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Annie: Hey 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've got a great show in store.

Remember that a big group of us are going through Chase the Fun together and it starts on Monday. Okay, are you signed up? Do you have your copy of the book? Let's do this.

Okay, you can get your copy at Walmart or Target or anywhere you love to buy books. Don't forget to tag me in your post at Walmart with your other favorite items from your cart. Give me your insider Walmart shopping tips. The link to sign up and join us is down in the show notes.

Before we dive into today's conversation, a quick word from one of our amazing partners, [Talk About](#) from Awana. Okay, so school gets started back up. I know so many of my mom and dad friends are celebrating having those routines back in action, technically me too. And you may have some extra time in the car with your kids when all those good deep existential conversations happen.

Never fear. Awana's got your conversation starters covered. Talk About, the new family devotional resources from Awana, helps you lead your kids through the gospel, prayer, worry, forgiveness, and more with the truth of God's Word.

In today's culture, peers and influencers are competing for your child's attention. Talk About helps you replace that influence with the gospel through daily faith conversations at home, in the car, or wherever you spend your time with your kids.

Talk About is delivered digitally to your inbox each week. It includes a simple yet really thorough conversation guide to share scripture with your family and weekly hands-on activities to apply God's word to everyday life with your kids all week long, and their bonus materials, including coloring pages, memory verses, parent prep videos, playlists, and more.

So help your kids to belong to, believe in, and become lifelong resilient disciples of Christ today with Talk About. Try one month free with the promo code TSF on talkaboutdiscipleship.com. Again, that promo code is TSF on talkaboutdiscipleship.com.

Intro: Today on the show I get to talk with my sweet friend Manda Carpenter. She's a writer, a speaker, and advocate for helping women grow in their relationship with

God, themselves, and others. She's such a true friend. And I'm really grateful for Manda and her husband Eric and their story.

They're foster parents, and they host A Longer Table Podcast. Manda has written this new book called *Soul Care to Save Your Life: How Radical Honesty Leads to Real Healing*. I think this book is gonna be so helpful to so many of us and I'm really glad you're gonna get to know her today.

Spoiler alert. We're not talking about taking bubble baths. We're talking about confession. This is like the real kind of soul care. Y'all are gonna love this one. So here's my conversation with Manda Carpenter.

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Anne: Manda, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

Manda: Thank you. I'm so excited to be here.

Anne: I mean, this is just awesome. Because we've been friends for five years or something, five or six years, and back then... were you gonna write a book back then?

Manda: I was gonna write a book. Definitely it wasn't this book.

Anne: Really?

Manda: Oh, yeah.

Anne: What were you gonna write before this?

Manda: Well, I think it was I was trying to write this book but I didn't want to go there. I didn't want to give it all. No wonder there was rejections, and it was like, "Mm, there's something missing."

Anne: You know what? I do remember this because we looked over the... I looked over the proposal with you. Yes. Okay, so that's fascinating. Because for a lot of our friends listening who are thinking of writing a book, how did you decide..? Because *Soul Care to Save Your Life* is incredibly personal. How did you decide the lines of what to share and what not share? How did you know?

Manda: That's a great question. There's an element to where I think that it was just obedience to God. And I don't just say that flippantly. Like I felt the Holy Spirit

saying like to go there. I also had a phenomenal editor who I believe you also know, Stephanie Smith, who just said, "Manda, you have one job and that is to tell the truth."

Anne: Wow.

Manda: "I will help you shape it, I will help you make it appropriate. We'll work together to make sure that the truth that you're sharing and the very vulnerable stories that you're sharing, that they serve a real purpose. It's not just for clickbait or like attention." You know?

Anne: Yeah.

Manda: We wanted to make sure the motives behind what I was sharing were pure and would serve people and serve that purpose, but also that it can be done really wisely. Because I'm also the first person to say that wisdom withholds. You don't want to just blast all your stuff to everybody. That wouldn't be wise.

Anne: I also was gonna ask you, are there places where you wrote things that you got it out in a first draft but you removed it before publishing?

Manda: Absolutely.

Anne: Me too. Every time, whether it's real names or locations or stories. Every time I write a first draft, I vomit the whole thing out and then we go back with wisdom and pull out what is private.

Manda: It was really helpful for Stephanie to say to me during the editing process, "Just feel free to make a mess on the pages. As long as you're telling the truth, I'll work with you and we'll reshape this."

Anne: Wow.

Manda: And that was so empowering and so helpful. And what I ended up finding was that a lot of what I removed were stories that didn't paint others in a great light. And what I kept was mostly everything that was sort of "telling on myself," quote-unquote, because I could handle the fact that, you know, this was just the truth of my story.

But honestly, by exposing the mess it's gonna make it that much more powerful that people see, like, "Wow, look what God did in her. Look what God can do." And by withholding some of that originally, it kind of was falling flat. It was like, "Wow,

you're proclaiming God's grace and you're championing this, but there's something missing." So I had to go there.

Anne: Okay. A story I'd love for you to tell everyone is the last couple of years you've had a really challenging publishing story. Like the pandemic deeply affected your publishing life.

Manda: Yeah.

Anne: So will you kind of tell that? I think the other side of it is so encouraging. The middle of it, we were devastated.

Manda: Yes.

Anne: And it was heartbreaking to walk with you. But will you just tell that story?

Manda: Yeah, absolutely. This book that everyone can have in their hands that's on the store shelves now, it was supposed to come out a year and a half ago with a different publishing company. Actually, they had just given me the green light. This was in 2020. August of 2020 they said, "You have the greenlight, go ahead and put it out there so we can start obtaining pre-orders."

Because as someone who is a first-time author in the traditional book space, you know, we kind of needed to get on it early. It was coming out in February, and it was like, "Let's start putting this out there because it's going to take a while to get these pre-orders that we need."

So I put it out there, I was all excited. Actually, it did so well, we hit number one on Amazon in our category that day. I got a really celebratory email from the marketing team. I'm feeling good. I just like, "This is so fun. Things are going great."

And 48 hours later, I get a call from my agent, and she says, "Manda, I need you to sit down if you're not sitting." I'm thinking, "Did someone die? What is going on?" And she said, "There's no easy way to put this. Your book's been canceled?" And I was like, "What?"

Anne: I'm telling you, when you called and told me, I had never heard that that happened.

Manda: Me either. I mean, immediately, it was like so much emotion. I was really confused. I want to know why, what was going on. So right away, one thing that was really

assuring is she said, "You're gonna get to talk to some of the people on the team, but they actually just found out too."

Anne: You're like, "From who?"

Manda: Right. Like, "Who's making these decisions?" So what I found out as the journey kind of continues is I got to talk to my editor, I got to talk to some other people on the team, and they really did find out at the very last second, which maybe isn't the best professional way to handle things.

But what ended up happening was that this particular publishing company made a decision from the top down, people who'd never read my book, never seen my social media, didn't know really anything about me, or if this book was any good, or how many preorders I had already obtained, they basically just said, "We're going to cut certain rookie authors from our roster as a financial reaction to COVID."

So basically what money has been given to them within their book advance and whatnot, they can keep that but we're gonna kind of cut our losses here and not take a risk because, you know, there's no proof that it's gonna sell. And obviously, the pandemic affected all of us in different ways, and this was obviously one curveball I did not see coming.

Anne: I mean, I've, again, never even heard of that. So many of our friends listening, and this has happened to me, too... I think I've told you this. I got, we did talk about this, 47 rejections on my first book. And every one of them, you think, "I'm never gonna get to do this." So what did you do the next day? Did you say, "Well, forget it?" Or did you say... Were you immediately like, "Let's go," or were you like, "I need a week."

Manda: It's true by personality to be like, "Let's go," and to fight back.

Anne: Yes it is.

Manda: So I took a moment, caught my breath. I was newly pregnant with my son Shia at the time. I had so much else going on in my life. We also had three boys that we were fostering at that time, and so my life was really full.

So luckily I didn't have a lot of space in my life to just mope around and have a pity party. What I did decide though right off the bat with my agent was I want to try to see if another publishing company will pick this thing up because I believe in it. If they won't, I have no shame in self-publishing. I've done it before and I really

enjoyed it. And I would do it again if I think it's more important that this book gets into people's hands and that they can read it and it could have the impact on their life than to collect dust on a shelf in my home or to just sit on my laptop, you know, and never be published.

So I made a promise to myself I was going to publish it regardless of the route. And honestly, not to get to the good part too quickly, but things worked out better than I could have ever imagined.

Anne: Yes, we both sing the praises of Baker Books and being with that publisher and working with those teams. It is a great publishing house.

Manda: Yeah, I feel very, very fortunate to have landed with them.

Anne: It's incredible. What do you know about God now that you didn't know when you signed that first book deal? Because when you signed that first book deal, there was celebrating then too. So what do you know about God now that you didn't know then?

Manda: Oh, I know that God is so much better at knowing what's best for me than I know for myself. That God being in control and letting God lead is actually going to be more beneficial for me than me taking the lead all the time.

I saw this even in a small way today. I was telling someone from Baker, that I just had lunch with that was in town, this short story where basically I just felt really frustrated about something and I wanted to say something to someone about this frustration. And I prayed about it, and I felt the Holy Spirit say, "No, you're not allowed to say anything."

So I, of course, didn't want to take that answer. So I went to a friend, a friend that I trust and not in a gossipy way, but in a true like discernment way, and I said, "Hey, I'm feeling like I need to say something to this person and this is really frustrating me," and she echoed what the Holy Spirit had told me. "No, you're not supposed to say anything."

Anne: Wow.

Manda: I was so frustrated, Annie. And then the redemptive moment was today when I heard from that person directly.

Anne: Uh-uh.

Manda: I don't know if someone else said something, I don't know what happened, but they must have had some sort of conviction. Basically, the moral story is, once again in big and small ways in my life, God continues to show me that I don't need to take charge all the time, and that I actually can rest in trusting him, that He's got me. That He actually wants what's best for me more than I even know. And that actually what His best is is better than what I think my best or His best for me would be.

Anne: Yes. So we met through a mutual friend in South Bend.

Manda: Yes.

Anne: And y'all lived in Chicago when we met, and now you're in LA. Will you talk about that move? Like why did y'all go from Chicago where you worked at Soul City Church. All my friends listening know Jarrett and Jeanne Stevens.

Manda: Love them.

Anne: We've had them both on the show. Love them. So you worked with them at Soul City, and then y'all packed up your whole lives and moved away from family to LA.

Manda: Yeah, with our four-and-a-half, almost five-month-old. I don't recommend that. The timing I don't recommend. Moving to LA has been amazing. I love the West Coast. I really do.

Anne: What do you love about it?

Manda: Well, one, the weather.

Anne: Well, certainly. From Chicago to that, yeah.

Manda: And I landed in Nashville even, and I was like, "Oh, it's hu... There's moisture in the air. I think it is humus. I was like, "I did not bring hairspray."

Anne: But that move was mainly my husband has sacrificed and bent over backwards to support me in chasing my dreams. We just have this kind of cold leadership dynamic in our relationship where we truly treat each other like equals. So we take turns supporting one another because obviously you support each other at the same time. But there's certain seasons and certain times in your life that call for one person to make a bigger sacrifice.

Anne: Right. Someone writes a bigger check.

Manda: Yeah, exactly. So he's done that for me. And in this season of our life he really wanted to leave his stable, steady paycheck to pursue his dream of writing as a songwriter and a producer in the pop music industry, which meant we needed to be in LA. So part of our journey was me saying, "Absolutely, you are my home. I will go where you go. Let's do this together." So we're there.

Anne: What part of LA are y'all living in? I mean, don't give me your address, but where have you found home?

Manda: We are in Echo Park. Not far from downtown LA.

Anne: Is he writing it? Is it going?

Manda: Oh yeah, it's going. There are artists... you should hear some of these people singing. I know Nashville is like the hub for country and Christian music. LA is like your pop artists. Like your soon-to-be Katy Perry's or Justin Bieber's or whatever.

I feel like we're meeting those people. They are in our home. We have a studio in home and E is working with... He's with a management company. So they send him artists and he gets to work with them. It's so cool.

Anne: That makes me so happy for him.

Manda: It's really fun.

Anne: His music is great. We'll link to it because he just released a new song last week, maybe?

Manda: Yeah. He's always putting out something new.

Anne: He's so good at making music. And every year he does a recap, like a playlist on Spotify of the best songs of the year, and he's always right. I listened through it every year and I'm like, "Oh my gosh, these are the best songs."

Manda: I know. This is gonna sound really nerdy, but I didn't use Spotify until he forced me. He bought me the premium and was like, "You need to be on Spotify." Because I was a radio listener, and he's like, "Who does that?" So he was really embarrassing and made me get Spotify.

And now the only playlist on my Spotify is just his best of. He does the best of each year, so I have the best of 2021 on there.

Anne: It's so good.

Manda: It's all I listen to.

Anne: He's wonderful. I think so highly of your husband. How does he feel when you were writing all this? Because so much of the book is like really personal about y'all-

Manda: Yeah, for sure.

Anne: ...and about his life as well. What was that process like? So many people when they're wanting to write a blog or tell a story, preach a sermon, write a book, it's never just about you. It's always about you and the people you're living with.

Manda: And it's what makes it so hard.

Anne: Right. So how did it go when y'all were processing through, "Yes, do tell this. No, don't tell this." There had to be a reckoning even between y'all over and over.

Manda: He is great. Anyone that knows him knows he's the most just gracious, fun human. Honestly, he is the epitome of fun. He brings the fun to our relationship. I can't say enough wonderful things about him. And I think even what you were just saying, people that read the book, if they've known him, they're gonna read the book and fall in love with him even more because of what I share.

But he honestly, Annie, endorsed every word that I wrote. There wasn't anything that he said, "I don't like that. Take it out."

Anne: Wow.

Manda: He said, "I trust you and I love you. I'll read it. If I really feel strongly, I'll let you know." And that didn't happen. He was on board. He saw the motive and the reasoning and the fruit that could come from me baring my soul and being really radically honest about everything. So I'm really grateful for him in doing that.

Anne: So let's talk a little bit about that. As far as... I know even just online recently, you've started saying, "Okay, here's a piece of what you're going to read. Here's a piece of what you're going to read." And part of that is infidelity in your marriage.

And I don't know that we've had a woman on who has the story you have that has talked about it. So if you don't mind... There's so many of our friends listening who know that story really well. Will you tell a little bit of that story, and we'll talk about it for a minute?

Manda: Yeah. I love that you're bringing this up because since we've come out about this part of our story, the amount of me toos or in some way relating to it has been... it's been really sad because it's not a story that you're proud of or that you want for people. But I'm happy that we are able to be someone that can provide others with hope because we've walked through it and come out on the other side.

I mean, early in our marriage, very early in that first year, I made a choice, a really terrible mistake and I stepped outside of my marriage and I was unfaithful to Eric. And if I get really specific, what was going on was, unbeknownst to me, I was having an emotional affair. I didn't know that's what it was at the time. So I wasn't consciously doing something that I thought was wrong.

Again, looking back, it's so clear and easy to see. And that's what I described in the book is, "Oh, this was actually there all along. It didn't dawn on me, the lights didn't turn on, and I didn't really recognize what had happened until it was too late." And that's when things had become physical. And so suddenly it was like I landed at this place that I described as a rock bottom that is, "How in the world did I get here?"

And then even worse, when you get to that spot, a lot of times you feel so bad, and you feel so ashamed that you keep it a secret. And the unfortunate reality is that the longer you live with something like that, a sin that you keep in secret, the more shame layers on because secrecy is breeding grounds for shame. It's exactly what the enemy wants.

I mean, we're talking about 11 months that I was fully keeping this hidden. It wasn't something that was actively ongoing. I cut that off immediately when that happened. Again, the only way I can describe it is that the lights came on and I was conscious of what had been happening and I felt immediately remorseful.

It wasn't like I wanted to be with someone else or that I didn't love my husband, which I know sounds weird and maybe doesn't make sense to people. But if they read the book, I think it helps make sense as I just kind of put the dots altogether. But what I had to do was I had to come forward.

I actually came forward to my mentor who I believe you got to meet her Rocio. She worked at Soul City Church at the same time, and she was like my instant friend when I started on staff there. And I now can see so clearly why God brought me to

a church. Because even though I wasn't actively still engaging in this thing, I think the Lord knew that I needed the right people and the right community around me to help me navigate healing, which included confession.

So I opened up to Rocio first and foremost because I thought to myself... Oh, well, let me just say it was eating me alive. Like truly eating me alive. Like every day would go by and it felt really dark. I was really depressed.

Anne: Were you afraid he's going to tell? Were you like around every corner there was a risk or was it just inside of you?

Manda: No, there was actually no risk. I think that's what's really interesting is I could have very easily, and I don't say this lightly, I could have very easily chosen to take this to the grave.

Anne: Never told.

Manda: And never told. Now, I also couldn't because of who I am. The way that I'm wired it was eating me alive to the point where I was having suicidal ideations and like, "I don't belong in this world, and the world's better off without me." Like really dark stuff that I now in a much healthier, healed place, look back on and I'm like, "Wait, you actually thought this?"

Like it's so sad to me, which is all the more reason of why I'm so passionate about sharing this now because I know I'm not the only one. I know there are other people that are in that dark spot right now that thinks there's no way out, and that the life that they want to live is too far out of reach, or they're too far gone. And so they think like I did that maybe it's truth or death.

Anne: Wow.

Manda: That's the place that I got to.

Anne: Truth or death.

Manda: So I told Rocio. And what I think is really beautiful is that she didn't promise me a happy ending, she didn't promise me there wouldn't be consequences. She just said that my life would still be worth living. But on the other side of all this, and she was like, "I'm going to be your friend through this," which what a gracious thing for one of the most godly women that I knew at the time to not shame me or to make me feel worse than I already felt in that moment. Not only for having done

what I did, but then for keeping it a secret for as long as I did. Like it was just, yeah, messy. Sin is icky and it affects all of us.

Anne: Is there more shame... More shame... it's hard to know. As you're talking about this, I'm thinking, man, so often we hear men talk about having affairs. Is there more shame when you're in the middle of it because you're a woman having an affair? Because, listen, every guy who has an affair with a woman, she's having an affair too.

Manda: Totally.

Anne: But we don't hear stories of women who step out of their marriage near as much publicly as we get about men.

Manda: Absolutely. And I love that you're naming this because in Christian culture, especially, I already thought that infidelity was up there with some of these other sins that we deem unforgivable or the worst of them. So I'd already like had that shame on me. But you're naming what layered it on for me was that I had yet to hear of another woman come out. So I was like, "Oh, my gosh, I'm like all these horrible men. I don't know any woman who's done this."

Anne: Wow. Wow.

Manda: In fact, in my own childhood and in my own upbringing, there are men who had affairs on my mom. So I would watch that destroy our family. My parents have both been married numerous times. I've had lots of step and half-siblings. I'd watched infidelity ruin marriages, but it was never my mom, it was always the person that she was married to.

So here I was having done the very thing that I, one, never thought I would do. Nobody wakes up one day and says, "I think today I'm gonna have an affair," or anything like that. That's just not what we do.

Anne: Right. No. Nobody says the big yes first.

Manda: No.

Anne: You say a lot of little yeses first.

Manda: Exactly. Exactly. Sin creeps in and little by little over time until one day-

Anne: Me too. Me too.

Manda: ...you're like, "What just happened?" So yeah, I would definitely say that the fact that I am a woman and the fact that I am a Christian woman, and the fact that even by the time I was working at the church, again, it was not an active part of my life, but the secret still was that's awkward. That's not something to be proud of.

And it definitely layered the shame because I felt like even more if I come out with this, not only like, "What's gonna happen to my marriage?" but like, Am I going to lose all the community? All these people that I love, are they going to love me anymore? Are they going to reduce me to this one mistake?

Anne: Right. Right.

Manda: Are they gonna see me as this person and not all of me? Because there's so much more to me.

Anne: I love the idea that today we're getting to like tell shame where to go. Because there are so many of our friends listening who have participated in person, online, through text, with their bodies or with their hearts, and they think "I can't tell anybody because I'm a woman. And I'm a Christian woman in this and I can't tell." And yes, you can. Yes, you can.

How did things change with E? I mean, he knew nothing, and then suddenly he had to know something and yet y'all survived it.

Manda: That journey was obviously long. And I don't go too in-depth in the book just because that's not the entirety of what the book's about. And maybe someday there will be another book. Maybe when we've hit, you know, 20 years married, we'll get to do something about that. It'll be-

Anne: Y'all do do a relationship thing: Orange.

Manda: Yeah, peel the orange.

Anne: Peel the orange.

Manda: Peel the orange, of course. So we work with couples to really like peel back the layers because that's what so much of this work requires is getting beneath the surface. So that is true of our story.

After I told him, Annie, I don't know if you recall this when you read the book, but the very first words out of his mouth were so beautiful, they were so in line with

what the Holy Spirit had been kind of telling me would be true. Again, the Holy Spirit didn't say, "Your husband's gonna stay with you." It wasn't like that clear cut. It was more just like, "There will be grace. There will be grace. Trust that there'll be grace. Things are gonna work out. It's gonna be okay."

So the first words out of his mouth were, "But I still love you." It was like a devastated way of saying it. He was in shock, like you said, because when I told him I said, "You know, this isn't recent but this happened this time in our life, and I've kept it a secret. So had to deal-

Anne: Were you just terrified that day?

Manda: Oh, my gosh.

Anne: Did you in the morning or at night?

Manda: I did it in the afternoon.

Anne: Afternoon.

Manda: Late afternoon. I will never forget that day.

Anne: Oh, sure.

Manda: ...because I went straight... Annie, there's only about a 15 minute window between me telling Rocio-

Anne: And telling Eric?

Manda: ...and sprinting home in my car to the apartment in Chicago to say, "Eric, I need to tell you something."

Anne: Oh my gosh. So you went from nobody knowing to quote, "everybody knowing." Like a mentor and your husband knowing in a 30-minute window?

Manda: Yes.

Anne: Dude.

Manda: Because Rocio, the way she responded and held space for me, again, she didn't make any promises that there wouldn't be consequences, but the way she gave me

hope and the freedom and lightness that I felt when I got it off my chest, oh, it just gave me all the courage.

If you could picture in a movie scene, it's like I'm driving home, my armpits are sweaty, I got like tears running down my face. But I just knew I just was gonna feel so much better. And not that that was my only motive, but that was something driving me in that moment. So yeah, I walked in and I mean, at the sight of me, he definitely freaked out. He was like, "Is everything okay?"

Anne: Right.

Manda: I was like, "No, but I hope it will be." And I just told him. And it was hard. I don't want to over-romanticize it. Even though he responded with "but I still love you," boy, that was not all he said and that was not the entirety of the journey. Like all things-

Anne: It wasn't like, "Let's go to Chili's" like it was fine.

Manda: He's like, "No, no, let's go bowling." No.

Anne: Yeah. Yeah.

Manda: No. It was a lot of evenings that were pretty painful, that we... a lot of counseling session.

Anne: Were y'all fostering at the time?

Manda: We were not fostering yet. This all happened before we were fostering.

Anne: Okay.

Manda: Fostering is always something we were going to do and something we talked about, but we hadn't fostered yet. So it was really hard. But I think what really helped was in counseling, one of the things that our counselor said to us was, you know, she's like, "Man, I've already chatted with you and now Eric is in front of me and I just want to know, do you want to make this work? Do you want to forgive her and recover from this?"

Because she basically looked at me kind of in a no offense way and she was like, "Manda, you don't get a stay here. This is 'does he want?'" And right away, he was like, "Without a doubt, absolutely. I just want to know that she can heal from this, that this won't be our life." Because he's like, "I don't know how much of that I

could handle," which, obviously, that is true for all of us, I think. We're not going to sign up to keep getting hurt over and over again.

Anne: Right.

Manda: So what was so helpful is that both as a couple and then for myself individually, counseling brought about so much healing because we had to lay it all out there. Like full disclosure, radical honesty. And then once you've done that, there's like a new layer of level of intimacy with your partner or with your friend or whoever that you get to experience that with.

And with us, we now have just this really... I think probably much more open than a lot of couples type of relationship where even if someone is kind of flirty with me, and I really enjoy the feeling of it, and I walk away from an interaction just feeling like I kind of flirted back or anything at all, I literally go until Eric. And I'm like, "Hey, I just need to tell you this." Because when I name it out loud, it loses its power. That for me is now just a regular part of our life together.

And he wouldn't mind if I say this so I'll just say it. He will come to me and say like, "Hey, I clicked on an image on Instagram, which led me down a rabbit hole. And then before, you know it I'm looking at some things I shouldn't have looked at. And I just wanted to come and bring that forward to you."

Anne: Yes.

Manda: Maybe there are a lot of couples doing that. But from the couples we've met and we've talked to, it's not normal, but I think it needs to be normal.

Anne: Yes!

Manda: So it sucks that we had to go through what we went through to get there, but I'm so glad for where we are now.

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Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about one of our amazing partners, [Indeed](#). When we want to improve in an area in our lives, we've got to look for improvements that build on themselves, right? Like hiring for your business.

You get better at hiring, you hire great people faster, your business grows and you get to keep on hiring. So how do you get better at hiring? How did we get better at hiring? You need Indeed, so did we

Indeed is the hiring platform where you can attract, interview, and hire all in one place. Instead of spending hours on multiple job sites searching for candidates with the right skills, Indeed's a powerful hiring partner that can help you do it all.

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Sponsor: And I've got one more amazing partner to tell you about. It's [Ritual](#). I do my best not to shoot people around here, you know that, but I will say we probably shouldn't ignore the gaps in our diet. Over 97% of women aged 19 to 50 are not getting enough vitamin D from their diet, and 95%, that's like literally almost all of us, guys, are not getting the recommended daily intake of key Omega 3s.

Ritual's Essential for Women 18+ multivitamin was formulated by exhaustive research to help fill nutrient gaps in the diets of women over 18. It is formulated with nutrients to help support brain health, bone health, blood health, and provide antioxidant support.

But Ritual does not stop there. They invested in a gold standard University lead, that's fancy, a clinical trial to prove the impact of Essential for Women 18+ multivitamin. The results: Essential for Women 18+ was shown to increase vitamin D levels by 43%, you guys, and Omega 3 DHA levels by 41% in 12 weeks.

The clinical study was published in leading scientific journal, Frontiers in Nutrition, which is a big deal and a serious commitment to a first-of-its-kind standard in the industry. Okay, Ritual, we see you.

Ritual is committed to third-party testing from USP and the Non-GMO Project, traceable and vegan-friendly ingredients and always clear communication, no shady stuff, which we love.

And Ritual just released Synbiotic+, a gut health supplement with clinically studied prebiotics, probiotics, and a post-biotic on one minty capsule. Just one Delayed-Released Synbiotic+ capsule per day support your gut with all the quality and traceability you'd expect from Ritual. I love knowing that with one little vitamin every day I'm supporting my overall health. And my Ritual vitamins come with a little minty tab so there's no achy taste when I take them. Y'all know I love that.

Right now Ritual is offering my friends 10% off your first three months. Just visit ritual.com/thatsoundsfun and turn healthy habits into a ritual. You get it. That's 10% off at ritual.com/thatsoundsfun.

And remember that the show notes are your one-stop for links to our sponsors, transcripts of the shows, and your chance to sign up for the AFD Week in Review. It's all there for you.

And now back to our conversation with Manda.

[00:32:17] <music>

Anne: What I see true in my life, I'm not married yet, but in my life if I will confess the little yeses I make more often don't get to the big yeses.

Manda: Absolutely. It's a preventative thing.

Anne: Because we're all going to sin and we're all going to be tempted and go like, "Man, I didn't like how that went." I mean, our friends listening have heard me say this, but every time I buy Oreos, I tell my mentor that just because someone just needs to know that this tool that I use that is not always healthy for me, like someone just

needs to know. It doesn't need to be a secret, because what if that secret leads to, you know... There's a way worse Oreo story that doesn't have anything to do with Oreos that can happen if I'm not confessing early.

Manda: On the other side of it, there's people... Like similar to Oreo thing, if someone's not eating, and they know that they have unfortunate struggle with disordered eating. And so skipping one meal leads to another leads to another leads to another.

I love that you're pointing out this. This isn't just about infidelity. This is certainly not just for married folks. All of this caring for our soul and practicing confession, and like you were saying, the little yeses along the way before it gets to big yes, it applies to all of us.

Anne: That's what I was going to ask you is why in a book about soul care did you talk about having an affair and talk about credit card issues, and talk about fostering? I think I'm gonna pick up a soul care book, and you're gonna teach me how to meditate and how to have a Sabbath, and that's not what you did.

Manda: Nope.

Anne: So why? Why is all that part of soul care?

Manda: Well, I didn't name it soul care initially. The journey was I'm going to write the book and I try to communicate the things that I think are really important for people to hear. We'll title it later. And when it came down to it, as you know, that's a collaborative thing with the publisher. They-

Anne: Dear everybody, if you want to write a book and you're married to your title, get unmarried.

Manda: Get a divorce.

Anne: Because the publisher gets a say in the title of your book.

Manda: So what it boiled down to was there's so much in this book. You already named stories from our life and just a lot of personal stories that sometimes has a memoir feel to illustrate a point, to help lead you to why a practice of caring for your soul, a particular practice is important.

Anne: Each chapter is a different practice.

Manda: Yeah, each chapter is a different practice. So what it boiled down to was this book is about caring for your soul in big and in little ways, in ways that you might not have ever thought that's soul care. But it's about caring for your soul.

And then the "to save your life" part is because I truly believe even if someone never gets to a point where they are like me and they've struggled with depression to the point where they don't know if they want to be here anymore, but even if that isn't true of you, soul care is what saves your life. It's what saves you from having a massive fall in the public eye when your character can't sustain your calling.

Anne: That's right.

Manda: It's what saves you, and it saves other people. The idea is that when we live a transparent life in the light, not only are we freeing ourselves, but we're freeing other people. And we need more of that. So that's sort of the why.

But you're right, it's not a book about like Kumbaya and meditation. Although that might be great practices to care for your soul too. This is about something different. And it was really hard to choose a title because so much of what this book is about is the inner workings of your soul. Like that's hard to name. This isn't just like, "Go take a bubble bath, you'll be fine."

Anne: Right. When we see a book about soul care, we think, make time for yourself. Our friend Sharon Hodde Miller, her endorsement of your book is my favorite. I wrote one, and hers is my favorite, where she said, "Somehow Manda has written a book that is essentially about confession, the ancient Christian practice of being fully known by God and others."

I mean, what I learned from this book is the best way to care for my soul is to confess. I mean, I don't think I knew that until you taught me that.

Manda: Thanks. Thanks for saying that. I mean, the subtitle *Radical Honesty Leads to Real Healing*, I got there because that is the culmination of all. All these soul care practices are important ongoing ways that we can not only care for our soul, but I actually think that they're a part of our spiritual growth.

I think this book is for someone too like if you just want to grow as a person and you want to grow in your relationship with God, this book will take you someplace deeper than you've gotten before. So I'm glad you said that because radical honesty leads to real healing.

It's honestly a more modern-day take on the verse James chapter 5, I think it's verse 15 or 16, where it says, "Confess your sins to each other and you will be healed."

Anne: Yes, yes. No one wants to do that.

Manda: No one wants to do that.

Anne: Right.

Manda: But it's like, Man, I could try to deny that all day long, but it's just been the truth of my story. In all the areas that I've experienced healing and breakthrough and freedom, and I'm no longer repeating the same mistake or the same sin over and over and over again, it's because I've gotten radically honest: with gossip, with infidelity, and just attention seeking behavior for men, with so many things in my life. So it's like this isn't just for the big stuff, it's for the little stuff, too.

Anne: You have a really delicious drink from Starbucks that you haven't even enjoyed.

Manda: I know. Sorry.

Anne: No, don't be sorry. I feel bad for you. I'm just watching it melt, and I'm like, "No, Manda, please have your drink."

Manda: I'm good. Anyone who knows me knows I've always got a nice mocha. Usually, my email signatures are like, love nice lattes. Love nice mochas." It's just who I am on email.

Anne: I love it about you. Now that the book is out, do you feel embarrassment over any of it? Because one of your soul care tips, one of your soul care practices is literally embrace embarrassment for the sake of freedom. But now you're gonna get on stages and now you're gonna be doing interviews like this that are not your good friend, that are just strangers-

Manda: Totally.

Anne: ...and you're going to have to talk about the same things. How do you get over that embarrassment?

Manda: Honestly, it's like a muscle. I think the more you do it, the easier it becomes because you get stronger. Like the thing doesn't get less heavy, but you become stronger.

Anne: That's good.

Manda: So there's an ease to it. Honestly, I'm not embarrassed. I'm not embarrassed because now that we've come out about it, well, one, I really just don't feel shame. I know that I'm not the sum of one mistake that I made, and that there isn't a single person we wouldn't love if we knew their story. But we've got to get to know people's stories.

And so if I can go first, and people... Like if I can offer that for someone else, I want to do it. So, no, there's not "pride," quote-unquote, for what I did, but there's honestly just I'm proud that God... that He's a Redeemer, that there's redemption.

And the redemption is not in my marriage working through this and being restored. That's really cool. That's not the story though that I want to highlight. The Redemption is I am healed. I know that when I interact with males there is no even subtle part of me that needs or is looking for their praise, their attention, for them to fill a void that once existed because that void is filled through a relationship with God. And that is the only way for me to explain it.

Anne: Yeah, that's beautiful. I love that. I think there have been seasons in my life where I had secrets. I don't currently. I hope I don't ever again, but you know, I've got a long way to go.

Manda: Me too.

Anne: But the beautiful thing about it is you go like, Yeah, I'm not going to get exposed because somebody knows. Everybody doesn't know everything but somebody knows everything.

Manda: Totally.

Anne: I feel like you care for your soul by not having secrets because you actually set yourself free. Jesus sets us free-

Manda: Absolutely.

Anne: ...telling the truth, you are walking out of the jail of-

Manda: Absolutely.

Anne: ...going like, "Oh, I don't have to worry about what's going on inside me because there's no secrets. There's not secrets."

Manda: There's no disconnect between your inner life and your outer life. There's no place where that... Because I even write this in the book too, but integrity is a prerequisite for security.

Anne: Yes. That's good.

Manda: You can't be so sure when you're not living with integrity. So it's no wonder that Manda 2016 was—actually around the time we met—was struggling unbeknownst to people around me internally.

I mean, I couldn't even accept a compliment. If somebody said, "Manda, you're such a great friend," and let's be honest, maybe I was being a really great friend or I was a good friend, I couldn't even accept that because deep down there was this little voice that reminded me, "Nope, you're fraud. You screwed up. And if anyone knows..." So there was this voice that was like, "If only you knew."

Anne: Wow.

Manda: It's like a block that wouldn't even allow me to receive praise and compliments and affirmation and love because of this one thing that I did.

Anne: Wow.

Manda: It's so clear to see now that when I start to feel insecure, I have to first start thinking or looking into, is there any part of my life where there's not integrity?

Anne: Wow.

Manda: Or in a particular incident, if I feel insecure in our friendship, well, am I showing up for that friend and living with integrity or is that why I'm feeling so insecure? It's just a question I find myself coming back to a lot.

Anne: And you're not always gonna have the same answer. I think that's the great thing is you go, "Am I not hearing God because I'm in sin? Am I not hearing God because I'm asking the wrong questions?" If you don't get curious about why things are going sideways, you're not always gonna get in trouble for it, but you got to ask the questions.

Manda: Yeah.

Anne: Man, that is amazing, Manda. So I'm thinking about our friends who need to confess something, right? Like their inside life feels tumultuous because there's a secret, whether it's from their childhood or something that happened to them, or it is something they've been a part of, or it is something that they've considered. I mean, I think even temptation is not our fault. The Bible says Jesus was tempted in every way.

Manda: Totally.

Anne: So temptation is not the problem. It's what do you do with that.

Manda: Absolutely.

Anne: And why not go ahead and confess it? So where do we go? What if we don't have a mentor? Where do we go if we're not Catholic? Catholics, congratulations, y'all know exactly where to go to confess?

Manda: I know.

Anne: What a benefit!

Manda: I know. I thought of that, too. I was like, "Man, what a beautiful thing that I can now take this from that particular part of the Christian faith and apply to your life!" This is so cool. What else could I be learning from other religions or other parts of practices? The first little word of encouragement I would give is, if it's something you've done, I just want to say it is always better to come forward than to get caught.

Anne: Oh, say that. Because everything in the dark comes to light.

Manda: Everything in the dark comes to light.

Anne: Everything in the dark. The Bible promises it. You get to choose. You want it to come to light, or you want it to come to light?

Manda: Exactly. So it's always better to come forward than to get caught. That's really important.

Anne: That's good.

Manda: But even if that's not your story and you want to get something off your chest, and you feel like you need to make a confession or share something, I would just say, if

you can find one person... For some people this is going to be in a counselor's office. And that's fine. That might be your safe person. But it could just be someone in your life that's not in a professional sense, but just someone you can go to that you can trust that is willing to hold space for you and as healthy. Do it. Take it to them.

And if you haven't taken it to God first, that is... I should have mentioned that. That's kind of the obvious first place. I think what you're going to find is if you have a relationship with the Lord, and you take this to God, you're going to be met with a lot of grace and love and hope and probably this little voice that won't stop nagging at you that says, "Just trust me already."

I mean, God probably was so annoyed with me it took me as long as it did to just listen. But I'm so glad I listened. But yeah, taking it to one person and just honestly baring your soul with one person and being radically honest. I hate to just say "Just trust me." I want to just say, just try it as an experiment. Just give it a shot.

Anne: That's right.

Manda: It'll change your life.

Anne: Yes, right. And I think if you don't know where to go, find a counselor and pay to go once. Pay to go once and say it out loud. I literally was on the phone with someone yesterday and I said, "When you see your counselor on Friday, say all of this out loud." Like you have to say this and the stuff you're not telling me. You got to say all of this out loud to your therapist.

Because I'm also like, Call a church and say, "Can I come talk to somebody?" Like just start getting whatever the thing is in you out of your body.

Manda: Absolutely. When we say out loud the things that tempt us or that we're struggling with, when we say them out loud, they lose their power. Again, I don't fully know how to explain it, but it's true. You will feel so light and free and those things will not hold power over you. And it's such a better way to live.

Anne: For some reason, our mutual friend Luke Norsworthy is coming to mind because I love... He's a pastor in Austin, has a great podcast and writes great books. Luke is one of the people that I think like if someone in Austin, Texas needed to confess, Luke's the kind of Pastor you'd go like, "Yes, I can sit down with that guy and tell him the thing, and he will help me know what to do next." And if there's one Luke in Austin, there's probably one Luke in your town too or 10.

Manda: Yeah. Or Rocio, my mentor. There's someone. Yeah, yeah.

Anne: It is just worth it to not hold it.

Manda: And if there's people listening, and maybe nothing's coming up for them, but I hope they feel this little call on their heart, this little tug, this whole nudge that says, "Who can I be this person for?"

Anne: Wow.

Manda: Because I think at all times in life we're both the student and the teacher, we're the mentor and the mentee. It's a joy that now... I mean, I still make confessions regularly both in counseling and to my mentors but it's also really cool that I get to be the same person. Like somebody just text me and she said, "I just read your first chapter and I want you to know that what Rocio was to you, you were Rocio to me."

Anne: Wow.

Manda: I mean, it's so cool that God will use us. So I just hope that someone listening that's thinking, "Me?" Yes, you.

Anne: Yeah, that's right.

[00:45:25] <music>

Sponsor: Hi friends! Just interrupting one more time to tell you about another amazing partner, [Rothy's](#). One of the sections and Chase the Fun is called the power of falling in love. You know if you read That Sounds Fun, I fall fast and I fall hard. And I'm not talking just about relationships, though. I'm also talking about soccer teams and jean jackets and shoes which brings us to the matter at hand.

I fell fast and I fell hard for my Rothy's and you will too. Rothy's shoes give you right out-of-the-box comfort, comes in amazing styles and colors and you can wash them. You guys! Transitioning from summer to fall is easy with Rothy's shoes. They have so many colors you can wear from season to season without going out of style.

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They also make insanely comfortable sneakers and loafers and ankle boots and more. Their wide variety of styles are great for summer and fall and the transition in between. So you never have to worry about getting brand new shoes each season.

The best part is everything Rothy's makes is better for the planet. They've repurposed millions of single-use plastic bottles. Y'all know how I feel about plastic bottles. No, thank you. They turn them into their signature thread that goes into every single one of their products.

I get compliments on my Rothy's all the time. They're so comfortable and machine washable. Basically, come right out of the washer looking like they're brand new. I especially love my Rothy's for the in-between seasons like as we transition from summer to fall. They just work great for any season.

So step up your shoe and accessory game this summer and get ready to be asked, "Are those Rothy's?" I bet I ask that. Literally every time I see someone with Rothy's I ask them. Plus you can get \$20 off your first purchase at Rothys.com/soundsfun. That's Rothys.com/soundsfun.

Sponsor: And I got one last incredible partner to share with you, [Thrive Market](https://ThriveMarket.com). Thrive Market is an online membership-based marketplace on a mission to make healthy living easy and affordable for everyone.

With Thrive Market you can shop everything from healthy pantry essentials and sustainable meat and seafood to non-toxic cleaning and beauty products, all delivered right to your door. And I love when companies do this, if you find a price lower elsewhere, Thrive Market we'll match it. Let's go, Thrive.

Thrive Market carefully vets each and every item so that you can trust if they sell it's probably the highest quality available. And the way you can filter things on their site, it is so easy, like by 90 plus different values and lifestyle. It's so easy to shop there over 5,000 food and home and beauty products according to the way you choose to eat and what matters most to you.

If you're looking for plant-based or keto or gluten-free or zero waste or BIPOC own brands, Thrive Market has you covered. I used to go to multiple stores to get the best prices on food and one cleaning product at another and beauty products at another. Okay, now Thrive Market is my one-stop shop. From my couch, you guys, for things like avocado oil. I use it in the salad dressing that I make from Danielle Walker's cookbooks. Y'all, it is so easy and so good.

And that Mrs. Meyers live-in Verbena dish soap that makes my kitchen smell delish while taking care of the dishes that may or may not have stacked up in the sink. It's not your business, you guys. It's fine.

But when you join Thrive Market you're joining a community of over a million members and sponsoring a family in need. And with their fast and free carbon neutral shipping, you are also being better to our planet. Done and done.

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

And now back to finish up our conversation with Manda.

[00:49:14] <music>

Anne: One of my favorite things about my mentor is every time she texts me and says, "When can we get together?" it is my cue to text the girl I mentor and say, "When can we get together?" It's just like her leadership in my life makes me a better leader.

Manda: Absolutely.

Anne: Right? So I go like, yeah, when I get to confess it's also I get to turn around and say, "Is there anything going on we need to talk about?"

Manda: Absolutely.

Anne: And I don't feel shame going into that conversation because I'm not hiding something today.

Manda: Yeah, absolutely.

Anne: So soul care girl, I mean, it's just amazing to think that the thing we most need... the world would say the thing we most need is time away and a vacation and dah dah dah. And you're saying the thing you most need is to be a healthy inner person. And that will come out on the outside.

Manda: Yeah, to get radically honest.

Anne: Is this the start of a thousand books you're gonna write or is this your book? Is this the one and you're done?

Manda: No, I think this was the book I didn't want to write but I had to write, and now I'm so glad that I did. No, I've got quite a few ideas in the works that we're talking about. So I definitely don't think it will be the last book.

Anne: Okay, good. I mean, I'm glad it's out. I want you to write as many as you want to write.

Manda: You're sweet.

Anne: This one feels like it has this special opportunity with it for people to be different. Are you and Eric doing the podcast these days?

Manda: I still have A Longer Table Podcast, and he's supposed to be my co-host, but he can't be co-host and editor. So right now he's just editor, and he'll pop up every now and then. But a fun thing we did was anyone who pre-ordered the book, we gave them 15 exclusive podcast episodes that were just me and E.

It was basically we'd read chapter one like by ourselves together, and then the episode was us giving more behind the scenes and sharing more. Because I know this book will leave people with questions.

Anne: Sure.

Manda: So we did that. And that was so fun to do together. E is like a yes man. He's game for any of my crazy ideas. So yeah, it was a really fun time.

Anne: So are y'all gonna start fostering in LA too?

Manda: Yeah.

Anne: Because y'all fostered how many kids in Chicago?

Manda: 16 kids in Chicago before Shia. Now we're licensed in LA. As much as we want to say yes right now to a placement because there is a need, it's huge, it's real, I feel it, we also have learned that to do it well, to care for a child and to partner with their family really well requires space and time and energy and not me traveling.

So right now we're in the thick of being newly with this whole book thing, we're going to just like sit tight. But I think probably in September, October, before the year is over we'll say yes to another kid and their family.

And we're so excited because we just keep getting bigger and bigger family. Like our family is huge. Some of my former kids were just at my in-law's house, and a couple weeks prior to that, one of our oldest spent the summers with my mom and stepdad.

Anne: Oh my gosh.

Manda: Like spent half the summer there. So I just feel so grateful that even our extended family, you know, brother-in-laws and sister-in-laws and my in-laws and my mom and my stepdad, they actually continue a relationship with our kids and their families. So it's also quite hard to sustain all these relationships. So we're just kind of easing back in and trying to be wise about it.

Anne: Will you talk a little bit about get too attached?

Manda: Yeah.

Anne: It's one of my favorite things that you talk about, especially when it comes to fostering.

Manda: Absolutely. Now, you know why I want to write another book.

Anne: Yes.

Manda: I have a lot to say, a lot of things. But I had to first just own up to my humanity and all that in this first book. "Get too attached" came from a place of frustration initially and then a place of joy.

So the frustration was that when we first started fostering, one of the most common things that people would say to me is, "Oh, I could never do that. I'd get too attached." And it really frustrated me because in that moment, I was like, "What do you think I am? A monster who doesn't have feelings?"

Anne: Right. Right. "I can do it because I'm cold hearted."

Manda: I can do it because I have no problem loving a child for two years and then saying goodbye. Are you kidding me?

Anne: Right.

Manda: I don't remember when but I think it was at the grocery store and someone said to me, and I didn't snap, I wasn't like rude, but I just like really firmly honestly said,

"Oh, then you'd be perfect for it because that's like what they need are people who are willing to get too attached. So that's why we do it."

I mean, the look on their face, their eyes go, "I know. Oh, snap." Because that's not what they were expecting. Maybe they just expected me to smile and be like, "Thank you so much." But I never want anyone to put me on a pedestal or make me feel like a saint for doing this work. Yeah, it's hard, it's holy work, it's really important, and we feel very much called to do it, but by no means are we saints. We are not special people. It does not take a special person to do it.

So I don't like when people say they couldn't do it because they'd get too attached. The whole point is to get too attached. And what I'll just say about that is what I was describing with our kids, you know, visiting with even my in-laws or my parents now that we live in LA across the country away from them, that is a sign that we got too attached.

That they know that they're still part of the family, that my kids know, they text me and FaceTime me, honestly, Annie, all the time to the point where sometimes I'm like, "Okay, D, I need a moment. Please do not text me every day. I'm really busy." Mostly because he's bored and he's like, "What are you doing?" And then the conversation goes nowhere. But it is getting too attached. It's also getting to attach to their family and being willing to say, "You are not the sum of your worst moment. You're not a sum of your mistakes." And it's obviously-

Anne: "We're not taking your child because we're better. We're taking your child in because we're helping."

Manda: Yeah, yes. You need a minute to heal, to figure some things out. And if I can help ease this time on your kid, then I want to do that. I want to absolutely step in. But yeah, it's a really cool partnership.

So we often are still very much in relationship with both the kids and their families, whether it's their biological families that they are unified with, which is so cool and something that deserves all the celebration in the world, equal to adoption, and the kids that have gone on to be in permanent forever homes that just aren't with us. But it's like one of the best parts of my life. And honestly, even though it's hard, it is one of the most fun parts of my life.

Anne: Yeah, that's what I was gonna say. You allude to it in the book, but I lived it with you too, that some of these kids have actually been really hard. Their stories and their emotional responses that are not their own fault-

Manda: Yeah, trauma.

Anne: I mean, you all have had some really devastating and challenging experiences and yet you still jump back in.

Manda: Yeah.

Anne: You always do. That's what I know about you is when it goes bad, you're like, "Well, let me try again." You're not like, "I'm done." Do you quit anything? You don't quit anything.

Manda: I can't think of anything-

Anne: You don't quit anything. I know. I know. You didn't quit on this book. You and Eric didn't quit on each other. You haven't quit on these kids. I mean, it isn't in you.

Manda: Thank you for saying that.

Anne: And I'm really inspired by that. That's what I've watched...

I mean, particularly with some of the foster stories, you would tell me what was going on and tell me a story, and then you'd be like, "And we've got another kid coming next week." And I was like... Honestly, I'd say, "Are the bruises even healed?" Right? Like, is your body okay? Is your heart okay? It is a holy thing you do.

I joked with the Dungy's on Monday who were on the show. They have ten kids in their house right now. As I was reading their book, and as I've lived life with you, I was like, "I need to get bunk beds. I need to start." And I was like, "Annie, pump the brakes. How about you first find a foster family and step in and help?" Not that I'm never going to foster or adopt. It's just as like when I listen to you, I'm like, "I'm not doing anything. I should be helping children."

Manda: You're headed to Target to go get the bunk bed right now.

Anne: That's it. That's it. That's my problem. I'm all or nothing all the time. It's like the funniest thing about me. So what did some other people do for y'all that weren't necessarily foster parents or adoptive parents, but kind of stepped in with you and E?

Manda: Oh, yeah, I love that you're asking this because so many of our friends rallied around us. And so they equally deserve the title of being able to claim like we

foster. I genuinely feel that. When I think about the Stars, when I think about the Greens, when I think about the Jordans, when I think of all of our friends in Chicago that rallied around us and were such a part of our journey... I just had to shout that out because they spent so much time with us and our kids.

The ways that they showed up that were the most helpful were any transition, whether it's a kid leaving your care, a new kid coming into your care, a kid taking a break from your care, a kid going to a residential treatment for a short time, any transition... This is true of all transitions, when someone has a baby, when someone gets married, when someone gets divorced, when someone is sick.

Transitions in hard times, we need to show up for one another. And that can be through meals, laundry. Obviously sending flowers is great and always really appreciate it and a thought and a prayer is always really, really nice, but man, when they show up tangibly like that, that's huge.

Sometimes one of the best things I think we can do is not ask people what they need. I recently sent a text to a friend going through a fertility struggle and saw some hard bumps in the road along the way. I knew she was having a low time, so what I did was I texted her, "I'm thinking of you. I'm praying for you. Please choose one of the following..." And I listed three options. One included, "I'll send dinner on Thursday. I'll pick up your kid from daycare on Wednesday," dah dah dah, all these little options that I knew I could commit to.

If she chose all or any of those things, I could commit to doing them. And it made it really simple. All she had to do was pick one. But I didn't give the option or like... It didn't say, "Oh, you do the work of telling me what you need."

Anne: That's great. You said A, B, or C? Which of these can I do? That is so smart.

Manda: I learned it from people doing it for us.

Anne: I have a friend who is in need of some help, and people keep saying, "What can we do?" And she'll send them to me and just be like, "Because I don't know." But now when I get to be the person sending the text, I'm gonna give three options. That's brilliant. I've never thought of that. That is a brilliant option.

Okay, *Soul Care to Save Your Life*, out this week. It makes me stop. Is there anything we didn't talk about to make sure we say?

Manda: No, this was great.

Anne: That was really great. Thank you.

Manda: Oh, thank you.

Anne: I am so happy about this month of shows because every resource that people are bringing are the resources that someone needs right now. I feel like we are in one of our strongest seasons of saying like, "Hey, I know it's not January, but do you want to start over right now? Do you want to start over right now? It's a new school year. Do you want to tell the truth today?" You do. The answer is you do. You don't know that you do but you want to tell the truth today.

Manda: Absolutely.

Anne: Call somebody right now. Okay, Manda, the last question we always ask. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

Manda: Well, Annie, I did what sounds fun to me. I got my nails painted fun color.

Anne: I saw that on the internet, I was so happy.

Manda: This is like so not me. But it's two part. What sounded fun to me, when a Zoom thing got rescheduled... I normally don't think that question. I don't think about what sounds fun. That's not my wiring as an eight. I kind of go into like, "What can I do to change the world and what needs to be done right now? I'm running to Target to buy the bunk beds."

Anne: That's right.

Manda: And instead I was like, "You know what? It sounds really fun to go get my nails done." It's not a regular thing I do.

Anne: So you took five different shades up to the girl.

Manda: So then I took five colors up to her and I said, "I want pastel nails. I want yellow, green, blue, purple, pink." And I know that I'm not seven and this might feel like a seven-year-old girl, but I want to do it because it sounds fun.

Anne: It looks so cool.

Manda: No regrets.

Anne: No, you shouldn't. They look so cool. And they're very summery, and they're... Yeah, well done.

Manda: Thank you.

Anne: I love it. When I saw it on the internet, I was like, "I cannot wait to tell her how much I love them."

Manda: You have taught me so much about leaning into fun and the value of fun, because there is so much value in it. So I just am so grateful that you inspire me and teach me in that way as well.

Anne: Thank you. Well, we would both like to thank Jason Miller for making us friends.

Manda: Yes, for sure.

Anne: What a gift! What a gift. All right, well, I love you. I'm thankful for you. Thanks for doing this.

Manda: Love you too. Thanks for bringing me to Nashville.

Anne: Yeah, of course.

Manda: This was fun.

Anne: This was fun.

[01:00:50] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, don't you love her? I know. I just love her. I just can't even tell you how much I love her. I'm so thankful for her.

Be sure to grab a copy of *Soul Care to Save Your Life* and follow Manda so you can tell her thank you for being on the show today.

And don't forget to pop to the link in the show notes and sign up to be a part of the big group of us going through Chase the Fun all together starting this coming Monday, August 15th. Let's do this together, friends. It'll be so fun.

If you need anything else from me, you know, I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs all over the place, Instagram, Facebook. Anywhere you may need

me, that is how you can find me. And I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same.

Today what sounds fun to me is one of our office neighbors is having a baby shower. So we are headed over there with a lot of diapers to give. So that sounds really fun to me. Congratulations to our friend, Dan, and his wife.

So you guys have a great weekend. We'll see you back here on Monday with one of my favorite authors and pastors and one of my dear friends, Sharon Hodde Miller. We'll see you guys then. Y'all have a good weekend.