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Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you today. Y'all, we have got a show for you. We've got a show for you.

Before we dive into today's conversation, a quick word from one of our amazing partners, [Cru](#). The Bible is one of the primary ways that God speaks to me. It's why I love being on the teaching team at my church, sharing bible stories on the MiniBFF Podcast, and writing devotionals like Chase the Fun because of the way God's word has changed my life. I want everyone to get to experience that too.

But imagine for a second that you couldn't get a Bible or that you couldn't afford a Bible or think about what it would feel like if it was illegal to own one. Honestly, sometimes we forget that there are so many people all around the world who simply can't get a Bible. That's why we're thrilled to partner with Cru. I love what they do so much, you guys.

Cru is one of the largest evangelical organizations in the world. They have over 25,000 missionaries in almost every country, includes giving bibles to people around the globe in their own heart language and sharing the hope of Jesus. But here's where they need our help.

For just \$21 a month, you can provide three people with Bibles each and every month. And when you sign up to provide three Bibles with a monthly gift of \$21, you'll also be partnering with Cru to provide meals for five hungry families through their humanitarian aid ministry and you get a free copy of Chase the Fun. Let's go!

Simply text fun to 71326 to help today. Think about how the Bible has changed your life and imagine just how much this gift could change someone else's life. Text "fun" to 71326. That's "fun" to 71326 to help now or visit give.cru.org/thatsoundsfun. Message and data rates may apply.

Intro: Today on the show I get to talk with Charles Martin. You've heard him here before on Episode, oh, I don't know, 133 or maybe 212 or maybe 267. And he was our special guest at our stop in Houston on the That Sounds Fun Live tour. If you haven't heard any of those shows, you've got to go back and listen. He's just the best.

He's one of our most frequent guests clearly because we cannot get enough of his beautifully written, action-packed, heart-wrenching novels. He's a New York Times and USA Today bestselling author.

His new book, *The Record Keeper*, is out. It is the third book in the Murphy Shepherd trilogy. And this book concludes... Maybe, I don't know. I think it does. We're gonna talk about it. This book seems to conclude the gripping story around our same beloved characters from *The Water Keeper* and *The Letter Keeper*.

More than I love his writing, y'all, I just love Charles and his wife Christy and their boys. Oh, love this family and their hearts. I'm just thrilled to have him back.

A couple of quick things to note. First, a little MiniBFF content warning that we do discuss trafficking in this episode. So maybe you want to listen during naptime or during the school day when little ears aren't around.

And also spoiler alert, we are going there talking about this novel. I gave you fair warning in my stories a couple of weeks ago to get your copy and read it, but let it be known we're about to have a book club about *The Record Keeper*. I just can't wait any longer when the author is sitting there, you know.

So here is my conversation with my... Okay, I think it's fair to say my favorite novelist, Charles Martin.

[00:03:26] <music>

Annie: Charles Martin, most popular guest on That Sounds Fun.

Charles: Thanks for having me back.

Annie: Welcome back. I mean, April 2019, April 2020, January 2021, and then one of our live guests the first time we toured in Houston, Texas. So everybody heard you in July of '21 as well. Am I supposed to give a jacket now?

Charles: No. No.

Annie: Ain't that what they do on SNL?

Charles: Well, I don't know. They might. Look, I love being here. We love you. I mean, I'm honored. It's like a thing. I know there are a lot of folks who would love to sit in this chair. So thanks for having me back. Really I love it.

Annie: Always. Always.

Charles: I never know what I'm going to say, mind you.

Annie: Right.

Charles: And I walked in this room like, I don't you know... I've said this. I'm a massive introvert. I'm much more comfortable sitting behind the thing doing this for 12 hours being quiet. So I'm always curious. And I really am. I sit down with great expectation thinking, "What on earth is she going to drag out of me today?" So anyway, with that, go ahead.

Annie: Whenever you talk about being an introvert, I always get tickled about it because that has never been my experience with you. Not on the show. We were just on the same flight and got to spend a lot of time, you, me, and your wife Christy after our flight together. I do not experience you to be an introvert. So it feels like an honor.

Charles: It's what charges my batteries.

Annie: Got it. Got it. Got it.

Charles: We are in Nashville, we had meetings, we're here hanging out with you. So I have met a lot of people over the last couple of days. Now, I will go home and I'll be quiet for a week and just get back to work. And I'll charge my batteries. It's just kind of the way I've learned to be me.

Annie: When you and Christie drive today from Nashville back down to Jacksonville, will you talk?

Charles: Yeah. I mean, some. You know, we've been married... This next summer will be 30 years.

Annie: Wow.

Charles: So we're into the pretty comfortable with each other's space. Do you know what I mean?

Annie: I would imagine. Yeah.

Charles: But yeah, I mean, we will. You know, I love her.

Annie: I should know who at this point-

Charles: She's still my best friend.

Annie: I love talking to her. So I would love riding anywhere with her. But I just like, "Man, I wonder if at this point..." I mean, I've only been with myself that many years. So I can't imagine being with someone else that many years. And when you

recharge as an introvert, the peace it would be to have a person you can recharge with?

Charles: Yeah. And she also knows me well enough to know that, you know, from nine o'clock yesterday morning till 10 o'clock last night, we were with people in meetings.

Annie: No.

Charles: And so she knows that if I'm quiet today, it's just because I used all my words yesterday for like the next three weeks. I'm here now speaking on credit from the month of September.

Annie: That's right. You're gonna have to write this check later.

Charles: I am.

Annie: I mean, are you working on the next novel? Is there something you're sitting in right now on? Are you working on fiction?

Charles: I'm about to finish it.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Charles: I'm working on the last chapter now. I told Amanda yesterday I will get it to her. My deadline was two days ago, but I've been checking in with her. And there was a good reason I missed it because I did two books with my pastor and we did them kind of back to back. That just took time. Whatever. I love doing it. And I will do more. But it just sort of backed up my schedule. So I'll get that to her in the next four weeks or so.

Annie: Okay, the next four weeks. You and I were both in Scotland at the same time. You and Christy were doing one trip, and then we ended up on the same flight home. And what you told me after that flight was that that experience changed the book.

Charles: Totally. I got there and my protagonist became who he should have been all along. When I got to Scotland, I could see him and I could hear him and I could hear his accent and see that-

Annie: Was he Scottish before the trip?

Charles: No, no.

Charles: But as soon as we landed in Scotland, we're walking around Edinburgh and I'm seeing the story in my head, because I've been in it for a couple of months now, like with my head down. And soon as I land and we're walking around, I just heard him... I mean, as much as I hear-

Annie: Totally, totally, totally. Yeah.

Charles: So I had to come home and rewrite. And I'm still in the process of rewriting who he is.

Annie: So have you finished it and you're just going back and sewing in some things or do you still have to finish?

Charles: No. I do have the last chapter to write. I did write sort of the climax and the reveal last week. And now I need sort of the close, which is pretty cool. I was praying about it. I didn't know where to go. I really didn't.

Annie: Really?

Charles: I was standing and I was like, "Lord, I have no idea how to wrap this thing up," because so much changed in Scotland.

Annie: Right.

Charles: And a lot of times when that happens, I just sort of push back from my desk and I go work out or do something, you know, sweat. You know, let my body move and my mind will unwind. And somewhere in there I saw a scene. And it was like, "Oh, of course that's what you do. That's been there all along? Well, of course." So now I've got to write that.

Annie: Oh, my gosh. I mean, I say that to my writer friends a lot, that people who are feel like they get stuck or have writer's block, if you move your body, if you will go on a walk, if you'll go work out, if you will move your body, your writer's block will come unstuck.

Charles: It helps. I've had moments and weeks where that's not been the case.

Annie: I've had them enough.

Charles: And the Lord has pushed me into worship. And I've had to worship my way through the heart. And that's a whole nother thing. But literally, you know, walking around my pool deck, like, "Lord, my circumstances don't dictate the truth of who

you are. Your Word does. And you are good. You do love me. This may be the end of my writing career but I love you nonetheless. So let's just walk."

So there are times when, yeah, like little blocks, sometimes sweat, whatever, will help. And then there are times where it's just I don't know. I mean, I'm 20 some years into this career and 20 some books and I don't always understand why they bubble up sometimes and why they...

People look at me and they think I must know what I'm doing. And in all honesty, there's some things I do... My craft is a little better but I sit down and the pages are still white.

Annie: Right. The cursor still blinks for you.

Charles: Right. No matter how much time I spend training in my computer. When I show up every day, it's not like I get there and it goes, "Hey Charles, after 20 years we finally got... The artificial intelligence has showed up and we got it. We know. We got it. So we wrote this, we would just like your approval."

Annie: Right, right. Right.

Charles: That never happens.

Annie: No. No. This is a technical question. How often do you replace your laptop?

Charles: Probably two years or so.

Annie: Okay. I can't ever quite get my mind around when to replace it because it starts slowing down and the battery starts draining but you don't really realize it because you're on it all the day. So for a while I was doing it after two books, every two books it would be... But I was like, "Is there a right answer?"

Charles: I mean, I'm a Mac user. I used to get the MacBook Pro and all that sort of stuff. And I've just sort of said, You know what? The MacBook Air thing, it works for me.

Annie: It's enough.

Charles: It's perfect.

Annie: And it's lighter so it goes with you. I loved what you said because I think everyone needs to hear you say, "If this is the end of my career..." You're one of the most

prolific and celebrated writers in our faith world for sure and in the mainstream and you sometimes think, "I'm not gonna be able to finish this one."

Charles: Who is... I forget. I think I've heard it attributed to Keller but maybe Keller was quoting someone, Luther, somebody. I don't know, forgive me. But somebody said, our hearts are idol-making factories. I've been doing this a long time. My identity is wrapped up I'm sure in being a writer. It's how I think, it's how I process.

And I think every now and then the Lord likes to tap me on the shoulder and say, "Okay..." It's like when he restored Peter on the beach. You know, Peter is in the boat. He's no longer following Jesus... After the resurrection, he's no longer following Jesus. He's gone back to his former way of life because he doesn't feel worthy.

The disciples see Jesus and they say, "It's the Lord." Peter wraps his cloak around him, jumps in the water, and lands up on the beach little place called [inaudible 00:11:43]. And Jesus restores him. And then that conversation, I've heard it taught a bunch of ways. And every time I've heard it taught, most of the people I've heard teach it see Jesus as coming at Peter with a "Do you love me? Feed my sheep. Do love me? Feed my ship."

That's not Jesus. I think Jesus... He knew what was going to happen. "I pray that your faith wouldn't fail you." And He sits down with his buddy, fixes some fish. Scripture doesn't say this but in my impression of who Jesus is, I think he sits down next to Peter, puts His arm around Him and says, "Hey, pal. Do you love me? then do what I told you to do. Just feed my sheep, man."

He's eaten some more fish and Peter's like, "Lord," and Jesus is like, "Dude, do you love me?" "Well, you know I love you, Lord." "All right then, just do what I told you to do."

And I think sometimes with me and writing, the Lord sort of has to check me... He doesn't have to, but he's checks my pulse a little bit. Like, "Is this thing more important than me?"

Annie: Wow.

Charles: "What do people say about you? Are the accolades that Annie Downs gives you on her podcast, do you want those more than just being with me at my feet and listening to me? Have you found your life in order to lose it or have you found the life I have for you in order to spend it? You know what I mean?"

Annie: Right.

Charles: So sometimes I think he taps me on the shoulders and we have this, you know... and I have to uncurl my fingers and say, "Lord..." So it's a sweet thing. It's a tender thing. I pray that my books are not idols and my life as a writer is not an idol. I do love what I get to do.

We've talked about this. Somewhere in the Psalm 45 became real. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer, and it is my great desire to make his name known to the nations. Do I know how to do that? No, not really.

Annie: Right. That's the trick is I'm like, "Here are all the things I'm willing to do, Lord. I don't know how you're going to do it, or what you're inviting me."

Charles: Fact. Fact.

Annie: That is beautifully said. It just is so encouraging to remember that on our best days and our worst days, we need to open our hand and go, "Lord, none of this matters more than you."

Charles: Can I tell you one quick story?

Annie: Yes, of course.

Charles: I was trying to decide whether or not to write Joby's book with Him. Joby's my pastor. I love him. He's a brother. He's a dear friend, and he asked me to work with him. And I was wrestling with, one, how to fit this in my schedule, I'm pretty busy, and I do have a career and all that sort of stuff.

And I really kind of had gotten quiet with the Lord. And I wanted to know, I'm like, "I need to know. Do you want me to do this or not?" I think I started kind of you heard the carnal side of me come up in the conversation. And I said, "Lord, I have spent..." I'm 52 now. I started right when I was 15. "I've spent 35 plus years working on developing my voice as a writer. And two things: I wasn't sure that I could step out of that in order to help Joby. And two I didn't know if I wanted to lend it. I know that sounds horrible.

Annie: No.

Charles: But I didn't know if I wanted to lend it. And I've said this to Joby. We've said this on his show. I'm not talking behind his back. But it was a tension that I felt. As soon as I said that to the Lord, I felt this tap on the shoulder. I was not audible but it was as close to Audible as I can think I got. And He said, "Whose voice?"

Annie: Wow.

Charles: And I was about to say something, you know, like defend me and then I felt like He said, "Is my spirit in you?" "Oh, yes, Lord." "Okay, then whose voice is it?" And it was a real sweet thing the Lord did with me where he gave me the freedom. "Use the voice I gave you for my son Joby. Go do this." It's one of the most fun things we've done. I've loved doing it. I've loved the books.

Annie: Tell me the titles of them.

Charles: *If the Tomb Is Empty*, and then coming out next Easter, *Anything is Possible*.

Annie: Perfect.

Charles: I love them. I love them. So it was a sweet thing the Lord did with me. But also it was like this check, whose voice is it? But it gave me freedom as a writer that I didn't know that I needed to lend my voice. And I'm grateful He did that with me.

Also, recently, I've been stuck in Matthew 10. And I can't remember how he says it, but there's somewhere in there Jesus says something like, "If my Spirit is in you, then spirit of my father's speaking through you."

Annie: Oh, wow.

Charles: That knocked me off. I was on my bike in my garage. Anyway, that's my story.

Annie: Wait, you read your Bible while you're on the...?

Charles: No, I can't read but I can listen.

Annie: Okay. I was gonna be like, "Wow, you do like your peloton while you're reading."

Charles: Oh, no. I can't. It's too much movement. It makes me dizzy. My eyes aren't that good. But I'll listen.

Annie: Okay. Who do you listen to read it? Are you just listening to the YouVersion?

Charles: I found this really cool recording, it's an ESV recording, somewhere on Audible. And it's a Scottish lady reading the ESV. I mean, when we get to heaven everybody's gonna be speaking in the Scottish accent.

Annie: Everybody. That's right.

Charles: You can't say the word-

Annie: It's the Lord native tongue.

Charles: "grace" without the whole... You know what I mean?

Annie: Right.

Charles: I mean, they're all gonna sound like *Braveheart* when we get there. So anyway.

Annie: Oh sure.

Charles: Whatever. Totally. You cut me deep check. You cut me deep just now.

Annie: So that's what you listen to?

Charles: So I love listening to that.

Annie: I listen to Father Mike read a little bit every day. There is something about when I sit and read, and I tried to do that, but if I don't have time to sit and read, I still listen to Father Mike and it still changes my day just to hear scripture.

Charles: I will force myself to listen to it because if I read it, I will slow down and I'll get stuck on words and I'll dig in. And next thing you know, I'm four rabbit trails deep. But if I'm listening, I won't stop.

Annie: Yes. So. And it also makes me listen to things that I would skip over reading like Ezekiel 35 and 36. I'm like, "You know what? Fine, Father Mike, while I'm brushing my teeth, you tell me what Ezekiel 35:36 says.

Charles: Yeah.

Annie: Okay, speaking of lending your voice, I mean, that is what novelists do is you lend your voice to stories that teach us things we do not know. So you're technically doing that all the time, a little bit, right?

Charles: I'm still trying to figure that out. Yes. Yes. The only hesitation I have is because I'm still just figuring it out. I'm still working on my voice. I'm still trying to figure out how to say what is on my heart that I feel like needs to be said.

Annie: But I mean, with *They Turned the World Upside Down* and... tell me the title of the second one.

Charles: *What If It's True?*

Annie: Oh, *What If It's True?* and *They Turned the World Upside Down*. That's your pastoring voice in those because they're not fiction.

Charles: Correct.

Annie: I mean, they're very good.

Charles: Let me tell you what we did with those. It's really cool.

Annie: Okay.

Charles: The folks at W came to me and they said, "We love these. We want to take the stories and call the stories out. Would you let us do that and put them together in a book that are just the fictional stories that you wrote about the life of Jesus?" "Sure."

So they took all of the places where I wrote a story about Jesus. Now, you gotta understand Scripture is over here. And if you could see me, I'm pointing with my left hand over on the left side. And it says what it says, and it is true, and there are no mistakes. On the right side is me. And I'm using the gift that God gave me to write what I think it might have looked like.

So they took those stories and they strung them all together, and they put it in this book called *Son of Man*. It comes out early next year.

As I read back through it, I was blown away because it is one of the... it's going to sound like I'm tooting my horn. When I read back through it, it's one of the clearest articulations of the gospel that I've ever seen. And it was as if the Holy Spirit was writing that while I-

Annie: And you didn't even know.

Charles: ...while I'm writing *What If It's True?* and *They Turned the World Upside Down*.

Annie: Wow.

Charles: So it's really cool.

Annie: Oh my gosh. When does that come out?

Charles: February of next year.

Annie: Okay. You're like, next Easter, oh, next February, I got stuff coming.

Charles: Do you know what it's called? *Son of Man*.

Annie: *Son of Man*. Sorry, you said it.

Charles: Which was Jesus' description of Himself. It's how He referred to Himself.

Annie: Oh, that's great. I mean, it's similar to what they're doing with *The Chosen* of going like, "Here's what Scripture says. Let us put some meat on those bones so you can actually see it."

Charles: Man, are they doing that right or what?

Annie: I think so.

Charles: They are knocking that out of the park.

Annie: Yeah. Have you watched them all?

Charles: No.

Annie: Me neither. But I-

Charles: But they're so good.

Annie: They're so good. It's just the way they have added personality to the characters in ways that may not be exactly how they were. But you go like, "When I write my books, I don't write every detail about the story either." But that's what you did with *Son of man*, too. I experienced that when I read *What If It's True?* and *They Turned the World Upside Down*. But seeing them together, that's gonna be awesome.

Charles: I think it's really neat. I'm thankful they did it. I can't wait to see it. It will be the kind of thing that folks who are not believers or who just are doubters or whatever... Because it's digestible. It's almost a gift. But I don't want to use that but it's that size. They won't be bogged down with my teaching or the theology, whatever. They're gonna read the story of Jesus and we'll just let the Holy Spirit do what the Holy Spirit does.

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

[00:21:44] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about one of our amazing partners, [Athletic Greens](#). I know that sometimes for me things can get a little busy between work and friends and church and family and my peloton and having knee surgery. Thank you for your prayers and kind words on Monday by the way. I'm doing just fine. I'm feeling so much better.

And when things get really busy in my schedule, eating healthy can quickly fall a few spots on the old priority list. It's one of the reasons that things like Athletic Greens can be so helpful.

In one delicious group of Athletic Greens every day, you're absorbing 75, high quality vitamins, minerals, whole foods sourced superfoods, probiotics, and adaptogens to help you start your day right. This special blend of ingredients support your gut health, your nervous system, your immune system, energy, recovery, focus, aging. You guys, it's all the things.

We've successfully influenced our COO Ashley's husband into trying Athletic Greens and he is hooked on the fact that there's so much quality support for his health in such an efficient, refreshing drink. It's very much like him to be excited about the efficient part.

Athletic Greens supports mental clarity and alertness, better sleep quality, and recovery. It costs you less than \$3 a day. You're investing in your health and it's cheaper than getting a fancy coffee or a chai.

For every purchase, Athletic Greens donates to organizations, helping to get nutritious food to kids in need, including No Kid Hungry here in the US. I mean, y'all Athletic Greens donated over 1.2 million meals to kids in 2020. How awesome is that?

Right now it's time to reclaim your health and arm your immune system with convenient daily nutrition, especially heading into the cold and flu season. It's just one scoop and really cold water every day. That's it. No need for a million different pills and supplements to look out for your health.

To make it easy, Athletic Greens is gonna give you a free one year supply of immune-supporting vitamin D and five free travel packs with your first purchase. All you have to do is visit athleticgreens.com/soundsfun. Again, that's athleticgreens.com/soundsfun to take ownership over your health and pick up the ultimate daily nutritional insurance.

Sponsor: And I've got one more amazing partner to tell you about. Get ready. Listen for it. It's [Shopify](#). Oh, now that sounds fun. Sorry. All I had to do is just right there. That was the sound of another sale going through on Shopify, the all in one e-commerce platform that will help you start, run, and grow your business.

Did you know that every 28 seconds an entrepreneur like you makes their first sale on Shopify? Shopify gives all of us business owners and entrepreneurs the resources that used to only be available to big businesses. So you have everything you need to connect with your customers, drive sales, and manage day to day.

It's so fun to think about all the possibilities for scaling your business. This has been my job for a little over a decade and if you'd asked in 2012 Annie where writing and podcasting would take her, yeah, she wouldn't have believed you.

Shopify is one of our favorite tools. It powers [shopanniefdowns.com](#) and can help you buy one of those adorable Share "Love You, Mean It." water bottles for your MiniBFF. And like they have for us, they can provide the resources for you that will make it easy for your business to succeed from down the street to around the globe.

Shopify instantly lets you accept all major payment methods, and they can help you reach customers online and across social networks by staying on top of the ever-growing suite of channel integrations and apps, including Facebook and Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, and more.

You'll get insights as you grow with detailed reporting of conversion rates—all that important information the business owners need. More than a store, Shopify grows with you. So the possibilities seriously are endless.

Go to [shopify.com/soundsfun](#) for a free 14 day trial and get full access to Shopify's entire suite of features. Grow your business with Shopify today. Go to [shopify.com/soundsfun](#) right now. Again, that's [shopify.com/soundsfun](#).

And now back to our conversation with Charles.

[00:25:32] music

Annie: Okay, can we talk about Murphy Shepherds, please?

Charles: Yes.

Annie: I have to warn everyone that we're going to say a few things about what happens in the third book, *The Record Keeper*.

Charles: Right.

Annie: But I told people on Insta story two weeks ago they needed to get the book and read it. And a bunch of our friends already have. I mean, every question that came in from our AFD Week in Review friends are people who've already finished *Record Keeper*.

So for our friends listening, will you kind of go through real quick and talk about the three books in this series so that people kind of have an overarching of who Murphy Shepherd is.

Charles: Yeah. Let me kind of back up one step.

Annie: Yes, please.

Charles: A couple years ago I was on book tour in north of Atlanta. And a book tour, it was just me and my truck driving from place to place. So I get there in the afternoon and it's basically a motel. All the doors faced the parking lot. That's a motel.

Anyway, I check in, get my key, go to my room, and my truck is the only vehicle in the parking lot. I just put my stuff in my room and I go down to the thing to get a drink and come back. A Jaguar pulls in. And it's really rad place. Very nice, you know, kind of like a James Bond car.

And the guy gets out, he's very well dressed. Looks like he could have been a fund manager. And he had a wedding ring on. I can't tell you why I recognized that. I just did.

Annie: I usually notice that too, by the way. That's part of my life. That's part of my story. But okay.

Charles: He was a big guy, bigger than me. I would learn this later, he immediately walked up some stairs and then walked toward me and he did that on purpose so that he would intersect me rather than going behind me toward where His room was. He did that on purpose. Walked toward me.

Usually, when you're on a walkway, you know, you'll step out of the side, "Hello, how are you?" and you'll yield to the other person? Well, I stepped to the right and he stepped to his left directly in front of me and didn't introduce himself didn't say anything. All he said was, "So I've paid for some time with these girls in this room down the hall. Sometimes they like to have somebody join us and sometimes they'd like to have somebody watch. Are you interested?"

And my first thought was not real Christ-like. All I said to him was, "No." I walked to my room and I watched him walk down to his. He walked in and shut the door. I called Christie because it really got me and I kind of unpacked it with her. Set my room and I've tried to work and I couldn't really.

About 45 minutes later I saw these young ladies leave. They were two of them. The girl... they somebody's daughter. Were they 15, 16? Maybe. Were they 18, 19? I don't know. I can't tell you. All I know is they were somebody's daughter, maybe somebody's wife one day, whatever, you know.

And they left and got in the car. Somebody picked them up. And then about 15 minutes later he left. And it really just... it did something. It just hacked me off. And I want to say something other than hack. But you know what I mean?

Annie: Yeah, yeah.

Charles: I get to my book event that night and I'm still... talked about it. People sit in there and I just sort of unpack it with them. I said, "I just want to tell you about my day." And it turns out the guy that owned the bookstore runs an anti-trafficking ministry where they rescue girls who are being trafficked in the metro Atlanta area. Works with former Delta guys, FBI, all that sort of stuff. Well, one of the places they've rescued folks was my motel.

Annie: Oh, my gosh.

Charles: And so it started me on this thing where the Lord allowed me to be angry. And then simultaneously along with this at the same time, I'm somewhere in I think it's Matthew 18 where Jesus is telling the parable of the shepherd. I've read that a bunch, you've read it a bunch.

But it struck me, for some reason, the shepherd and the safety with the flock, He leaves the safety of that, to walk off through the middle of the night to chase down the one sheep who's gotten himself or herself lost for the 100th time.

Annie: Right.

Charles: And when he finds it, he throws it on his shoulders. He doesn't shame it. He doesn't chastise it. He hugs it, brings it back and has a party. And somewhere in there, it struck me two things. This is the inconceivableness of the gospel of Jesus, that He would leave the 99 to find the one. And that's what He does with us. That's the gospel.

He found me, he found you. And then when He does that, He brings us back. That somehow we're worth rescue. Sin and shame and mistakes and all the stuff that caused us to stray in the first place doesn't disqualify us. Somehow the needs of the one in that moment outweigh the needs of the 99. And that's just the majesty and wonder of Jesus.

So somewhere in that soup, between the experience of the hotel and our motel and Matthew 18, the story of Murphy Shepard bubbled up. And I had recently completed a boat trip where we started in the keys and took the intercoastal all the way to Jacksonville. It's just a beautiful trip. 300 some miles. So it became the setting. I saw this character who was really good at finding people who were either lost by kidnapping or were lost by just having gotten themselves lost.

So *The Water Keeper* really became the story of us getting to know Murphy and his love for the lost. And what is he willing to do to go get them? To what extent will he go? And it's the story of him rescuing several girls, a couple of whom have been kidnapped and trafficked.

But we really learn the story of these beautiful ladies who... One of the things I've learned in being around women who have been trafficked is there's a point at which—and it varies for all of them—there's a point at which something happens in them and they don't feel that they are worth rescue because they've been with so many... They are like, "Who's gonna love me?"

So there are two rescues that occur. There's the physical, snatching somebody's body out of a hotel room with a line of men down the hall. But then there's the second rescue.

Annie: Or the hole of the ship. They keep ending up in the holes of ships and your boats, man.

Charles: The second one, though, is the rescue of them—their heart. So we learned that in *The Water Keeper*. And we also have a pretty good introduction to bones and kind of who is in their friendship. And I didn't know I could write a trilogy.

When I sent it to Amanda, I didn't know. I said, "I think I've got a character with some legs. I think he's complex. I think I could write a trilogy." But I'd never done one. I have no idea why. I don't know if I can do it again.

Annie: Wow.

Charles: But he was deep enough, at least in my thought process, that I thought, "Well..." So then *The Letter Keeper* really became the story of Murphy Shepherd. And who is

he? Where did he come from? How did Bones rescue him? Is this really the story of the rescue of Murphy? And then we get to *The Record Keeper*, which is really what the whole thing is about anyway, which is the story of Bones.

Annie: Yeah, I was gonna say it's the rescue of Bones.

Charles: It is the rescue of Bones, but even in that, Bones is telling a story. And the rescue is not what you think.

Annie: No, no. But I will tell you, Lillian who works here, came in when she finished it and I asked her if she had guessed what was gonna happen about it. She was like, "Yeah, I saw it coming." And I was like, "Meanwhile, I'm bawling, crying when I'm reading what happens to Bones?" Are you Murphy Shepherd?

Charles: No. I mean, I would love to think that parts of my heart show up in him. But look, I'm writing vicariously. I do this in all my characters. You know, of course-

Annie: But I have read a lot of your books and none of them are as you as a main character as Murphy Shepherd in my experience of you.

Charles: I don't know. I would love to think that the Lord has done things in my heart in the same way that what we read in Murphy, that his heart is that... I mean, greater love has no man than one who's willing to lay down his life for his friends. That's it. There's the plumb line. Period. And Murphy does that. Not as well as Bones, but he does that.

Annie:

Charles: So am I Murphy? No. I'm still selfish carnal Charles. Am I in the process? Sure. Is the Lord not finished with me? Absolutely. But I love that you think I might be. That's a great compliment. But no, there's a lot that I look up to and I love about him.

Annie: Wow. So for everyone, we're going to talk about *The Record Keeper*. But in all three of these novels, there are so many things that Murv and Bones are experts in. Even just the weapons they use and the amount of weapons or the undercover thing. How did you learn all that?

Charles: I love that. Undercover.

Annie: When I wrote down, I wrote undercover things.

Charles: I'm pretty good at asking questions. When I meet-

Annie: To who?

Charles: Well, I mean, I've met folks who've worked in the CIA. It's not hard. If you get on YouTube, you can answer a lot of questions. Seriously, I did. I spent a lot of time on YouTube looking into trafficking. And you have to be careful what you-

Annie: Sure.

Charles: Do you know what I mean?

Annie: Right.

Charles: A lot of it I would do in bed at night with Christy. Because they're just some things I don't want to see. So there are experts that know more than I. I also have a pretty vivid imagination. I can fake it. I've watched enough of Jason Bourne.

Annie: But I mean, the way you describe weapons being put together and taking apart. The boats I understand because I know you and your son your family y'all are like Florida people who get in the water.

Charles: I am 52. So when I was in my early 30s, there was a period of time which guys and I in my neighborhood traveled all over... not over, but several places around the US to get trained in your precision rifle-

Annie: You're speaking Murphy Shepherd. You totally are.

Charles: ...urban rifle. You know, we did a lot of that. And we traveled to some really great places. We went to Thunder Ranch out in Oregon and got to know Clint Smith. I mean, Jack Carr has-

Annie: Are you rescuing people and we don't know?

Charles: No, I'm not. I'm not. Even if I was, I wouldn't tell you.

Annie: Charles, I know.

Charles: But I'm not. But I learned a lot. It is a degradable skill. I'm not what I once was, but I know enough to be able to write about it. In the beginning of *The Record Keeper*, I did have fun putting together the first sort of scene. I loved that. That was lot of fun.

Annie: Murphy Shepherd is a novelist who no one knows who he is. So that is what helps pay for this rescuing life he has in the way he's able to rescue men and women, young boys and girls. So he write books and he secretly rescues people from trafficking. And Charles, I'm just gonna stand on here in front of everyone, I'm not convinced you aren't doing this.

Charles: I love the fact that you think I do. And I could. That makes me feel tough and cool. But I know me. And I'm not as tough as he is.

Annie: When you spend three books writing about trafficking and writing about what happens to boys and girls and women, and probably men too, but in my memory of the books you're mostly younger people, are you okay after you write all that?

Charles: No. No.

Annie: What happens in a person after they spend years researching that and writing it?

Charles: I had to pray my way through a lot of it. And I didn't write all that I know. If I write what I know, you won't read it.

Annie: Wow.

Charles: Because it's horrific and it's gross. It's the worst evil I can conceive of. I mean, the sex trafficking-

Annie: Yeah, because you're not graphic in any of the books.

Charles: Well, I try to write in shadows so that you have an idea of what's happening without making you want to throw up because if I write... People would close the book. There's a reason sex trafficking has surpassed the drug trade. And you can sell a drug once, you can sell a 10-year-old boy 60 times in a week.

Annie: Oh, gosh.

Charles: So I had to kind of pray my way out of it. Also, I think, though, that the Lord gives you what you need when you need it. Do you know what I mean?

Annie: Yeah.

Charles: I am knowledgeable. There are people who are far greater experts than I.

Annie: Sure.

Charles: Also the cool thing is I've also met people who have been rescued. So while I know the horror of it, I've also seen the joy and the hope. And I've seen women who were rescued that did not think they were lovable now married with children. Do you know what I mean?

Annie: Yeah.

Charles: I've seen the redemptive side of it. One of our questions from our friends at the AFD Week in Review, Hillary asked, "As a dad of sons..." You have three boys. I adore them. She says, What is it like to develop the characters of Angel and Ellie and Casey and their relationships with Murv? So there are these three young women in the book that are all daughter-like to Murphy. But you raised three boys. So is that from doing interviews with survivors? How would you step that much into a daughter relationship?

Charles: Well, I don't know. I grew up in a house with three sisters.

Annie: Oh, good.

Charles: So I think that did inform a lot of my... I mean, my mom loved me. I was the only boy so I had dad to myself. So we did a lot of cool stuff. But I don't know.

I think somehow growing up in a house with three girls maybe my ear became attuned to emotive things that maybe some of my friends weren't exp... I don't know. I don't know what was the effect of that on me. I've been married 29 years. Christie still loves me. So beyond that, I don't know how I know how to write Casey and Angel. I don't know.

Annie: I mean, I would imagine growing up with sisters. I can see that playing out. Because there are a lot of times where, especially in *Letter Keeper* but also in *Record Keeper* where the interaction between the girls is like you're eavesdropping on how will Charles ever know that that's how three girls are when they're sharing a bathroom.

Charles: Right.

Annie: But it's because you grow up with three sisters.

Charles: I did grow up with that. I did hear some of those conversations. Yeah.

[00:40:14] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting one more time to tell you about another amazing partner, [Stitch Fix](#). Do you know my favorite kind of shopping? The kind that other people do for me. Amen to that.

When you guys found the gold number I needed for seeing Shania in Vegas and when my friend, Amber, who's a stylist picks out things I should wear for tour and live events, I love to leave it to the experts. One less decision to make. You will too when you let Stitch Fix shop for you.

It's easy and fun to get started. First, take a few minutes to set up your Stitch Fix style profile. You'll answer a few questions about what you like to wear, what you don't, and how open you are to trying new styles, and then Stitch Fix's expert stylists will go to work finding items exclusively for you.

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Sponsor: And one last incredible partner to share with you, the new movie [Lifemark](#) from the Kendrick Brothers and Kirk Cameron. It's opening in theaters everywhere on September 9th, which is eight days from now. I got to watch it a little early and really enjoyed it.

Lifemark is based on a true story and follows 18-year-old David through an emotional series of decisions he has to make after his comfortable world is turned upside down because his birth mother unexpectedly reaches out to him in hopes of meeting him. Y'all it is a wild story.

Through really interesting storytelling with flashbacks and flashforwards—is that a word?—Lifemark shows how many lives can be changed with one decision. It celebrates adoption, reconciliation, and love. So if you're looking for a movie that is hopeful and explores so many relational dynamics in really interesting ways, Lifemark is the movie for you.

Those of you with younger MiniBFFs in the family will probably want to preview this one first so you're prepped for any conversations that it may start. So go see Lifemark in theaters nationwide beginning September 9th. I think you'll enjoy it. I think it'll start a lot of conversations, really interesting conversations with you and your friends you see it with, with your family. I think it is really a conversation starter.

You can learn more about Lifemark and get your tickets today at lifemarkmovie.com. That's lifemarkmovie.com. Remember that the show notes are your one stop shop for links to all these partners, transcripts of these shows, and your chance to sign up for the AFD Week in Review email. It's all below.

And now back to finish up our conversation with Charles Martin.

[00:43:14] <music>

Annie: This might be spoiler category so you can tell me we can't talk about it.

Charles: Okay.

Annie: I feel like we know it at the end of *Letter Keeper* but it's really explored in *The Record Keeper* is Bones' twin brother.

Charles: Yeah.

Annie: What? Bones is the best guy in the series is twin brothers with the evilest, though every evil person is just a hurting person. I understand. The evilest character in your book is twin brothers with the absolute hero actually.

Charles: Two things there. One is wounded people wound people. Now let's back up. The first set of brothers on planet earth, one killed the other. The very first thing that happens, Cain kills Abel. Murder of one brother. So it's not out of the realm of possibility.

But also when I was sort of looking at who is this bad guy, all of us wrote him off. All of us want for God to send a lightning bolt to the cranium and just zap him. And that is not Bones' heart. Bones is still taking us to school, and the one looks different. Like we think, "Well, I'll rescue that one because they seem lovable, because they'll thank me."

Annie: Yes. Because there's a future and a hope with that one. That is not with him.

Charles: Bones is digging a little deeper than that.

Annie: How'd you find Bones? Who is he?

Charles: That's a good question, too. I don't know. I wonder if he's not a mind meld of several people. We probably see The first glimpse of Bones back in *Fireflies* with Unc.

Annie: Oh, my gosh, you're right.

Charles: It's the beginning of that voice, you know. And then we see him show up a little bit again maybe in *Thunder and Rain*, just in terms of his tenacity. But he really wouldn't fully developed probably until, you know, he landed somewhere in my mind in *The Keeper* series.

Annie: Wow. But there were just touches of him all along. I just told you this story. But I finished the book. The last two words of the book, I freaked out. I did the thing that should be illegal.

Charles: Which I loved by the way.

Annie: I texted the author-

Charles: I loved it.

Annie: I sent a screenshot of the last few words like you didn't know that was what you finished the book with? And I said, "Charles Martin, what does this mean?" And you said, "What do you think it means, Annie?"

Charles: What do you think it means?

Annie: And I thought, "Wrong answer!" So where do we go now with Murphy and maybe with Bones and all these characters? Is this it? Is it a trilogy and they're gone?

Charles: I don't know, Annie. What do you think?

Annie: I mean, I can put in a vote. My vote is that everyone lives happily ever after and we get to keep hearing people being rescued, versus someone being dead, which is a very possibility at the end of *Record Keeper*.

Charles: Let's just put a bookmark there.

Annie: Okay. Okay. That's a great answer. That is a fantastic answer that we're all... I mean, 10 questions here, 11 questions here? Half of them are-

Charles: I know. I know.

Annie: Have you left us dangling like that at the end of the book? I haven't felt the way I felt at the end of *Record Keeper* with your other books before as far as like, is he coming back? Are they coming? Are we done here or we're not done here?

Charles: Next question.

Annie: This is great. This is everything I dreamed of. This is exactly what it's like to talk to a novelist who's not sure. Okay, great. Great. So we can all just keep reading what you write?

Charles: There's an answer which I can't give you.

Annie: You won't give me, which I appreciate.

Charles: So we'll circle back around.

Annie: Okay, great.

Charles: But I will say this, when I finished the last page-

Annie: Did you write the last page last?

Charles: Yeah.

Annie: Okay.

Charles: ...I cried my face off.

Annie: Did you?

Charles: Yeah. Totally. Shredded me.

Annie: Wow. Great.

Charles: Shredded me. I love him.

Annie: It gives me so much hope. I told you I cried twice in this book. There's an adoption story that made me cry. And there is a falling from a helicopter story. And that

made me cry because I thought, fricking Charles Martin is gonna kill Murphy Shepherd right here in front of my face. And he was so close to rescuing him. And in the helicopter moment you also are having a moment with Bones.

Charles: Right.

Annie: So I thought, "No, Murv, hang on. Oh, no. Why would you even grab onto a flying helicopter anyway, Marv? What are you doing?" So I cried a lot. What have you-

Charles: What about the scene where they name the-

Annie: Oh, gosh. What about that scene? Let me put it back on you.

Charles: Let me tell you where that came from. There's an organization in Texas called Pure Hope Foundation. Katherine Lee runs it. They rescue ladies in some ranch in Texas. It's one thing to rescue the physical, it's another thing to rescue their heart. Your body keeps the score. We've talked about that. It takes a while for the Holy Spirit...

Look, the Lord can do what the Lord wants to do. He can heal anybody in a moment. But oftentimes, it's layers like an onion. And He peels those back. And that's his healing. That's just the way He's healing to. So with these ladies, healing looks like a process. But they've done this beautiful thing in the backyard of the house where they all live, and they walk through the exchange at the cross.

But in one of them, many of these women have had forced abortions. And I met them and you know... And they are left with, you know, "Does God hate me? How am I going to stand...?" All that sort of stuff. But they're also left with, "I didn't get to hold..." And so they have this thing where they bring all the ladies out and they name their children-

Annie: Wow.

Charles: ...at the cross, and they give them to the Lord. And they name them. Like that child has a name. I loved that. I love the healing in it. And I've seen the healing that occurs in them when they do it and the way the Lord lifts trauma and just lifts that weight out of them and the hope of "I'm gonna see him. Right now my son or daughter is with the King." Do you know what I mean?

So I didn't see that or go through that when I was at the house and think, "Gee, that's got to end up..." I was writing and I was in the middle of that scene that I was... that bubbled up.

Annie: That adds such a layer to that story. How are you different after writing these three?

Charles: Well, I look at ships on the water a little differently.

Annie: I will look at ships on the water a little differently.

Charles: I look at young ladies in public places a little differently. Like, "Are they okay? Are they here of their own will?" We've been in hotels lately and I get on the elevator with somebody. Are they here because they want to be or are they here because somebody is...? You know, those questions go through my mind.

Here's where I am after the end of these stories. I know me and I am not worth the death of the Son of God. And yet He pushed up on his nail-pierced feet for me.

Annie: Right.

Charles: I can't get over that. I can't wrap my head around that. Why would the King of the universe, this universe and every other, in perfect unity with the Father, take off his crown, stick His diaphragm in the corner, give His ring back to His Father, disrobe and take a swan dive out of heaven and end up here in a gooey mess and live a sinless life on my behalf to make a payment I could never make in 10,000 years for the sole purpose of—he says this in John 17—so that they, meaning you and I, might know the love with which you and I have loved one another? He's speaking to the Father.

I mean, the reason for Jesus is a return trip back to the Father. He says it in Exodus. "I brought you to myself." Jesus says, "I'm the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." So the destination is the Father.

So you asked me how do these books impact me. The extent to which someone i.e. Jesus went to rescue me—I'm not talking about everybody else. I'm just talking about me—shreds me every now and then. And I am reminded of what it costs Him, what it did not cost me and what he offers me freely.

Annie: Right.

Charles: I have found myself sometimes in my office just with my eyes shut like, "Lord, I know the words. I'm grateful. Don't really get at telling you. But as much as I am able to communicate with my heart, thank you. And I'm yours. I'm loose change. You spend me how you want. My gift is yours. My work is... whatever. If I'm able to the extent that I am able to surrender to you, please know that I want to be that surrender."

There was a beautiful verse somewhere in... Maybe it's Samuel. "The eyes of the Lord look to and fro across the earth to find a man whose heart is wholly, W-H-O-L-L-Y submitted to His." And I pray that when He scans the earth He sees me and He sees Annie and He sees Christy and He sees my boys and He finds our hearts wholly submitted.

Now, am I pushing these books on people so that they are thumped over the head and they are brought...? No, the Holy Spirit did that in me. Holy Spirit is gonna do what he's going to do in them. I'm just telling you that's what he's doing in me.

Annie: That is the wild thing about these books is if you don't know they're about Jesus you may not know, besides what the Holy Spirit tells you.

Charles: Cool.

Annie: If you know they're about Jesus, you know. You like feel it. There's a scene that plays out in *Letter Keeper* that repeats that you go back to and *Record Keeper* of a girl found in a shower. And when I read that scene, I think... and there's other girls who signed up to do modeling photoshoots and they end up getting trafficked and rescued by Murv and Bones.

And when I read those two scenes, I think, how many times in my life am I saying yes to one thing that may not be the best thing and the enemy turns it and it makes... it doesn't make me, but it leads me down a path to a yes that I'd have never said before.

Charles: Correct.

Annie: And Jesus rescues me out of the floor of the shower.

Charles: Correct.

Annie: That is what I picture. I don't know that I had a good picture in my head as a person who grew up a believer and doesn't have a wildly transformative testimony. So I don't know that I had a picture before that scene of, Oh, this is what it feels like for me too, even though I don't have that version of a testimony, my testimony is that he still found me in the bottom of a shower and rescued me out of it.

Charles: There are two scriptures that the Lord's been... One is in first or second chapter of Corinthians. Paul says... It's just a very short phrase. He's talking to the church in Corinth. He says, "By his doing you are in Christ Jesus." If you spend time on that, you think about it, the initiation is his. By His doing. Think of all this wrapped up in that.

It's the same thing that he says in Ephesians when he says, "When you were dead in your trespasses and sins, He—initiation is his—made you alive." What did we do?

Annie: Right. What did you do? Nothing.

Charles: Go back to Genesis 2 and look at the dust. He made man, fashioned us out of the dust of the earth, made Annie look like Annie, made Charles look like Charles. Then he presses his lips to ours, breathes in the ruakh of God, makes us living beings. We didn't do that. What can a dust do?

Annie: Right.

Charles: I don't know. That's a little bit of where I've been lately. By his doing. And I'm grateful for His doing. It's also changed how I pray.

Annie: Really?

Charles: Yeah. And it's changed like, "Lord..." We were all of us, regardless of the drama of our testimony, regardless of how the world might perceive, wow, that person was a long way off compared to somebody who whatever, you know, all of us have gone astray. We're all equal in the Lord's eyes. We're just a bunch of rebellious sinners. There is no... It's like saying there are degrees of "dead." There's not.

Annie: Right. No.

Charles: It's not like I'm more dead than you. We're just dead.

Annie: We're just dead.

Charles: I'm just brought back to what the Lord did by His doing in me to get me to Himself. I can't wrap my head around that.

Annie: Yeah, you help us all with that by lending your voice to Murphy. By lending your voice to this story, we get a better picture of it.

Charles: He's pretty cool character.

Annie: I'm telling you. I think too. He's a novelist who rescues people, Charles Martin. That is you.

Charles: I will tell you this. We've had two folks in the last couple of months that are in Hollywood that have mentioned the whole made for TV series because I won't let it be a movie. A movie can't do it.

Annie: It's not enough?

Charles: Not movie. Not even if you did three movies. You can't.

Annie: In your dream, who's Murphy Shepard?

Charles: Oh, that's easy.

Annie: Oh, yeah?

Charles: Chris Pratt.

Annie: Chris Pratt is Murphy Shepherd.

Charles: Because he has, in my opinion... and I don't know him. I've never met him.

Annie: Me neither, but we're both gonna be friends with him after this.

Charles: But he has the heart. At the moment he's in the *Terminal List* in Jack Carr. He's James Reese. So he's awesome and he's crushing that. He do all this stuff. But he also has the heart. Like I know what I'm talking about. I know people that know him.

Annie: And publicly, his faith life is really part of his life.

Charles: Correct. And I think it's gonna take somebody who has a walk with the Lord to be able to pull this guy off because there's a thing... Maybe you can fake it, but I don't know that it would be authentic.

Annie: It's Chris Pratt old enough?

Annie: Well, are you basking the writer? Because I can make him old.

Annie: Guess what? I can make Murphy any age I want to make him.

Charles: Right.

Annie: Who is Bones?

Charles: I don't know. That's a great question.

Annie: Thank you.

Charles: I don't know.

Annie: Because whoever plays Bones is gonna play his old twin brother too.

Charles: That's true. I don't know. They are-

Annie: Okay. Okay. Who is Bones? I want it to be Alan Rickman, but he's not alive anymore. But I could see him... because he's so good at Snape. You know who I would love as well for Murphy Shepard is the main guy in *Virgin River*. Are y'all watching *Virgin River*? Do you know the show?

Charles: I don't know that one. Do I need to?

Annie: Yeah. It's a sweet little nurse moved to a small town show on Netflix. It's very popular. But I don't know the guy's name. But I'll go with Chris Pratt. I can get behind Chris Pratt. You're changing... because I picture you, I can't quite make Chris Pratt.

Charles: I think it's gonna take somebody who's tough enough to do the stuff. And he's-

Annie: He's gotta fall off the helicopter.

Charles: But he does have to fall... At least he has to get shot with a crossbow bolt.

Annie: That's right. So that's true. He has to get shot a lot technically.

Charles: Yeah, technically.

Annie: Poor Murphy Shepherd. That guy! For every tattoo he also gets he also get a bullet wound.

Charles: What would be fun though is gunner... I mean, would people not just-

Annie: Oh, gosh.

Charles: They follow seriously.

Annie: They're gonna love that. Absolutely. Okay, great. I can't wait. Well listen, Dear Chris Pratt, if you happen to listen to That Sounds Fun, part one, welcome. Part two, we've got your next role for you.

Charles: Part three, would you like to be on the podcast?

Annie: Yeah, yeah, yeah. See, I put mine third. We'll first get him in your show and then we'll get him on the pod. Is there anything we didn't say that you want to be sure we say?

Charles: I don't know. I don't even know what we said. Here we are again.

Annie: Yeah, we did it.

Charles: I don't feel like I said anything.

Annie: Great. Because you said a lot of very good things, I almost cried thrice. So I cannot wait. A lot of people have already read this series, but this is a "do not miss" novel series. And it is a page-turner. I mean, I didn't go to a dinner with my friends, Charles. You are ruining my social life when you write books like this, because I was like, "You guys, I don't feel great." And the real real was I've got four chapters left. I have to sit right here.

Okay, the last question we always ask you. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, professional That Sounds Fun guest, tell me what sounds fun to you.

Charles: I am going to finish a novel in the next four weeks.

Annie: Yes, you are.

Charles: And I'm gonna close my computer for a little while. Christy and I bought a farm. And it's not a farm. There's no structure. There's no running water.

Annie: There's is no road, right?

Charles: There's no power. It is a mess. It's just property. So I'm gonna-

Annie: Is it called a farm when it's just the land?

Charles: I'm calling it a farm.

Annie: Okay, okay. It's gonna be a farm.

Charles: We're currently making payments on it. So we get to call it...

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

Charles: So I'm gonna go out there and the boys and I will, you know, just get lost and do fun stuff. And we're gonna fix roads and build a barn. I'm gonna let my hands work and my mind unwind. I need to be quiet for a while. I need to not write.

Christy is telling me that. Chris, my agent, is telling me that. My body is telling me that. So if I could take a little time off, that sounds fun.

Annie: Good.

Charles: Not not writing forever but just let my well fill back up.

Annie: If you work with your mind, Sabbath with your hands.

Charles: That's good. I'm gonna steal that.

Annie: And if you work with your hands, Sabbath with your mind. So you even saying, "My mind has to unwind because I need to do something with my hands, that is a tale as old as time. That's what we get to do. Thanks for being back.

Charles: Thank you so much.

Annie: What everyone knows is we've already got you schedule for your next one. So we'll see you in 2023.

Charles: Love it. Thank you.

Annie: Thanks for what you do. You're one of my favorite pastors.

Charles: Thank you. All of us listening, we thank you for what you do.

Annie: I love it.

Charles: You're amazing.

Annie: Thank you.

[01:02:55] music

Outro: Oh, you guys, don't you love him? Every time, ten out of ten, five out of five times, six out of six times? I don't know. He's been here a lot. I'm so thankful. Are you dying to read *Record Keeper* now? I know. I know. Okay.

Read *Water Keeper*, *Letter Keeper*. You can just start with *Record Keeper* if you want to because it is... It blows your mind. The last two words, don't flip there, but just trust me.

And make sure you follow Charles. He's Storied Career on social media. Tell him thank you so much for being on the show again. And as I told you on the show, he's already scheduled to come back so we gotta get him again.

If y'all need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that's how you can find me.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me... oh, going on a walk. I haven't done it in a month. And now that my knee is back to fighting shape, we're going on a walk. Oh, I can't wait.

Y'all have a great day. We'll see you back here tomorrow. What? A Friday episode. Yes, I mean it. Why not? Before a holiday weekend, let's drop a surprise Friday episode with our friends and two of my very favorite worship leaders, Bryan and Katie Torwalt. We'll see y'all tomorrow.