones?

**Jennie:** The bonus new ones we invited them. And I cannot wait. We had to get a sprinter van. We have expanded to that size.

**Annie:** That's cool.

**Jennie:** And just being with my people. Those are the things I look the most forward to these days. Hey, and being with my people, you, this summer we're going to be at LaSalle ranch together. I can't wait.

**Annie:** That's right. I can't wait. It's the vacation on my calendar that I'm looking most forward to because...

**Jennie:** Me too.

**Annie:** Like I've got nine vacations. I don't. But it is the week I'm looking forward to because we get to be with our people without social media. Your phone doesn't work there, so there's nothing we can do. And we sit around the fire. I'm really looking forward to it. I love you. Thanks for making time to do this today, Jennie, and thanks for writing *Find Your People*. I'm excited for us all to get to read it.

**Jennie:** Thank you.

[00:53:42] <music>

**Outro:** Oh, you guys, isn't she just the best? And be sure to grab a copy of *Find Your People* and follow Jennie and IF:Gathering on social media so you can tell her thanks for being on the show. Listen, I'm telling you, I read the book and I sent some texts and I'm making some changes. Like it's really important to me and I think it will be to you as well.

And be sure to join us for the live stream of the That Sounds Fun tour stop in Marietta, my hometown on Friday night. Tickets and all the info are at [compassionlive.com](http://compassionlive.com) And then we'll be in Tampa Saturday and if there are tickets left, you should grab one. Y'all weekend two of the That Sounds Fun tour is here.

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

And today what sounds fun to me is going on a walk at Radnor Lake. I would love to do that. Y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday with the astronaut's wife herself, my friend, Stacey Morgan. See you guys then.