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Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That sounds fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm really happy to be here with you today. We have got a great show in store.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to take a moment to hear about one of our incredible partners, [Brooklinen](#). Let's hear it for the dads. That's how I'm gonna say it. Whether they're new dads or granddads or all the father figures and honoring dads in our lives, we know they deserve the best. Give them a gift that they didn't know they needed but will love for years to come with Brooklinen's cozy bedding, towels, and other home essentials.

Is it your first time trying Brooklinen? Their bestselling luxe sheets are the perfect place to start, featuring an irresistibly soft feel and buttery smooth finish. Made with the highest quality cotton, these sheets come in classic colors like white and graphite—I have the white ones—and limited edition shades like aqua blue and toffee. Okay. I love mine so much, y'all. I have multiple sets. I'm just saying, I have multiple sets.

If the dads in your life are anything like my father, Mr. F. Downs, and as practical as they come, maybe they've been hanging on to some old towels or robes for, you know, decades or sweatshirts. I'm looking at you Mr. F. Downs. Refresh that robe situation with Brooklinen super plush robe featuring an ultra-thick luxurious feel and convenient pockets. It'll be his Saturday morning go-to.

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And if you need any more shopping inspo, our friends at Brooklinen created a gift guide for gifts at every price point. They've even got a Father's Day bundle that saves you up to 15%. And y'all, the five-star reviews, over 100,000 of them, yes, you heard that right. 100,000 5-star reviews, I bet your dads will be one of them.

So give them the comfort refresh they deserve and get it for less at Brooklinen. Go to [Brooklinen.com](#) and use the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN to get \$20 off your purchase of \$100 or more. That's Brooklinen.com. and enter promo code THATSOUNDSFUN for \$20 off. Brooklinen, the curators of comfort.

Intro: Okay, speaking of comfort, let me tell you who brings comfort to my soul. Today on the show we get to talk with my friend and one of my favorite pastors, Scott Souls. Y'all know him. He has been on the show a million times before: [Episode 22](#), [Episode 119](#), [Episode 219](#). And I'm so glad he's back with us today. We've linked to all those shows in the show notes below or at anniefdowns.com/podcast if you want to go back and listen to those.

Scott is the senior pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church here in Nashville, Tennessee, and the author of *Jesus Outside The Lines, Befriend, From Weakness to Strength, Irresistible Faith*, and *A Gentle Answer*. His newest book, *Beautiful People Don't Just Happen: How God Redeems Regret, Hurt, and Fear in the Making of Better Humans* is another wise, timely gift that he has given us. I loved this book. I loved it so much. It's one that's challenging me.

I love learning from him and hearing from him. And this conversation does that as well. So, friends get ready. Yeah, I'm gonna say it. This is a note taker. This is a note-taking episode. Here's my conversation with one of our favorite pastors on the pod, Scott Souls.

[00:03:43] <music>

Annie: Pastor Scott Souls, welcome back. You're a four-peat around here.

Pst. Scott: Oh, is that right? This is number four?

Annie: Fourth time is a charm. Yeah.

Pst. Scott: Wow. Wow.

Annie: Episode 22, you were very trusting to come so early, Episode 119 in January of 2019, and episode 271 in January of '21. So about every two years, I like to have you back.

Pst. Scott: You're so kind.

Annie: Are you kidding? I mean, we quoted you already this month where I've said so many times that the quote you gave me, maybe even the first episode based on the month when it came out, when I said, "What happens when you stay to church?" And you said, "That's when you grow up?"

Pst. Scott: Yes.

Annie: You still think that's true?

Pst. Scott: I do. I do. There's just something about sticking it out and enduring. You know, the Bible talks a lot about endurance. And one of the primary avenues of endurance is relational. That's why husbands and wives make a covenant until death do them part. There's something built into that covenant that just, you know, says thick and thin, good and the bad and the ugly, we are committed.

I do think that the very best, most life-giving experiences of community, especially as we were talking about local church, when your church was going through a kind of a rough patch during that season, we were talking a little bit about that. But the strongest, most resilient people are the ones who endure and don't hit eject on relationships as soon as it get challenging and hard. In fact, that's how relationships get deeper.

Annie: I said recently on the show that I've just decided that I need to treat my church like it's the only one in town. Like it's the 1850s, I'm in a wild west city, and there's one church at the end of the street.

Pst. Scott: Which in Nashville, that puts you in the minority.

Annie: Right. I mean, there's so many incredible churches that people I love lead, like your church, or people that I love go to. And so when one person sits in my seat and I can't be in the seat I want to be in, the eject button is very interesting to me. And I am one of the teachers, and the eject button is interesting to me. I think there's something to the staying. Someone asked me recently, how do you know when you should leave your church?

Pst. Scott: You want me to answer that?

Annie: Yes.

Pst. Scott: It's a really delicate conversation because you don't want to shame people for moving on. Sometimes people are legitimately called out of something or called towards something, or both and. But in terms of the whole church hopping thing, church hopping meaning, you know, changing churches every one to three years because you get bored, because, you know-

Annie: Someone's sat on your seat?

Pst. Scott: Yeah. The church down the road just got a new pastor who was really cool, and there's buzz and all of that. Churches take turns being the church in town. So there's all this kind of...

Annie: Isn't that funny to watch?

Pst. Scott: In a town like this one, which it's kind of this weird sociological thing, I'd love to hear an expert weigh in on it, which I am not. But I think, number one, Annie, if there is unaccountable lack of integrity in leadership at some point, you know, after maybe trying to influence as a member and getting nowhere for a while, and it's a confirmed lack of integrity, right?

Because sometimes if you the church member is upset with leadership, you actually might be the problem. Like it's not a guarantee that just because you're upset with leadership... People got upset with Jesus, all of Israel got upset with Moses, but they were just upset about their situation out here in the desert and they put all the blame on Moses and Aaron who were trying to do a good job.

So examine your own heart. Like, what are your motives really? And are you looking for a scapegoat just because you want to go somewhere else? But you know, being honest with ourselves. But if there's a lack of integrity that's unaccountable... You know, Mike Cosper does a big podcast on those sorts of dynamics recently, sometimes it's time to move on.

But then the other is, you know, let's say either your core theological beliefs change or the theological beliefs in the leadership change, and it's in the category for you of things that really matter. You know, people distinguish between essentials and non-essentials. And so if it's in the realm of essentials where it's really hard for me to follow Christ under this shift in teaching for this shift in my own understanding, that becomes a time of discernment.

But I would just say, anytime you do leave, don't do it quietly. But don't do it loudly, either. Meaning have a conversation with the existing leadership. Because even if you leave, you might be able to leave them with something to consider, either as a testimony against bad integrity or as an opportunity for the leadership to reconsider some things. But always want to be an advocate of having transparent conversations before...

And involving leadership in your decision. Don't just come in and say, "Oh, I've decided or we've decided, and here's our list of grievances on our way out." Try to work through the list of grievances first because that might become a really great relational opportunity and an opportunity for the church to get healthier.

Annie: That's what I did poorly when I left one church to go to another once in my life because I just kind of went like, "I've made this decision, I'm going to tell them," but it was not a conversation. It was a list. And it wasn't even a grievances list. It

was more I didn't want to sneak out, so I want to say to you what I'm doing. But I didn't leave a lot of space for conversation.

Pst. Scott: Got you.

Annie: And where I'd ever have to do that again, I would learn what you just taught for me. I love my church. I'm so thankful that I get... I mean, we just talked about Pastor Kevin before we started. He's just one of the best things that's ever happened-

Pst. Scott: He's fabulous.

Annie: ...to our city, to our church, and to my life as my pastor. And every church has hard times and great times. I'm thankful that you taught me to stay a long time ago. So it has served me.

Pst. Scott: The Lord taught you to stay. We just had a conversation.

Annie: Okay, Scott, so your new book comes out tomorrow. It's called *Beautiful People Don't Just Happen*. And so even in this conversation I'm thinking about, there is something about being committed, and you write about this, about being committed to God, to others, and to yourself in order to become who you want to become. Have you become who you want to become?

Pst. Scott: No, I'm not even close.

Annie: Me neither.

Pst. Scott: It's a lifetime. I'm better than I was a year ago. And a year ago, I was better than I was 10 years ago. So I come from the world of Tim Keller, right? He's my mentor and frankly I learned so much from him. But one of the things that he said once in his sermon, he's like, "When I was 30 years old, I thought my 20 year old self was an idiot. When I was 40, I thought my 30 year old self was an idiot." And now I'm... you know, I don't know, he's 50 or something. "Now I'm 50, and I think my 40 year old self is an idiot. And when I'm 60 I'm gonna think my present self is an idiot, which means I am an idiot." So that's my story, too. I'm always incomplete but hopefully progressing.

Annie: When I read that where you talk about, like, "Hey, I've been reading the Bible daily for 30 years, I've been teaching publicly for 25 years and I'm still not there."

Pst. Scott: No.

Annie: I just think that helps me a lot. Because sometimes I look at other people, especially leaders, and I think, "What am I gonna have to do to not be embarrassed when I sin and to not feel like I'm catching up on my Bible reading?" So how do we balance that? How do we hold that tension of like, well, we're trying to be disciplined and trying to connect with God, but we're just never ever hitting the mark exactly?

Pst. Scott: Grace is there, not just at the very beginning of your relationship with God, where you enter into it on the terms that God has established, "My son came and lived a perfect life in your place, and he died the death that all sin deserves. He took it. And if you receive it with empty hands, with nothing but your need to offer back to him, then you're in. You're welcome into the family of God, welcome into being adopted and loved and cherished forever. Right?

If we look at that as a courtroom experience and let's say the cross of Jesus Christ is the door to that courtroom, right? So you walk in and then the judge points to the cross and says, "That's your freedom." But I think a lot of us, we never leave the courtroom to live on the other side of the cross, which is resurrection, and freedom, and newness of life, and growth. The old person is gone, the new has come.

So I think that's the trick of figuring out, what does it mean to get out of the courtroom? Because I'm not being judged. I'm not being assessed. There's no jury, there's no judge anymore. God is only Father to us after we come into the family through Christ. And so with God only being Father and not judge, it gives us a reason to change that. It's not a pressured reason, but it's more of an invitation to live in greater freedom. But that burger that the Bible calls the flesh, you know, sticks with us and with it all kinds of insecurity and hesitancy, right?

Annie: Yeah.

Pst. Scott: In the book, the first two words of the book are "you suck." And those are words that I spoke to myself recently about something I said to somebody 37 years ago. You know, the shame, the guilt, the regret, it sticks with us. We leak grace, but we hold on to guilt and shame like a sponge holds on to water. And the whole I think journey of following Christ is to figure out how to act like a sponge with grace and squeeze out that guilt and shame.

I don't know if we ever completely arrived, but guilt and shame are terrible motivators. I think they're the main culprits that hold us back from actually growing and flourishing and other people God's made us to be.

Annie: The problem for me, amongst many, I mean, one of my problems is even this morning I was listening to Lectio 365, and they read Hebrews 4, where it says, You can approach... I think it's Hebrews 4. I'm gonna be sorry if I'm wrong. But there's

grace and mercy for you. And I thought, even as you're talking, I didn't have this language at the time, but what I knew this morning was I always treat God like a judge. If I sin, then it is mine to walk back into the courtroom and make it right and then we can move forward. So where's the difference between God isn't our judge anymore and confessing and repenting?

Pst. Scott: Well, confessing and repenting is a lifestyle. It's a way of life for a Christian. But I think our posture toward it can be one of this complex combination of regret and joy. Right?

Annie: Wow.

Pst. Scott: When we break God's law, the bigger thing is that we're breaking God's heart and we're breaking fellowship momentarily with Him. We're not breaking the relationship. The relationship can't be broken. Our status with Him can't be broken. But we're breaking the fellowship, the intimacy, the nearness. And that's where the grief comes from.

Whereas before Christ, the grief came from guilt and shame. Guilt is what I've done and shame is who I am, because of what I've done. And the cross is eliminated and obliterated all of that and absorbed all of that completely. So the whole new way of relating to God... You know, think about if, Annie, you did something to hurt your sister, or you did something to hurt a really close friend. What's going to draw you to make that right? It's restoration of the goodness of your friendship, of your family relationship. So it's a whole different motivation structure. Because God is your Father.

There's this old Michael Card song where, where it says, To be so completely guilty and given over to despair, and then to look into your judge's face and see a savior there. He's mercy. That's what He is. He's no longer the punitive judge. He can judge our actions, which is what leads us to godly grief and repentance, but He doesn't judge us to punish us, but only to free us.

Annie: What blew my mind about *Beautiful People Don't Just Happen* is you actually use, in the subtitle, regret, hurt, fear. You really kind of use these what I, as your Enneagram seven friend, would call negative emotions. I understand they're not necessarily negative. But regret, hurt, fear, shame, disappointment. What you're contending is that all of those actually make us who we want to be.

Pst. Scott: Yeah, they're so valuable. So our friend Chip Dodd talks about core emotions, and only one of them would be classified as positive or happy.

Annie: Yes, only gladness.

Pst. Scott: Gladness.

Annie: That's it.

Pst. Scott: That's the seventh emotion.

Annie: I depend on it.

Pst. Scott: And then me as an Enneagram four, I get seven and you get one. Those are what? Guilt, shame, sadness, hurt, fear, anger, loneliness. If we think about how God has taught us to pray, at least how to pray in a fallen world, we've got the Psalms. So 150 of them. They're full of really just robust expression of all of these emotions. I don't know.

I used to be a guy... Maybe it's because I'm American. Maybe it's because I grew up kind of as a jock. And to show negative emotion is a sign of weakness. Whereas I think the more I've grown up, gotten older, learned what it means to live as fully human under God, I think the more courageous healthy people are the ones who express. Not in order to bleed on other people, not to create mellow drama and every group situation you go into ends up being a group therapy session for you. You know, like there's a sense of oversharing that is inappropriate and unhealthy and probably belongs in a counselor's office or with a pastor or something.

Annie: If any of your friends say to you, "You should talk to a counselor," believe them.

Pst. Scott: Yeah, you should. It's time. It's time because I've reached my limits.

Annie: That's happened for me.

Pst. Scott: Like this is above my paygrade. This is not what any of us wants to define our friendship, right? Like our friendship needs to be more than just this. But of course, good friends do show up for each other and can offer what they can. But I don't know. I think, Annie, the older I get—I'm in my 50s now and I'm kind of in that reflective season of life—the more I feel like there's actually great value to really finding those appropriate context express the distressed emotions, right?

It's kind of like Enneagram four's playground. I'm like the ER personality, right? So I've got a little bit of a three to make me positive but I'm a four. Like the tortured artist personality. Like Russell Moore and Andrew Peterson, I think, all those. That's good company.

But the way I look at it is like if you think about how humans and trees interact, humans exhale carbon dioxide because I can't hold it in, but the trees inhale it. Because carbon dioxide is oxygen to the trees, it's like oxygen to us. And they exhale oxygen and we breathe it in. And there's like this relationship.

I think there's a similar dance between maybe your personality and mine, Annie, where you breathe you know a certain air of positivity and life and I breathe an optimism and I breathe the air of realism. Like, yeah, I'm so with you and so want to go there with you, and yet the world's really hard as well. So how do those two things dance together?

We have this interchange in the same way that humans and trees do where your personality is of great benefit to me and I need to be around it to remind me that there's no reason for despair because God is good all the time. And maybe a seven would benefit from a four of knowing, Hey, we're not home yet. We're on our way but we're not there yet. And we really do need to enter in and grieve this hard stuff and show up for the poor, show up for the weak, show up for distressed friends.

So, I don't know, God's made us complicated and he's made us different and I think it's a really wonderful thing. But emotions are just as much a part of us as our ears and our fingers. They're not there to be shoved down. They're there to be expressed hopefully in a healthy way.

Annie: I haven't thought about how similar that is between humans and trees as in we are for each other. Or even what I would label as my good emotions, bad emotions, my positive ones, and negative ones, they need each other. And that is how we become who we want to become.

Pst. Scott: I think so. We become who we want to become and who we're meant to become in community.

Annie: Yeah, yeah.

Pst. Scott: Even in paradise it's not good to be alone, right?

Annie: Yeah.

Pst. Scott: I mean, before things became a train wreck, God said that of Adam. And that doesn't mean you got to be married but it means you got to be surrounded by people. We're meant to live in community. Jesus and Paul, both unmarried men but had packs of people that they traveled with all the time, men and women. Married people like me, you know, Patti and I will tell you, we need more than each other. We are not enough to carry this thing. We need community as well.

Annie: And y'all both awesome to be around. So it's not even there's one that's lacking. You're both very fun to be around.

[00:23:13] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about one of our amazing partners, [Liquid I.V.](#) Y'all know how fiercely I protect my morning routine and my weekly Sabbath. I just think we make time and space for the things we need to keep us healthy and grounded. Right? Rest, fuel, reading, prayer, fun.

In addition to all of that, though, we can't forget to make hydration a priority. 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.

So I'm a morning time Liquid I.V. gal. I just add it in my water bottle, because it helps me feel my best so I can tackle the day ahead with energy and focus. And y'all, watch out when I get one of their energy multipliers in me. It makes me feel unstoppable. It contains five essential vitamins: B3, B5, B6, B12, and vitamin C, and three times the electrolytes of traditional sports drinks.

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Sponsor: And one more amazing partner to tell you about, [stamps.com](#). Y'all know I love it when I get to talk with my friends like Tim Schurrer or JeAnnie Stevens about leadership and entrepreneurship. That is a topic y'all want more of from us.

Well, I want to learn everything I can about leading our companies the best that we can. And when you're running a small business, every second counts. You can't afford to waste a single moment. So for my fellow business owners out there, why are you still taking time out of your day to go to the post office when you could be using stamps.com instead?

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And remember, we include the links to all of our sponsors in the show notes below. But we'll also email them all to you on Friday with a bunch of other fun stuff, including the transcripts to the podcast if you go ahead and sign up for the AFD Week in Review. The link is in the show notes below.

And now back to our conversation with Scott.

[00:26:55] <music>

Annie: Okay, you talked about this in the book and you just mentioned it to about this aging thing and like kind of looking at the world through these new lenses of mortality a little bit is... I can't remember the exact word you use. But you said something along the lines of you have a different view than you used to have. Me too.

I'm a decade younger than you, and I'm having very interesting, like, Oh, what does it look like to not be...? Now so many of our friends who are listening are in their 20s and some of them are in their 30s. But for a couple of minutes, for those of us that are over that, how do we do this well? Have you figured that out yet? Like how

do we step into this third quarter of our life, fourth quarter of our life in a way that is healthy?

Pst. Scott: I think, Annie, we step into the third and fourth quarter in the same way that we're supposed to step into the first and second ones. The writer of Ecclesiastes-

Annie: Oh, I love how you talk about the book of Ecclesiastes. It's the party pooper of the Bible.

Pst. Scott: That's right. It will be the party pooper. And what is Scott Sauls' Enneagram four's favorite book of the Bible? Ecclesiastes. But you've got this guy who he's older in life, he's incredibly wealthy, he's got all the power, he's a king, he doesn't just have a pool, he's got several pools. He didn't just have a garden, he's got several gardens. He's got everything.

Annie: He doesn't just have a wife-

Pst. Scott: I know. I'm not gonna go there.

Annie: A thousand.

Pst. Scott: He's got too many wives. One is all you need. But he's got it all. And he's got worship too. He's in contact with the living God. Like a lot of people think that the writer is Solomon son of David. But whoever it is, he's like, "You know, all this is vapor." It's like trying to hold on to smoke. It's just going to leak out of your fingers and it's going to go poof and vanish.

But one of the things that he says in there, you know, since you mentioned your younger listeners, remember your Creator in the days that you were young? It's just like investing money. The earlier you start, the more you're going to flourish in your older years.

Annie: That's right. Your emotional health, spiritual health, your physical health.

Pst. Scott: 100%. So my mentor that I mentioned a minute ago, Tim Keller, he's got an incurable cancer right now. And probably some of your listeners if they've heard of him, they know this. And every interaction I've had with him, Zoom, phone calls, whatever, sometimes he can have a chemo drip in his arm.

Annie: Wow.

Pst. Scott: And there's this lightness of being that he has. He looks at it and I'm like, "Oh, no, poor guy!" And he's like, "Can you believe this little thing cost \$9,000. Isn't that ridiculous?" And he's fully engaged. He's still writing like crazy.

Annie: Is he really?

Pst. Scott: Yeah, he's doing all the things. One of the things that he says every time somebody asks him the "how are you doing?" question, he's like, "So glad you asked." And he says, "I'm happier than I've ever been in my life." Because it's all the truth that he's been absorbing for all his life is coming home to him when he needs it the most.

Annie: Wow.

Pst. Scott: He's like, "My goals right now are to work on my marriage." He's in his mid-70s, he still wants to improve his marriage. He wants to stay focused, he wants to know the Lord more deeply so he can be ready, you know, for his time when it comes. And then he says—this will speak to you, Annie, as a writer—he says, "I want to keep writing..." I love the way he phrased it. He says, "...to leave messages in a bottle for the future church."

Annie: Wow.

Pst. Scott: And he says, "I want to be an encourager." So he's saying these kinds of things that you would expect somebody in the prime of their life, at the peak of their health with the world as their oyster, but he's saying them as a dying man. And here's the punch line. It took us quite a long, circuitous route to getting to the punch line. The punchline is this. This man has been praying through four Psalms every single day for over 60 years.

Annie: The same four? Or does he go one through four, five through eight?

Pst. Scott: He goes through the whole book once a month.

Annie: Oh my gosh!

Pst. Scott: ...part of his prayers. He reads the whole Bible at least once a year, every single year for over 60 years.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Pst. Scott: He's got a deep, very involved life of prayer. And he receive-

Annie: His book on prayer called *Prayer* is just unbelievable.

Pst. Scott: It's outstanding. And he receives criticism like nobody I've ever seen. Even when it's unfair. You know this is as a public person, Annie. Like for every fair criticism, there's like ten that just are off. They're just not right. And he lives in that world.

I worked very closely with him for like five years, never heard him either directly or behind somebody's back ever say a negative word about anybody. Never dogged his critics. Sometimes he would get a little frustrated and hurt, but he would never dog anybody. And his first question would always be, what's the kernel of truth in there that could become an opportunity for me to take it to the Lord, repent and experience new intimacy with Christ?

So that stuff doesn't just happen, right? That's from his teenage years doing the Bible thing, the formation. Like all these kind of quiet, hidden, non-Instagrammable spiritual practices for decades. That's how you become that. And through suffering. He's survived cancer before. This is a second bout. But you and I can both list a lot of people that we know who have become remarkable people through pain points or through hard things.

But a major ingredient in that is doing all the work that you can to stay close to God, which means deep relationship with the Bible, deep relationship with a local church, not a lot of local churches. This is where I also want to encourage folks who benefit from a lot of really good teaching on the internet. Do not substitute your pastor with your favorite celebrity preach. Like don't do that. As a vitamin supplement, fine. But let your main course... Even if you kind of half love the music at your church, let that be your main... Like, truly part of growing up... You know, back to that growing up thing-

Annie: Say it!

Pst. Scott: ...part of it is being able to enter into things that bless other people, that enrich other people-

Annie: That's good. That's really good.

Pst. Scott: ...and sort of draft off of somebody else's enjoyment of a song that you may not love yourself. That's actually a way to learn to love it, right?

Annie: Yes!

Pst. Scott: Like I'm a girl dad and I grew up as a jock in an all-boys home. I had to learn to love girl things. I mean, a lot of girl things. I'm the biggest *Gilmore Girls* fan there

is. But it was through their enjoyment that I came to enjoy things like the *Gilmore Girls*. Silly example, but an important one.

Rick Warren starts Purpose Driven Life with these words: it's not about you. And the less we make it about us, the more joy we end up having. I don't know. I could go on and on about that. I feel like I've gotten off-topic.

Annie: No.

Pst. Scott: But yeah, you know, like church life... Like CS Lewis in *Screwtape Letters* talks about how if a devil really wants to discourage a Christian, the devil should get the Christian in a church and sit them next to somebody who sings off key and has squeaky boots or whatever, and soon enough, they'll just want a peace out. And I would say that if everything about your church experience is spectacular, you're missing an opportunity to mature.

Annie: Well, you haven't been there long enough.

Pst. Scott: Yeah. Churches are supposed to be like Bridgestone Arena or like the Ryman. Like there's the performing arts which are wonderful and their own type of gift from God. And then there's Christian community, which is about not only bringing our best to God, but bringing our imperfections to God, and He loves us through both of them. And we learn to love a community through the good and the imperfection.

Annie: I also have seen it myself that when I get my feathers ruffled about something... A mentor told me to do this. I certainly did not come up with it myself. But a mentor said, that's when you go and volunteer somewhere at your church. Because when you put your hands in the dirt, it's much harder to be upset that there's dirt in the building.

Pst. Scott: That's a great point.

Annie: Because you're like, "Yeah, I brought it in. I brought it in because I was at serving Saturday or because I worked with volunteer with the student ministry or whatever." You bring up an interesting point, because one of our friends... We let our friends submit questions to our guests through the AFD Week in Review email. And one of our friends said, how do you pastor in a way we're right now, and as another big political season is coming where ideologies are so different? It feels like people bring their politics with... I do, I bring everything I believe with me into the church on a Sunday. But so many people believe that what they believe politically aligns with Jesus. But everyone thinks that.

Pst. Scott: Everyone thinks that.

Annie: That's complicated, Scott.

Pst. Scott: I was tracking with you until you said another political season is about to happen, and then my stomach turned over.

Annie: I know. I feel that for every pastor.

Pst. Scott: I will say this. And our friends at Barna will back this up. The last two years have been especially excruciating for many pastors. Number one, you're closing your doors and you're trying to keep community going on computers.

Annie: You're pivoting constantly.

Pst. Scott: So there was that season. And then people come back and you can only see half of their faces and you can't really have conversation before and after church because you're all trying to protect yourselves and each other from a pandemic. Then everybody starts coming back and you realize, "Wait a minute, half the room is strangers that I've never met and there's so many that haven't come back like I thought would. Where are all those elders?"

So it's been exceptionally hard for pastors in the same way it has for restaurant owners and things like that. Not just pastors. I think arts and entertainment took a real hit for a while. But they're coming back with a force. I'm so jealous of our arts and entertainment people.

Annie: Oh, man. Everybody is on the road. Every show is sold out. It's wild.

Pst. Scott: Yeah, I won't mention any names. One of our mutual friends are like, "I love you. You're so great, and I hate you because your life is so fun right now." We're all struggling to come back and-

Annie: Arena tours or not?

Pst. Scott: Filling arenas.

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

Pst. Scott: That's great. More power to them. They paid a great price during the pandemic as well. But, you know, Barna says that 40% of pastors are looking to get out of ministry right now.

Annie: Oh my gosh!

Pst. Scott: 40%. That's a lot of pastors.

Annie: It's a lot. It's hard.

Pst. Scott: And part of it is just the charged political environment. A huge part of it is the charged political environments. It's like I'm darned if I do, I'm darned if I don't.

Annie: That's it.

Pst. Scott: If I say anything about race, either I'm not saying enough, or I've said too much.

Annie: You can get both of those emails.

Pst. Scott: Yeah. Or if I say anything about the life choice conversation with all the Supreme Court stuff that's happening recently, I'm gonna get frayed from both directions. This is the pesky thing about Jesus. He never quite lands thoroughly with the blue state people or the red state people. So there are things on both sides that I think the truth of Scripture and the truth of Christ would say, "Yeah, that's a good thing."

But there are also things on both sides that he would come in and clean house and want to turn the table over. And even now probably some people who are listening are getting defensive about their side, which is perfectly fine. We're not called to ignore politics, we're called to redeem them like we're called to redeem everything that God gives us the privilege of being involved with.

And so I think the question is, what does the redeemed political engagement look like? I think it looks... And Annie, I can be off, but I think it looks like people having greater and greater difficulty over time guessing which side you vote for.

Annie: Yes.

Pst. Scott: Let me explain that just for a second. So our church is a multi-site church. So we have four congregations in different areas of town.

Annie: We had Mika and Christina on. Mika Edmondson and Christina.

Pst. Scott: Yeah, wonderful.

Annie: One of your pastors.

Pst. Scott: So Mika and Christina, we planted the Koinonia congregation right in the middle of the pandemic.

Annie: It's unbelievable.

Pst. Scott: Perfect timing to plant a church. And they were already here and we're like, "You know what? Let's go for it."

Annie: Let's go!

Pst. Scott: And we had a ton of people who went with them and have been great support from the very beginning.

Annie: Yes, it's been incredible to watch.

Pst. Scott: But they're in an 82% African American community. And let's compare them to say our Cool Springs congregation that Russ Ramsey leads, which is like Cool Springs. Cool Springs, Franklin is as red state as it can get. Bordeaux, North Nashville is about as blue state as you can get.

So you have two congregations in the same church. Two congregations, they're about the same size. Let's just assume that 100% of the people in both congregations believe the Bible cover to cover is the word of God. And yet, these two congregations are going to cancel out each other's votes.

And that means one of two things. Either one of these congregations is just missing it in terms of the Bible and in terms of what's true and beautiful and of God, and one of these congregations is just completely blind and the other is completely enlightened.

Pst. Scott: Or-

Annie: Or.

Pst. Scott: ...both have some blind spots and both are seeing certain things more clearly than the other through the lens of Scripture as applied to government and politics. There's this woman at Duke University Divinity School named Christina Cleveland, she says, "The best way to understand and know your own blind spots is to get into community with brothers and sisters in Christ who have opposite political views as you do."

Now, there's certain things where I would say, Look, you're never going to convince me that elective abortion is a good thing." You're never going to be able to convince me of that because of Scripture. And so you're like, "Ah, Republican."

Well, I would also say, you're never going to convince me that undocumented immigrants separated from their children at the border is not something that Christians should care about. "Oh, you're one of those Democrats!" Well, no, I'm actually... It's funny people say, "Oh, I know. I know what..." I'm like, "You have no idea. You are missing it. So badly you're missing it."

Ann Voskamp said to me once, she's like, "I don't know what to do because I feel like I'm too conservative for all my liberal friends and I'm too liberal for all my conservative friends." And I'm like, "Bingo, that's right where you belong."

Annie: Oh, wow.

Pst. Scott: "That's right where you belong. So is Jesus." If you look at the love chapter, and Paul's talking about if I speak in the tongues of angels, if I give my body to the flames, like he's listing all these different faith commitments. And if you parse them out half of them are progressive virtues and half of them are conservative virtues.

Annie: Wow.

Pst. Scott: And so when I think, the whole scripture is like that. Like when he starts a letter saying, "Grace to you and peace," that's a subversive socio-political statement. Because "grace to you" was a Greek salutation; "peace to you" was a Jewish one."

Annie: Oh, wow.

Pst. Scott: He's like saying, "AOC fans and Donald Trump fans to you from God our Father." It was that radical.

Annie: Wow. This is why we need to study the Bible in the original way like this.

Pst. Scott: Be formed. Don't be a disciple of a talk show host. When I say talk show, I really meant like cable news host.

Annie: Got it. Got it. Go it. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Pst. Scott: Because talk show hosts are awesome. But cable news is designed to rally a single way of thinking in an echo chamber and to condemn those other guys. That's what makes money, that's what sells advertising. Like if you've ever seen *The Social Dilemma*, that's how the social media companies are exploiting your own tendency toward anxiety and anger and outrage.

The algorithms are meant to fuel anger, to drive advertising. That's why you see such a vastly different message from Fox News versus CNN. Don't let yourself be disciplined by those voices. Do the Tim Keller thing. Remember your Creator from the days that you're young. Get as much input as you can from what's true and beautiful directly from God and people who represent His voice well, and then you'll be able to discern.

I'm not saying stop watching cable news. Just learn to discern what you're hearing. And then there's the whole logs and specs thing where we think the log is in somebody else's eye and you're just like, "No." If everybody could just start from the place of humbling themselves in any kind of conflict... I don't know if that gets to the pastor thing.

Annie: Yeah, you talk about that beautifully in *Beautiful People Don't Just Happen* of like, you've got to see. If you're seeing something big out there, you've got to look inside here because they're the only way you become who you want to really be and who you were meant to be is if you are first humbling yourself.

Pst. Scott: That's right.

Annie: That's where God tends to make things much more clear. But to your pastor friends who asked that question, my own experience is this. If you want to grow a church really big, really fast, go as partisan as you can. Just preach politics. Like whatever Tucker Carlson is saying, say it in your pulpit, or whatever Rachel Maddow is saying, say it in your pulpit, and your church will grow so fast. But it won't grow by conversion, it'll grow by just people wanting something more politically aligned from somebody else's church. So it's a great way to hurt other churches and to grow yours. If that's what your life vision is, you know, I don't quite understand it, but okay.

Annie: We can tell you how to do it.

Pst. Scott: That's how to do it just from a pragmatic point of view. And if you want kind of the slow, healthy growth trajectory, then be a Jesus person, which means you're going to be your own person in these political conversations. And realize that the political noise in your congregation is in all likelihood coming from less than 10% of your members. It feels like the whole church but it's not. It's not.

I got so many friends that would say that, that it's a matter of turning the volume down on the loud majority and turning the volume up on the silent... I'm sorry, the loud minority, and turning the volume up on the more quiet, faithful, humble majority.

If you get accused of being both too liberal and too conservative, it probably means you're right where you need to be. And the people who are calling you too political, if that's who you are, are the people who are too political.

Annie: Wow.

Pst. Scott: Because only a hyper-partisan person is going to be triggered by a balanced preacher. Because they don't want a balanced preacher. They want a doppelganger of their favorite cable news person. Faithfulness doesn't look like that. Render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.

[00:48:26] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting one more time to tell you about another amazing partner, [Chime](#). So here's a question for you. Is that tiny piece of plastic in your wallet doing enough for you? Because with the Secured Chime Credit Builder Visa credit card, you can start building credit with everyday purchases and on time payments.

See, with Credit Builder members can increase their credit history with no annual fees or interest. And having a good credit score can mean getting better car loan rates or renting apartments easier. Anytime you see those commercials for ways to check your credit score, you can rest easy and be like, "I am good."

Continue your credit journey with Chime. Signing up takes only two minutes and it doesn't affect your credit score. So get started at chime.com/thatsoundsfun. That's chime.com/thatsoundsfun. The Chime Credit Builder Visa credit card is issued by Stride Bank N.A., pursuant to a license from Visa USA.

Chime checking account and \$200 qualifying direct deposit required to apply for the Secured Chime Credit Builder Visa credit card. Regular on-time payment history can have a positive impact on your credit score. Impact to score may vary and some user scores may not improve.

Sponsor: And one last amazing partner tell you about that I was literally on their website today, [Thrive Market](#). Y'all know I love Thrive Market. You've heard me talk about it before. It's the online membership-based market on a mission to make healthy living easy and affordable for everyone.

With Thrive Market, you can shop everything from healthy pantry essentials to sustainable meat and seafood to non-toxic cleaning and beading products all delivered right to your door. And if you find a price lower elsewhere Thrive Market will match it.

Our friends at Thrive Market have high standard just like we do, so they carefully vet each and every item they sell. That just means that you can trust that if it's available through Thrive it is high quality. One of my favorite things about Thrive is that they make it super easy to filter the market by values or lifestyle.

So when I need to replace the cleaning supplies at my condo or make sure my purchases aren't terrible for the planet, Thrive made that super simple. They've got 90 different lifestyles to choose from, so you can filter over 5,000 food, home, and beauty products according to what matters to you most and what helps you with the lifestyle that works best for you.

So whether you want to eat paleo or shop from zero waste brands or you're doing keto, Thrive Market has you covered. Give me that Thieves household cleaner. Y'all know it. Y'all know that Thieves smell. It smells amazing. Thrive brings it to my door so I don't have to deal with decision fatigue and the endless options on the shelves at the store, and I know my house is clean with no chemically toxic extras to worry about.

When you join Thrive Market, you're joining a community of 1 million-plus members and sponsoring a family in need. And with their fast and free carbon neutral shipping, you are also bettering our planet. Thank you very much. I know how generous and caring y'all are. So I know that matters to you like it does to me.

So join Thrive Market today and get \$80 in free groceries. You guys, \$80. That's [Thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun](https://thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun) to get \$80 in free groceries. My gracious! That's thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun. [Thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun](https://thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun).

And now to finish up our conversation with Scott Sauls.

[00:51:40] <music>

Annie: When I was reading *Beautiful People Don't Just Happen*, I just kept thinking, man, one of the questions I wanted to ask you that we're running out of time is I want to ask you who would you write it for? Because as I was reading I was thinking, you hand this to pastors and you hand this to moms and you hand this to 20-year-olds so that they become who they want to become starting early.

Pst. Scott: That's the hope. To all humans. You got the advance copy. I don't know if the dedication is in there or not.

Annie: It is. It tells me "separator line." Separator line.

Pst. Scott: Separator line. So essentially, you know, I said it's for anyone who experiences or anticipates experiencing any level of weariness from regret, hurt, or fear, which is all of us. But it's also for those—and the acknowledgments or the dedication is heavy on this—it's for people who are in helping positions.

You mentioned the informal ones, like friends who show up for the struggling friends or parents who show up for kids or spouses for spouses or friends for friends, but also for counselors and social workers and pastors and ministry workers.

Annie: Doctors, nurses.

Pst. Scott: Doctors, nurses, yeah. It's really designed hopefully to, you know, be maybe some pastoral words and insights for those contexts. There are so many of those contexts in all of our lives.

Annie: I can't wait for people to get *Beautiful People Don't Just Happen*. This is one of those that you... I have a couple of books that I have a tiny handful of. My mom taught me this. She had a gift closet when we were going up. And if I forgot I had some... need to take some to my teacher, we could go to gift closet. And I just have a couple of books that I keep five of and just go in case somebody needs it. This feels like one of those that we can go, "Man, when somebody needs this..." So I hope people go ahead and grab five today.

Pst. Scott: We'll put it right next to your book about fun because they're like the opposite. There's a tree and the human right.

Annie: That's right. That's right. That's exactly right. Scott, is there anything we didn't say to make sure we cover?

Pst. Scott: Just thank you, Annie. We're so, so thankful for you and the bright light that you bring into the world and into our world. You're an intergenerational voice in our family.

Annie: I love that.

Pst. Scott: Oh, yeah, we just love what you bring and-

Annie: Thanks. Thanks.

Pst. Scott: ...the hope that you put out there. So please keep doing it.

Annie: I will. I think one of the gifts of you is you're very tall. And so when you walk into a room, everybody knows and it brings such peace. So I'm thankful God made you tall because it is a little bit of a treat for us. So I'm very thankful.

The last question I always ask because the show was called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you, Scott?

Pst. Scott: So what sounds really fun is the NEEDTOBREATHE concert that's happening right over this summer.

Annie: Yeah. We're gonna go to that. Don't you love them?

Pst. Scott: Yes.

Annie: They're just amazing. Have you been a longtime fan of NEEDTOBREATHE?

Pst. Scott: Here's the fun thing. So I knew nothing about their music and then Patti and I because we just kept hearing people saying, "Oh, you gotta hear this band," we saw them in Ascend amphitheater, and I looked at them and I'm like, "I think this might be the best live show I've ever seen." And what they do comes from a place, right?

Annie: Yes. Yes.

Pst. Scott: So during the pandemic right when we've all got masks... This is the funny story. So Bear and Mary Reames are part of our community at Christ Pres. But when they first showed up, they showed up with a mutual friend and we're having a conversation and we've all got our masks on, right? And they're just very understated about what he does. And I'm like, "So what do you do with your days?" And he's just so humble and shy.

So she's like, "Well, yeah, we came here... He's in a band, does music." And I'm like, "Is it a band that I've ever heard?" He's like, "I don't know. Maybe." And I said, "So what band is it?" He's like, "This band called NEEDTOBREATHE." And I'm like, "Huuuh." It was just like I just met Bono or something and I didn't recognize him. Like for me, because their music has become so meaningful to us on a lot of levels and to our daughters, which makes it even more meaningful for us, so we're fired up about getting to go hear them do their thing.

Annie: He's been on the show a couple of times, and he dared me to... He said he would pay for me to get a tattoo of bear paws on my neck. And I was like, "Bear, I can't. I just can't, but I've really thought about it. I've thought about it a lot." He's like, "I would pay for that." He's like, "I can get this guy to help pay." I'm like, all these other friends we have, I'm like, "Bear can't do it." But I think about it a lot.

Pst. Scott: Bears paws.

Annie: Yeah, because of his name.

Pst. Scott: Oh, yeah. To acknowledge his-

Annie: Yes, yes. Just like we were talking about all these tattoos we could get. It's just always in my heart. I love NEEDTOBREATHE as well. I'm excited for their shows. When they're out touring, I'm always like, "Everyone go. Everyone go." When there's something behind why they make what they make, you can tell. All right, well see you at that show. For sure. I'll be there.

Scott, thanks for doing this. Thanks for writing another book. I'm thrilled for people to get it tomorrow.

Pst. Scott: Thanks, Annie.

[00:57:03] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, don't you love him? Oh, gosh, he brings such peace, doesn't he? I'm so thankful. Be sure you grab your copy of *Beautiful People Don't Just Happen*, follow Scott on social media, tell him thank you so much for being on the show. And if anybody has come to mind while you're listening to this episode, and you thought they'd love it, I'd love for you to share it with them. Thank you guys for all you share the show, how you rate and review the show. It matters so much. Thank you. Thank you.

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

And today what sounds fun to me, well, today I get to eat dinner with some friends and we're sitting outside. We are right on the cusp in Nashville of it being too hot to be outside. So, for a whole meal. So I'm glad tonight is not that. So we'll all be sitting outside to eat.

Y'all have a great week. I will see you back here on Thursday where we are talking barbecue with Pat Martin from Martin's Bar-B-Que. Y'all are going to love this conversation. Let's talk barbecue. We'll see you guys back here on Thursday.