

[00:00:00] <music>

Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. Happy Labor Day. Hope you have had a fun and rest-filled weekend. And then many of you are getting to extend that into a long weekend today, at least here in the States.

I'm really happy to be here with you today. We have got a great show in store.

But before we dive in today's conversation, here is a word from our sponsor, [BetterHelp](#). Y'all know I tend to be pretty optimistic and future-oriented. I'm not one to dwell on problems. As you saw me say on Instagram, we're always trying to figure the way out. And the best way out is through. Sometimes the only way to solve a problem is to, you know, sit with it for a bit and be in it and work your way through it.

Y'all know me. Sitting in pain isn't my favorite thing, but I do love the feeling of finding solutions and healing. A therapist can help you become a better problem solver, making it easier to accomplish your goals no matter how big or small.

I'm often surprised how conversations with my own therapist will meander around but end up yielding exactly what I needed for the problems I was facing. Gah, I'm so grateful for her. I want you to have that kind of support too.

If you're thinking of giving therapy a try, BetterHelp is a great option. It's convenient, accessible, affordable, and entirely online. You fill out a brief survey and BetterHelp matches you with a therapist and your journey towards a healthier you has begun.

They make it easy to switch therapists at any time too so you can be sure of a great fit for the help that you need. When you want to be a better problem solver, therapy can get you there. So visit betterhelp.com/thatoundsfun today to get 10% off your first month. That's betterhelp.com/thatoundsfun.

And be sure to check out the show notes for links to our sponsors like this, the transcript of the show, and your chance to sign up for the AFD Week in Review. And we'll email you all the things.

Intro: Today on the show I get to talk with my good friend Matthew West. You may remember Matthew from when he and his lovely wife Emily are on the podcast during couples month in 2020 or when he launched The Matthew West Podcast on the That Sounds Fun Network.

Maybe you know him as the voice behind so many of your favorite Christian songs on the radio since he is a five-time Grammy nominee—we're going to talk about it—and has basically won all the awards you can win as a Christian songwriter and artist.

Well, I'm excited to get to talk to him today about his journey into writing his newest book, *The God Who Stays*. Y'all, it is heartfelt and beautiful. Such a good reminder that no matter what we're dealing with, God is always with us.

I love this guy and his family. I cannot wait for you to hear from him. This is a notetaking episode and maybe a tear-jerker. We both cried at one point. So that's good for you to know.

Here's my conversation with my friend Matthew West.

[00:02:57] <music>

Annie: Matthew West, welcome back to That Sounds Fun. Like we haven't been talking for 40 minutes in here.

Matthew: Yeah. We should do two pods. The pod before the pod.

Annie: That's right.

Matthew: I was so excited to come here today-

Annie: Thanks.

Matthew: ...and to visit your offices again. Which do your listeners... like do they know how stylish your team is?

Annie: They know I don't pick it. My team is very cool.

Matthew: It's like I'm walking into restoration heart or whatever at this office.

Annie: Oh, I wish.

Matthew: It feels this kind of vibe.

Annie: It's kind of vibe. You made it better because you brought cookies.

Matthew: I did.

Annie: Do you always show up with treats? Is that part of being Matthew West?

Matthew: I do have some personal rules.

Annie: Oh.

Matthew: One, I have to confess to your listeners I completely messed up our first interview time. That was last week.

Annie: Because you had just played the Ryman, headlined it.

Matthew: But I spaced and I felt terrible. So I was like, "I can't come to my rescheduled podcast interview with Annie without bringing some cookies.

But you know, I do a lot of songwriting. Most days I'll be writing songs and I'll be writing with different writers or artists. And my rule is—it's not always financially intelligent—but I always buy lunch. Because in my mind—this is how insecure I am—if that's the only contribution I make to the songwriting appointment, if all my ideas are terrible, at the end of the day they can say, "Man, that guy-

Annie: "But he bought me lunch."

Matthew: "He bought me lunch. He bought me taco today."

Annie: That's really nice that you always buy lunch to your co-wrights.

Matthew: Even if I do a bad job on this interview, I can walk out of here feeling like, "She's probably still going to finish the day going, 'You know what? That's a stand up guy. He bought me some cookies.'"

Annie: Okay, will you talk about headlining the Ryman?

Matthew: Yeah. It was insane.

Annie: It was just unreal.

Matthew: It was insane. You know, one of my favorite authors wrote a book called That Sounds Fun-

Annie: Thank you. Thank you.

Matthew: ...and that to me would have been like... It was the equivalent of like the things that you're going, Okay, like adventure, bucket list, dreams, what... I will say that it was a real challenge for me to be in the moment and soak up the fun of the moment because it's also like when you're getting to do something really cool, like play your first ever show at the famous Ryman Auditorium, there's a lot of pressure that you can put on yourself.

And so I felt equal parts. Like one minute I'd be soaking up the moment and the next moment my head would be just thinking about a million other things. But it was a really sweet thing. My favorite moment of the show was my daughter came up and sang with me.

Annie: I saw her.

Matthew: And it was a song that I wrote inspired by my daughter's because boys are starting to come around.

Annie: Right, right, right.

Matthew: It's a song called *Before You Ask Her*. The boy that my daughter likes was actually in the crowd.

Annie: And you're like, "I'm singing straight to you, brother."

Matthew: But I mean, my daughter Lulu, she stepped up on stage like nothing fazes her.

Annie: Her voice is beautiful too, Matthew.

Matthew: It's like she didn't care. I'm like, "Do you want to sing with me at the Ryman?" She's like, "Oh, yeah, sure." I'm like, "Okay, well, should we run the song?" She's like, "No, I'll be ready." And I'm like, "What?"

Annie: Wow.

Matthew: And then sure enough she showed up on the day of the show at the Ryman Auditorium and five o'clock before the doors opened we ran the song. Everybody was speechless. The whole crew was like, "What just happened?" Then she came out on stage and knocked it out of the park.

Annie: And did it.

Matthew: But it was fun. I had a lot of special guests join me. It was sort of like the coming together of my two different worlds of writing songs for other people and then putting out my own records. And so we got to do a mix of that which was amazing.

Annie: I saw Carly Pearce came out with you too. I love her.

Matthew: She's like this mysterious superstar now. She's a dear friend. But I didn't see her the whole day... This is funny. I'm on stage at the Ryman and we're coming up to her song. We were gonna do a song called *Truth Be Told* that she recorded with me but I didn't know if she was there.

Annie: Oh, you hadn't seen her at all?

Matthew: Because I hadn't seen her. I'm pretty sure when I introduced her I must have said it like, "Carly Pearce?" Like, "Please welcome to the stage Carly Pierce?"

Annie: I think.

Matthew: Like who types a question mark in the teleprompter? Because I literally didn't know if she was there. And then she appeared like magic and crushed it.

Annie: It is amazing to watch someone become an industry darling like she has in country and stay very grounded as a human. That seems impossible to me.

Matthew: The fact even that like... She didn't have to do that duet with me. She didn't have to show up at the Ryman. She's got two of her own Ryman shows coming up this fall. But she did. She got off tour with Kenny Chesney and showed up at my show to sing a duet with me.

And I just told her, I was like, "You don't know how much that means to me." And she's like, "You don't know how much that means to me." You know what I mean?

It was a moment where like when she heard that song, it really resonated with where she was at in her life, what she had been through. And she even said, "I had been praying for a way to share how my faith is important to me." And I was like, "That's awesome." So I have a lot of respect for her. But it was a special night in Nashville.

Annie: Is that a venue you've been holding out to play? Like, does it feel special to you? Because that's probably, to me, The Fox in Atlanta and the Ryman are the two that I'm like, "When I get to do shows there."

Matthew: Oh, yeah. Well, I think it was just a matter of... I had been a guest at the Ryman on other performances. Sometimes they'll bring the Grand Ole Opry to the Ryman. Sometimes at Christmas time they'll do that. So I had been a guest in years past and maybe gotten to do one song.

I remember Little Jimmy Dickens introduced me one night before he passed away.

Annie: Wow.

Matthew: But just to do my own concert, I feel like I've rarely done my own shows in Nashville. Period. I've always performed everywhere but Nashville. So I don't know that it was something I was waiting for. To be honest with you, it was probably something in the back of my mind that said, "You know, you're not popular enough," or "You're not..." I don't know. I don't know.

You know how your mind can kind of keep you away from bigger things sometimes?

Annie: Yes.

Matthew: And I'm always very driven but there was a fear about playing the Ryman, like, Will people come? Like there's so many shows that people can see in Nashville. So if I'm being honest, that might be one of the things that kept me from booking my own shows at the Ryman.

Annie: From trying it, yes.

Matthew: And then it was just like, "Why? Why would I be afraid of that? Let's go. Let's shoot our shot and let's have an amazing time." And it wound up being just that.

Annie: Funny thing about you and I, we are both so driven. It's one of the things we love about being friends is we're both like, "To the moon," and then we're also like, "No one's ever gonna come." Like, "Oh, that's the last book anyone's ever gonna buy?"

Matthew: Do you think those things too?

Annie: Yes. I am convinced like, "Don't put another tour on sale. No one's ever gonna come." And that is not how it works.

Matthew: But the both of us... like people would probably be surprised to know that because, I mean, I know you project confidence, not arrogance. There's a difference. Right?

But because you're so fearless in your pursuits, I think people would look at you and go, "Well, nothing scares Annie." But that's not true, is it?

Annie: No. Right. Right. I don't ever want to put the Ryman on sale.

Matthew: It's maybe like you and I are like... we're jumping off of a cliff and not thinking about if the water's deep enough until we're already in mid-air.

Annie: That's when we're like, "Everyone stop! Stop!. The water. The water."

Matthew: It's too late, dude.

Annie: That's right.

Matthew: I feel like every time we have a meal or even gets to have a conversation like this, we... While our Enneagram numbers might be different, I feel like there are a lot of similarities in our wiring.

Annie: We're built very similarly, yes. What venues do you have left that you would love to play or headline? Do you have ones that you're still jonesing to do?

Matthew: So the crazy thing is is I got to play Red Rocks in Colorado the same month that I got to check the Ryman off my list.

Annie: The K-LOVE did a big thing out at Red Rocks, right? Had a bunch of y'all out.

Matthew: It was epic. It was the coolest night and just the most beautiful surroundings. So I think my goal is to, you know... We want to make the Ryman show an annual thing.

Annie: Oh, brilliant.

Matthew: And when I do, you need to come and speak or something. It would be fun to like-

Annie: Oh, that would be so fun. I've never done a thing on the stage.

Matthew: You should do your own Ryman show.

Annie: I know. It's in the making.

Matthew: Is that on your list?

Annie: Yeah. By the time I'm 50 is what I told Nate Bargatze. And he was like, "Annie, that is like nine years away. You're gonna do before that."

Matthew: You said, "That's 29 years away."

Annie: That's right. But I would love to.

Matthew: Nate's probably sold out the Ryman.

Annie: I think he has. I'm not sure he sold out the Ryman. But I know he's headlined the Ryman.

Matthew: When did you have him on?

Annie: Christmas.

Matthew: Does it get funnier than Nate Bargatze?

Annie: No. I don't know that it does. He's just so fast.

Matthew: In a slow way.

Annie: Yeah. You can see how fast his brain is working but it doesn't come out. Sometimes some of the fast brains it comes out of their mouth too fast. And Nate has a fast brain that doesn't need him to rush it.

Matthew: With a slow delivery that's like, Ooh.

Annie: That's exactly right.

Matthew: Oh, he's a trip.

Annie: And you don't have to worry like, is what is coming out of his brain that's going to come out of his mouth gonna offend someone here? He may push buttons, but he's a clean comedian.

Matthew: His whole bit about the dead horse is-

Annie: Oh, my gosh.

Matthew: I mean, I don't want to get in... Maybe your listeners don't know that story but they need to go find it. I prided myself on discovering him before he blew up. And then

we were at this event together and I went up to him... There were all these other artists and I didn't care about meeting them.

So I was like, "Hey, Nate, you know, nice to meet you. I'm Matthew." I was like, "Man, I just gotta tell you. I've told like 20 people about your special, that they need to see it." He's like, "So you want some sort of a kickback or something?" I was like, "No, I'm just trying to tell you I'm a supporter." He's like, "Oh, am I supposed to give you like 40 bucks for every person?"

Annie: Oh, my gosh.

Matthew: It was just funny. I'm like, Of course, his response is... you can't ever have a normal conversation with those people.

Annie: Absolutely not. Absolutely not. No, no. The sincerity that lives in them does not come out of them as easily.

Matthew: Well, you're giving me comfort just even here chatting. The fact that you're the same way. Sometimes I'm like, "What's wrong with me that I would think such fearful thoughts in the midst of such perceived courage or bravery?"

Because whether we're putting a book out or booking a concert or doing those things... And ultimately we're doing those things because we believe we've been called to encourage people. But then we ourselves can get really discouraged before you put that song out, that book out, that show or whatever it is. You're like, "Oh, oh." What is it 1 Corinthians says? If you build it, they will come. Is that in the-

Annie: Is that 1 Corinthians?

Matthew: No.

Annie: I feel like that's 1 Field of Dreams 3:16.

Matthew: 1 Field of Dreams. I'm kidding.

Annie: But no, I do believe it a little bit—if you build it, they will come—in that there is nowhere to gather if you don't give them somewhere to gather. I mean, it's what you've done with your podcast. It's what you do with your songs. It's what you're doing with your new book. All your books you've written. There are seven of them, by the way. Did you know that?

Matthew: Yeah.

Annie: I counted on Amazon.

Matthew: Seven of them?

Annie: You've written seven books, Matthew?

Matthew: And nobody knew.

Annie: No, that's not true. It's just amazing-

Matthew: My mom-

Annie: ...that you're good at so many different avenues of art. It's wow. But if we give people a place to gather, they do. They're looking for invitations like I am. I'm looking for invitations like that.

Matthew: And it's not up to us to decide the size of the gathering and for that to be the sole validation for whether or not the creative work we put out was good enough. I think that's been the biggest challenge. I will say—and I mean this—your encouragement, the way that you just lead, the way that you celebrate things too... Like I walk in and you guys give me a special award for the podcast-

Annie: Yeah, trophy because you had 2 million downloads. That's huge.

Matthew: I heard it said once about like my Enneagram number that like they have a hard time staying for the confetti to fall.

Annie: Wow.

Matthew: And I wrote about it a little bit in my book. Like I love to celebrate other people, but I don't really do a good job celebrating me. And sometimes I'll struggle to go like... even a success can sometimes feel like a failure because I haven't allowed myself to properly figure my way through the... I'm probably making your listeners go, "Okay, this guy's got issues."

Annie: No, no, no.

Matthew: But you set a really good example of like you celebrate the big stuff and the small stuff. And I need that reminder to like not just go looking for the next mountain to climb but celebrate it.

Annie: Man, don't see the confetti hit the ground. That is like a wild thought.

Matthew: I feel like I heard that on your show-

Annie: Maybe. I don't remember.

Matthew: ...during one of your Enneasummers.

Annie: Enneasummers. That is like-

Matthew: I told you about your Enneagram summer breaking me.

Annie: Yes, messing you up. I know. I'm sorry. That's why we took a break this summer. I was like, "I need to not hurt people for one summer."

Matthew: I told you. I was like, "You broke me."

Annie: In *The God Who Stays* you write about in 2020 when you would go on walks and how much your brain was having to readjust to slowing down and being home. Why did you call it *The God Who Stays*? I mean, it's a song title. But why?

Matthew: Well, I call it that because I wrote a song by that title before the pandemic. I thought I knew what the song was about. But then when the pandemic hit, and that wound up being the song that was on the radio during a time of extreme isolation for all of us, I could see God orchestrating this season where that was the message that was going to be delivered to the world via my platform. This reminder of spiritual closeness we can experience in the midst of physical distance and separation.

But in my own personal life, I was starting to understand the words of that song on a deeper level. And really, as a result of the pandemic, I find myself kind of doing this return to taking some inventory of who I've become as a follower of Christ, maybe areas where I haven't grown the way I think I should, and really just overall looking at like, "What do I believe in? Why? God, why do I feel like there's a distance between you and me?"

One of the big themes about the book from my personal story is feeling like I've gotten better at talking about Jesus than actually talking with Him and talking to Him, and kind of wanting to return to the 13 year old me who didn't live as much life as I've lived, didn't make as many mistakes at that time, just knew that he needed Jesus, had this feeling with everything that was in him my story is not my own, I think I need Jesus. And I call out to him.

And I remember that moment. Somedays the enemy makes me feel like, "You're never gonna get back to that kid. You've moved too far away from that blue couch you were sitting on."

This whole book was about me having a desire to return, but God's showing me, "Matthew, do you think I stayed on that couch after you got up and went away? I've matched you step for step. I want to have a friendship with you. I really Am the God who stays with you."

So this book's kind of been a chapter by chapter reminder that I needed a God who stays in all the ways that He does stay. He stays faithful, He stays patient, He stays loving, He stays forgiving. He stays kind. And then how He calls me to be the kind of person who stays with others that way, not giving up on other people either. So that's the why.

Did I tell you the story about the Uber driver?

Annie: No.

Matthew: So the reason why the book was born, it was born in the back seat of an Uber on March 12 of 2020, which was the day the world shut down for us.

Annie: Yes. When you were out on the road.

Matthew: Yeah, I was on the road and we had a show canceled, but the whole country shut down. We were in Trenton, New Jersey. And that was like, you know, we were all starting to freak out. They said show's canceled, the city's going on lockdown. We didn't even know what that word meant at the time.

Annie: Right.

Matthew: The whole tour is canceled. Like it's about to get crazy. And I got a flight booked and then I booked an Uber to drive me to the airport and it was an hour away. I was like, "This is gonna be an expensive Uber, but I was just panicking. I want to get home."

So I was having kind of a panic attack in the backseat of the Uber. Just like, "What's going on?" Like calling home and all these things and sort of freaking out. And about 30 minutes into the drive to the airport, this song comes on the Uber driver's radio and it's my song, *The God Who Stays*.

Annie: Oh, my gosh.

Matthew: And I'm like, "This is crazy."

Annie: And he is having it on one of the Christian stations?

Matthew: Yeah, he's listening to some Christian radio station, and it's my song coming on. And we're driving on the Jersey Turnpike. I look at him and I notice he doesn't have a care in the world. It's as if he didn't know about the pandemic. He's smiling. He's singing every word of my song.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Matthew: He knew it. And he was from a third world country so it was like in broken English. And I'm just sitting in the backseat going, "What is happening right now?" So I started singing with him. And I figured if I sing loud enough he's gonna recognize me.

Annie: He's gonna recognize. He's gonna be like, "Is this in stereo?"

Matthew: So we get to the end of the song and it ends and I lean forward, I was like, "Hey, man, how do I sound?" I'm thinking he'd be like, "Oh, you're the guy? I just heard you." And instead he kind of joked, he's like, "Not so good. Not so good." And he was kind of making fun of me. And he's like, "But it's not your fault." And I said, why? He's like, "Because you're not professional like the guy on the radio. But you keep trying. You keep trying." He kind of encouraged me.

Annie: That's fun. Matthew!

Matthew: To me it was the most beautiful moment. And I never told him that it was me. The rest of the drive to the airport I forgot all about the things that were making me panic and I talked to Arthur, the Uber driver. And he told me why he loved that song. We had this really special conversation.

And when I got back home in the weeks that followed, as everything started going crazy, I put pen to paper and I started just by telling that story of Arthur. That's chapter one.

And it turned into the book. I talked about what it looks like to hear the message of a God who stays in broken English and how that was a beautiful moment where God was showing me "I'm about to do something in your life, and I'm about to

bring you closer to me if you'll let me." And that's really what I felt like this book has done for me personally.

Annie: Psalm 66 and I think it's 12, I read it this morning. But Matthew, I think it says, "You went through fire and water and brought us to a place of abundance." I mean, I needed that this morning. When I read that this morning in Psalm 66, I was like, "Has this already been in the Bible or did you write this for me today?"

Matthew: That's what I love. That's why it's the living word.

Annie: That's it, right?

Matthew: Right. It's alive and active.

Annie: Things show up. I mean, I sent it to-

Matthew: I love that.

Annie: Ain't that beautiful?

Matthew: Yeah.

Annie: So when you're thinking about the God who stays, I mean, He's with us in the fire and the water and He's taking us to a land of abundance. Have you experienced that? Do you feel like that's true?

Matthew: Oh, without a question. One of the chapters talks about places where it's like, Okay, here's all the ways that God stays in our lives. He stays with imperfect people. He stays through our anxiety and our fear. But there's one chapter that talks about how He stays with the plan.

And a lot of times when we're in the middle of the fire or we're in the middle of the water, we can't see the abundance, and we might be tempted to think that our circumstances have thrown God off course, or our choices more so.

I mean, how many times does the enemy try? I mean, I swear Satan is really good at what he does. He's a liar. And he's a thief, but he uses the same tricks on every one of us.

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

Matthew: And we still fall for him over and over again too. He does try to make me believe, "Well, because you did this, God can't..." He says He knows the plans He has for you but I feel like at my worst I believe the enemy telling me that Jeremiah 29:11 was written in past tense.

Annie: Oh, my gosh.

Matthew: "I know the plans I had for you."

Annie: "But now you've screwed it up."

Matthew: "Now you've screwed it up, you big dummy." That's the Message translation.

Annie: That's Matthew International Version.

Matthew: I mean, at my weakest, or at my most discouraged, I'm tempted to think that like, "Oh, my choices have disqualified God's plan." That chapter means a lot to me because I talk about God's staying with the plan, but really His plan is to pursue me and for me to know Him more, and then ultimately to bring me home. Right?

So just understanding the bigger concept of the plan that God is staying with and realizing that my little mess ups or my fire or my water doesn't mean that God's not staying with the plan. And the promise that you just gave the listener right now that abundance is coming.

Annie: Abundance is coming. And the problem is there's a version of Annie that wants to go like, "Abundance is coming, great. I bet it's next week. I bet we're almost done with the worst part and I bet it's all good."

And then sometimes the Lord is like, "No, I'm in abundance in like 40 years." I just meant for you to keep going on the path with the plan. Just like a thousand years is a day to Him. But a thousand years is a thousand years to me. Right?

Matthew: I mean, that's the hardest part of patience and trusting His timing, because I don't understand it and I want it now. One of the things I talked about in that chapter is how a lot of times we talked about the best things that have ever happened to us in life. And one of the things I like to think about are the best things that never happened.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Matthew: It's almost like a different way of like... Remember that old Garth Brooks' song? Like, [singing] Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers. But it's not an answer prayers. It's prayers answered in the way that, you know, rejection is never rejection.

So I talk about some of the rejection I've faced in my life and how my story's been marked by chapters of rejection but how they've always been like, "This is not rejection. It's get ready. I've got something bigger, something better for you. And you may not see it now." But I think we do need that reminder that the promise of abundance is not a promise of it right around the corner.

[00:26:20] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about one of our amazing partners, [ThirdLove](#). I know I'm not alone in this because my friends and I have had these conversations.

We've all had experiences with bras that don't exactly keep the promises they make. You know, that they'll actually be comfortable and supportive and look great under your clothes. You've been through that too, right?

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With ThirdLove you never have to get stuck with a bad bra again. They have expert fit stylists on hand, and they make it quick and easy to return or exchange if you need to. In fact returns and exchanges are free for 60 days.

So do what I did and ditch your bad bras, you guys. Get a better one that makes you look and feel great. Upgrade your bra today and get 20% off your first order at thirdlove.com/soundsfun. That's 20% off your first order today at thirdlove.com/soundsfun.

Sponsor: And I've got one more amazing partner to tell you about, KiwiCo. Y'all know I love to have fun with my MiniBFFs, whether it's summertime, or on an evening after school or on the weekend. I do understand how sometimes the inspiration of what to do can be a little tough to come by though especially if the weather isn't cooperating and you want to avoid those screams. Well, KiwiCo to the rescue, you guys.

KiwiCo delivers monthly crates full of science and art projects perfect for kids of all ages who want to keep their imaginations active all summer long or all weekend long. Your child will have fun learning with super cool hands-on projects delivered to their door every month.

They'll be so excited to see their box in the mail. KiwiCo day will be their favorite day of the month. You'll be surprised at how high quality the materials are too. Y'all, I'm always impressed. These are real engineering science and art projects designed to make learning incredibly fun for kids of all ages.

So is anyone at your house as crazy about slime as my MiniBFFs are? It is a real phenomenon. Well, KiwiCo has a doodle crate that allows your kids to make their own color-changing slime.

Now, before you skip this because you hate slime, hear me out. You know KiwiCo always thinks of everything. There are little storage containers for the finished slime. Bless the Lord. Maximum fun and science learning minimum mess.

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And now back to our conversation with Matthew.

[00:30:08] <music>

Annie: I watched a dating coach on Instagram today. And she said, "When you've been ghosted, you've been holy ghosted. God's actually protected you." And I thought, Man, how often is that true that we think the thing that we have asked God for that we don't get is actually we think we're being punished and God's going, "I'm protecting you. I'm protecting you." Right?

Matthew: We don't want to hear that.

Annie: No.

Matthew: And we wish we didn't have to go through that. When I was writing the book, too, I thought a lot about my kids. But then I found out how similar I still am to... My desire is to protect my kids from having any heartbreak or any pain or whatever-

Annie: Of course.

Matthew: ...and yet, I'm sitting down writing this book about how God has shaped me so much by the words-

Annie: Through pain. I know.

Matthew: But my heart as a father is still to protect my children. And I have to think that God's heart for me is to protect me through fire and through water. He's not going to abandon me.

I had a counselor say to me once about, like my kids... It was like, Your job is not to change their story and your job is not to rewrite things for them. Your job is to walk with them through it. And as a parent that's so hard.

Annie: That's terrible.

Matthew: But just to know like, Okay, I'm going to stay with my daughters. They're going to go through hard things, and I can't rewrite their story. They're going to make choices, they're going to do things but my job is to let them know that I will never

leave them through it. I feel like God showed me that about His heart for me. Do you know what I mean?

Annie: Yeah

Matthew: But the difference is He is in control, and He's going to allow things to happen but ultimately He's going to pull me through that fire and that water in His time.

Annie: I have some friends who their family is going through some real hard stuff. And another friend and I were saying that what we're praying for the kids is that the only hard things that would stick to them are the things that told them something about God. That all the pain of this season that their family is going through, that all the bad stuff that doesn't actually draw them to God that they'd forget. And all they remember...

And then I thought, "Well, I don't want that for me. I don't want to hang on to any of the stuff that is painful." And then I'm like, "No, but there are things that hurt us to heal us, and that God allows to draw us closer to Himself." And I'm like, "Well, if I'm praying that for kids that I love, I've got to be willing for God to do the same."

Matthew: To accept that yourself?

Annie: Yeah. And I don't want that.

Matthew: I don't want it either. But I'm so thankful that there's not a thing that He sees as useless. Any and everything we experience or go through in our lives or our kids will go through in our lives or whatever is something that He will use to bring us to an awareness of our dependence on Him.

And that's why I felt like in the chapters I was writing about like, Okay, I want to write about how God stays with us in the valley, through the fire and the water, but I want to write about how he stays with us. Like one chapter is called God stays for the party. And it talks about celebration. I thought a lot about Annie Downs on that part. Like the celebration.

But just to realize that He uses it all. And I want everything that I experienced in my life to point me to, Okay, this good thing that happened, thank you, Lord; this bad thing I'm going through, thank you, Lord, that you're with me through it. Right?

Annie: Yes.

Matthew: I don't know why I'm thinking of a story that is not in the book, but it feels like it points to the book. Maybe it's just because it's fresh in my mind. I took my daughter to this camp. It was a father-daughter camp out in California. And we did this walk-

Annie: Was it like a whole week of just you and Lulu?

Matthew: It was a whole week.

Annie: Oh.

Matthew: It was a whole week with my 16-year-old.

Annie: That's really sweet. In my brain I thought you dropped her off at camp. I didn't know you stayed.

Matthew: No, I stayed with her.

Annie: Wow. Okay.

Matthew: Part of me doesn't-

Annie: Tell it.

Matthew: If I tell it, I'm gonna like... I've told it once before and I started crying. I told it to my wife-

Annie: We have tissues.

Matthew: Do we have time?

Annie: Yeah, of course. So one of the activities we did was like a trust walk, they called it. And they had like a group of dads and their daughters. And they separated the girls and they blindfolded them. They sat in the woods and waited while the dads got these instructions.

And the instructions were, "You're going to have a walk with your daughter, and you're going to go behind them and put your hands on their shoulders, and you're going to instruct them with four things. And you're going to tell them these four things, but you can only tell them one time.

Then we're going to lead you through this walk and things are going to change throughout the walk. And the four things that you can tell your daughter is, 'I will never leave you. You can ask me anything. You can always trust me. And listen only to the sound of my voice.'

Annie: Holy cow. That would make me cry just hearing the instructions.

Matthew: So the counselor said these instructions. They said, "Do you have any questions?" And I said, "Yeah, Why am I crying right now?"

Annie: I know.

Matthew: I literally was crying before we started the walk. So I go to my daughter, I hear my daughter, I look at her, I see her blindfolded, my 16-year-old Lulu, and she's like, "Dad," I'm like, "Yeah, I'm here."

And I put my hands on her shoulder, I said, "I'm gonna tell you four things and I can only say these things one time, but it's important that you listen. You can ask me anything. You can always trust me. I will never leave you. And listen only for the sound of my voice."

And then we started walking. And at a certain point, the counselor would motion for me to take my hands off of her shoulders. But I can still talk with her. And I'd have to lead her. "You're going to turn right here, this, that."

And then at a certain point they tell me I couldn't talk anymore but I could answer question. So she said, "Which way do I go?" I would say, "Turn right." But I couldn't.... right?

Well, then a counselor would walk up as like the voice of deception to my daughter and say, "Hey, your friend Megan got turned around. We all need to gather the group. If you follow me, I'll lead you back to the group and we'll continue the rest of the walk."

Annie: Oh, my gosh.

Matthew: And they warned us. They said, "Now some of your daughters are gonna follow and some of yours are gonna remember the instructions." So in my mind, I'm like, "Lord..." And they said, "Don't read into this."

Annie: It's just one day. They feel safe here.

Matthew: So sure enough my hands are off, I'm following behind my daughter, I'm now quiet. She's sort of stopped and kind of go, "What's happening?" Sure enough here comes the voice, "Hey, hey, Lulu. Your friend got sidetracked and we got to rally the group. You follow me."

And I'm just waiting watching, she goes, "Okay." And to her credit, the deception was pretty... I probably would have followed too.

Annie: Totally.

Matthew: But what they did is they led her just to a tree apart from everybody else.

Annie: Wow.

Matthew: And as a dad, I had to stand there and watch.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Matthew: And I stood there and I had to wait for her to remember the instructions. And what were they? You can ask me anything. I'll never leave you. You can trust me. Listen only for the sound of my voice." And she's standing there and she'd be like, "Dad." And I can't answer that because it's not-

Annie: It's not actually a question.

Matthew: So the counselor had to go and remind her, "What were some of the instructions you heard?" And I was standing there just going, "Oh, please, call out to me. I'm here. I'm here." I was so close. I was closer as I am to you right now just waiting for her to call out to me and ask for help.

Annie: Wow.

Matthew: And she's standing facing this tree blindfolded. And the counselor comes up and he's like, "Well, what are some of the instructions?" She's like, "Oh, I can ask him anything." The counselor is like, "Yeah, that's a good one." And she goes, "Dad, are you there?"

Annie: Oh.

Matthew: And I was like, "I'm here." This is stupid. We're just in the woods. This is not real life. And she said, "Can you help me?" I was like, "Yeah. I'd love to help you." She's like, "Which way do I go?"

And just like that, we were right back in sync and I was able to help her. And she asked, and I was there. I never left there, even when she had forgotten the instructions. I just couldn't help but see myself and my savior in that same situation. How many times I've landed in front of a tree and just-

Annie: On my best days I land in front of a tree.

Matthew: And forgot the instructions. And forgot that I could ask Him anything. And then He's never going to leave me. And I can always trust Him. And I should listen only for the sound of His voice. I listened to all the other voices and they land me in front of a tree, and then the other voice tells me, "He's not with you anymore." And then I forget to call on His name.

I don't know. That moment, one, it brought me so close to my daughter and my heart for her. I just love her so much. And two, it just kind of made me feel like okay, "This message of a God who stays, this is not just a message I need." I needed it though.

And I think the same with my songs, Annie, usually when I write a song that I need, somebody else needs it too.

Annie: So what was it like for Lulu after that? What was her experience at that moment by the tree?

Matthew: Well, she took her blindfold off when we made it to the destination and she looked at me and she's like, "Sorry, I didn't..." She felt like she let me down. And I'm like, "That's okay. You're fine." What followed that was this incredibly uncomfortable exercise where we went apart, just the two of us, and we had three minutes of eye contact.

Annie: Oh, that's awful.

Matthew: And I wept. I don't know what's wrong with me. I'm not a crier. I'm not a weeper. It's not my thing, Annie. I don't know if it's like a male meno... I don't know if it's like menopause or something.

Annie: Menopause is making you cry.

Matthew: I don't know. But my heart was tender to those moments. And I feel like the Lord used it in a powerful way to show me His presence in my life and how He's calling

me to be a presence in my daughter's life. So it was a really special moment. I know what made me think of that story while we're talking here, but sorry for the tangent.

Annie: Oh, I love it. Do you think you'll take Delaney?

Matthew: I mean-

Annie: You're like, "I can't do this camp again."

Matthew: I might just take the curriculum and go to a nice hotel. Go to The Ritz.

Annie: That's right. That's right. You'll be like, "I'm gonna blindfold you as we walk to this lobby."

Matthew: I mean, I will say the need to hear God's voice, I know the need for it but I rarely am willing to shut off all the other noise. So there was something about being in the middle of nowhere and my cell phone really didn't work, and I was stripped of all the comforts of how I normally live because I live a very busy life. It was an important forced pause on some things.

Annie: That's what this knee injury has been for me.

Matthew: Really?

Annie: It's just slowed me down so much. And it has been terrible. Because you and I move so fast at everything, right?

Matthew: Yeah.

Annie: And I don't slow down very much. I mean, I take a rest every week, but I'm not slow as a person. I'm either on or off. And this has not allowed that to be the case. This has made me find nuance in my own speed.

Matthew: Are you finding any redemptive part of it?

Annie: No. No.

Matthew: You still not.

Annie: Not yet.

Matthew: I love that honesty, though.

Annie: I'm like, "Get me out of this."

Matthew: But don't you feel a pressure to always find something that'll preach out of a situation?

Annie: Yes. Yes.

Matthew: I hate that about my mind. Sometimes I can't just be in a moment without going, "Oh, that's a song."

Annie: "This has to matter."

Matthew: "This is a three point message. Oh, could this be in my next book?"

Annie: Yeah, totally.

Matthew: I mean, chances are you will have a chapter in your next book about your knee. But sometimes you just want to-

Annie: But that's not the goal.

Matthew: No.

Annie: No. I can't think of it right now. I mean, that scripture, that Psalm 66 really I just kind of said to the Lord this morning, like, "Okay, I've been in the fire and the water and I believe you that abundance is coming. And I've also had abundance in the middle."

That's the thing about being a human is even on you're in your hard seasons, not me, you win a K-LOVE Fan Award, or even in your hard seasons, I got to go see Shania Twain in concert or even in a hard season-

Matthew: Did you go to see her?

Annie: Yeah. I saw her in Vegas.

Matthew: I play her song at women's conferences?

Annie: Which one?

Matthew: *Man! I Feel Like A Woman.*

Annie: Do you?

Matthew: I do.

Annie: Like when you do Women of Joy or something?

Matthew: Because I feel weird being the only guy there. It's like [singing] man, I feel like a woman.

Annie: Well done.

Matthew: No, you're right, though.

Annie: Because it's never all bad or all good.

Matthew: That's exactly right.

Annie: Which is so frustrating.

Matthew: And we're fooling ourselves when we think... If it's ever all good, it's just because our focus is not... we're not seeing the bad in the moment. But like you said, there's always good and bad going on. It's the power of perspective that is a really important thing.

I will say this, I know that you always have your antennas up and so even if you go through... Your pain is something that undoubtedly, inevitably ministers to people because the Lord shows you special things through even the mundane or the junk that you have to go through. So I think with that you can...

Annie: That's true for all of us.

Matthew: I know that's a little comforting.

Annie: I mean, it is comforting. I think that's true for all of our friends listening and for you and I, that the thing you're going through, when you tell the story, it helps someone else every time, every single time. I mean, that's what you've done in *The God Who Stays*.

I mean, you do it all the time, Matthew, on your podcast. I think most of our friends listening listen to your show already, The Matthew West Podcast. That is what you do is you invite people on and you say, "Tell me your blue couch story and all the

other things that are going on." And you give this chance for someone listening to say, "Me too." Do you mean to do that?

Matthew: Absolutely.

Annie: Okay, good.

Matthew: Well, I think to me it's several years ago I started turning the microphone around and giving people a chance to share their stories with me. And that's become a deep well of inspiration for me. But it's also formed, in my opinion, like a deeper connection with people than before when I was making music that was just my story, inspired by my story. It just feels like there is like a me too, like I'm not the one component that I feel to that.

So I think ever since that experience, Annie, I've been more focused on... And doing the podcast has been so refreshing for me to be on the other side of the microphone. Like sitting here talking with you today, like it's your podcast, you're the host, you're asking me questions about my new book. And that's awesome. And I love it. I'm thankful for the chance to talk about something I'm excited about. But being on the podcast has been so exciting.

Like doing my own where I get to be focused on somebody else's story, that has awakened a new curiosity for me. But I mean, there's power when we share our story. And that's probably one of the main themes if I boiled my whole career down-

Annie: Really?

Matthew: ...to one thought, it would just be like we are meant to be storytellers not storekeepers. There's no power in keeping the story to ourselves. The power is realized when we share it, somebody else go, "Oh, okay, I'm not the only one."

Annie: Yeah.

[00:47:29] <music>

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And now back to finish up our conversation with Matthew.

[00:51:50] <music>

Annie: So everybody's hearing us on Monday, your book comes out Tuesday. So your book comes out Tuesday. You have a no-kidding kind of fall, new season of the podcast, a new book out, you're touring this fall like crazy, right?

Matthew: I am playing in concert this fall, yeah. I'm busy.

Annie: How do people find you on the road? Matthewwest.com?

Matthew: Yeah. That's probably the best way.

Annie: Okay.

Matthew: I do my podcast from my studio which is called the Story House. And so we're taking this show on the road and calling it An Evening at the Story House. So we're gonna kind of combine the podcast and the concert and the book experience into one evening.

Annie: Oh, my gosh, that's amazing.

Matthew: Yeah. I don't know how yet, but it'll be cool.

Annie: That sounds like you get your girlfriends and everybody goes, it's a date night. That sounds like a full experience.

Matthew: I think it's going to be neat.

Annie: Matthew, that's so cool.

Matthew: Well, because I love doing the big show with big stuff and big things happening. But then I like doing more intimate storytelling nights too. So I think this will be a neat way to incorporate all those different things that I've been able to start doing over the last couple of years.

It's been fun. I hope people are out there enjoying it. I mean, the podcast, like I said, and you've championed me and cheered me on in that-

Annie: Yeah, it's been so good.

Matthew: ...but it's been a really beautiful experience. Every episode is different. You probably experience that too. Your interactions with people are different.

One of my favorite things is that I just created a hotline where people could leave me messages. And it's so much fun getting messages from people and asking me questions.

I got the sweetest message from this little kid. He was like, "Dear Matthew West, I listen to your podcast. I'm coming all the way from Nevada to see your show at the Ryman." And they requested a song and so I played their song. So it's like just connecting with people has been really special.

Annie: They see that far to see you.

Matthew: They came all the way from Carson City, Nevada.

Annie: Nevada.

Matthew: Nevada.

Annie: I was just there for Shania. I should know.

Matthew: You just say Nevada? Shania?

Annie: I said Las Vegas. I said Shania. I said Las Vegas. I mean, two and a half million downloads in - what? Three years of a show? Two and a half years of a show? That is like no joke, Matthew. You told me that's good. I don't-

Annie: That is good.

Matthew: I don't know what is good.

Annie: That's really good.

Matthew: I don't know what's good. But I'm just thankful for the chance to do it all. I'm thankful to partner with you too. It's fun.

Annie: Hey listen, you're a great part of the That Sounds Fun Network.

Matthew: Your Ennesummer broke me but I'm back.

Annie: But the network put you back together.

Matthew: I'm back. And then I started crying again on your show.

Annie: The thing we haven't talked about though we got to talk about before you go is that you won a K-LOVE Fan Award.

Matthew: I did.

Annie: The same show where I again lost.

Matthew: Oh, stop it.

Annie: You hosted and you won. And your face when you won, you genuinely could not have been more shocked.

Matthew: I started crying there too.

Annie: Immediate you were crying.

Matthew: This is a problem.

Annie: You had to suck in air kind of crying. You did like-

Matthew: This is a problem.

Annie: No, it just means you have feelings. It's very good.

Matthew: I don't want to have feelings, Annie.

Annie: That's what happened when the Enneagram broke you. It broke open your heart.

Matthew: I don't want that to happen. Put it back together.

Annie: Let me keep my tears on the inside.

Matthew: Yes, I want to bottle it up, push it down deep. I don't know.

Annie: You were nominated like every year that the K-LOVE has existed and this was the first time you won this award.

Matthew: It was like... What's the soap opera star?

Annie: Susan Lucci. That's who I say I am.

Matthew: Oh, you are? No, you are not.

Annie: I got two Ls under my name. I got a long way to go.

Matthew: No, I'm the Susan Lucci. I was like, "Oh, for nine dude." You got nothing to complain about.

Annie: I know. I'm just getting started. I'm just getting started.

Matthew: Your podcast is for the people.

Annie: That's right. That's right. It may not be an award winner but it's for the human.

Matthew: No, seriously though... I will tell you. I remember saying... because you know, sometimes in Nashville, like even at the record labels, I remember back in the day when you'd go to the label, the people that work there would wear shirts or something with their favorite artists. But it was never the artists like us. The ones that they worked with.

Annie: It was the one that they worked with.

Matthew: Like they were fans of like somebody maybe who was perceived as cooler artist or whatever. But I remember... I think it was Bill Gaither said something. The great Bill Gaither, a gospel legend. He said something about like we make records that nobody likes but the people.

Annie: Wow.

Matthew: And I'm totally paraphrasing, probably butchering it but the principle of it was he was commenting on why they might not win a Grammy Award or whatever.

Annie: Right, right. Right. Right.

Matthew: Nobody likes it but the people. I don't know why, but subconsciously, I was like, "That's what I want to do."

Annie: That's what I want.

Matthew: This is for the people. This is not for-

Annie: I want my friends to love this.

Matthew: It's not for the Academy.

Annie: That's it. That's it. I mean, but it felt like a thing when you won that K-LOVE, huh?

Matthew: Yeah. I didn't want it to matter. Why did it matter?

Annie: Everything matters. Of course it does.

Matthew: Annie, help me. I'm crying out for help right now.

Annie: I think it should matter when you get honored for the work you've done. I think it's amazing.

Matthew: In all honesty, what got me choked up was they had my family strategically placed.

Annie: Front row on the edge.

Matthew: So when I looked and I saw how much it meant to my mom and my dad and my wife and my daughters...

Annie: Who were in their slippers. The girls had already changed out of their red carpet shoes.

Matthew: They were so tired with their high heels. Because that's when you start to like... a whole host of feelings rushing of like, "These people believe... they've championed me, they believe in me." I get emotional thinking about that kind of stuff. Like, wow, the people we have in our corner, like we're so blessed.

Like you don't get to where you are without having champions. And that's honestly not to point back to the book. But one of the things that the book is about is like the God who stays with us is calling us to be the people who stay with others.

Annie: I love that.

Matthew: One of the stories I tell is one of my best friends passed away at 50 years old. She was a publisher, and she was my first champion. And she spent her whole life championing other people. Her name was Cindy. And I tell the story in the book about at her memorial service the pallbearers who carried her casket, they all had a story to tell about how she championed them. Because for years, very few people knew it, but every Sunday night you didn't bother her because she couldn't be bothered because she was at the prison giving devotions to the female inmates. Every Sunday night.

Annie: Wow.

Matthew: No accolades, no awards, no book sales, no nothing. She just poured into these women's lives at the women's prison every Sunday night. She passes away, and the people carrying her casket were all former inmates at the prison who she had led to the Lord.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Matthew: And I thought, God, what will be said of me? When it's all said and done, will I have lived my life championing my own cause only or will I have lived the kind of

life where I championed other people in such a way where they can say, "Hey, he pointed me to Jesus," not just from a distance because I threw a three-minute song at him.

That hit hard for me just going like, "God, thank you for staying with me. Let me not settle for that knowledge, but let it change me to where I'm a different kind of person for other people."

Annie: Yes, yes. What does it look like to do that? I mean, I joke all the time that any of us that get applause here for our work we do for Jesus are cutting grass in heaven. We are getting our applause.

Matthew: Geez, that's gonna be a problem.

Annie: Don't get to ask for a transfer as soon as we get there.

Matthew: And have you ever mowed lawns for a living? Have you ever done that though?

Annie: No.

Matthew: I worked for the Hart district in my hometown in Downers Grove, Illinois. That job-

Annie: It's hard.

Matthew: Oh, it was terrible.

Annie: I'm telling you. But it's the pastors who've been pastoring for 50 years that are gonna get to sit and rest. Not me. I'm gonna be holding doors. We're gonna hold doors.

Matthew: We're gonna be weed-whacking.

Annie: We're gonna be weed-whacking. That's exactly right.

Matthew: That's terrible thoughts. Oh, man.

Annie: You better get to the prison on Sunday night.

Matthew: You better get to the prison.

Annie: I know. Oh, Matthew. Well, listen, you know you're always welcome here. So come on back anytime. I mean, your new bio does say a K-LOVE Fan Awards winner. So I would like everybody to know that.

Matthew: Yours is coming.

Annie: A Dove Award Songwriter of the Year. I mean, you really... Let me just keep going. Five time Grammy nominee? Five time, Matthew?

Matthew: That just means-

Annie: It means you lost five times.

Matthew: That's what Ricky Skaggs told me. Oh, gosh. One night he introduced me on stage at the Grand Ole Opry... And you know he's won more Grammys than anybody else. The great Ricky Skaggs.

Annie: No, he has so many.

Matthew: He's got like a warehouse full of them.

Annie: Oh, my gosh.

Matthew: And they handed him that sheet and it said, "Five time Grammy nominee to the guy who's 85."

Annie: Yes, certainly. Oh my gosh.

Matthew: So he introduces me. And he had this snark, he goes, "Well, this next young man is a five time Grammy nominee." And a few people were like, Woo. And then he looks off into the wings, makes eye contact with me and he's like, "Well, you keep trying, young men. You just might get one one of these days." And then he's like, "Matthew West." I was like, "Oh, my gosh." I walked out on stage a shell of a man.

Annie: I mean, every time we release a book, it's like, New York Times bestseller nominee. Nominated to be the bestseller.

Matthew: Well, you are New York Times, aren't you?

Annie: I am. I am.

Matthew: Dang.

Annie: Once. Yes. It only takes once and then it's on all your books' titles. So I'm good.

Matthew: Is that right?

Annie: Yes. The day that we found out that That Sounds Fun hit, my publisher, Mark, the marketing guy, he said, "No one can ever take that from you."

Matthew: Did you celebrate that?

Annie: Hard. Yes. We went big.

Matthew: Cool.

Annie: That's when we went to Dollywood. You were there, remember?

Matthew: Oh, wait, was that what the celebration was for?

Annie: That was the whole day, yes. Because I told the publishing team, "If we hit New York Times, I'm flying you out to Dollywood."

Matthew: That was one of my favorite experiences ever.

Annie: That was so fun.

Matthew: Seeing your fans-

Annie: And they all came to your shows too. See, we share all the same people that we're jumping back and forth.

Matthew: But walking into your theater and seeing your fans at Dollywood-

Annie: It was so fun. All those friends, man.

Matthew: That was electric.

Annie: It was.

Matthew: You were there Craig?

Annie: Yes, Craig was there.

Matthew: You were there?

Annie: Remember that's what the day that we told him that this girl named Hannah existed. And now they live together as married, husband and wife.

Matthew: Wait, that was the one?

Annie: That was the actual day that he heard about Hannah for the first time.

Matthew: You met her at Dollywood?

Annie: No, no. We just told him about her.

Matthew: "She was working at the Tilt-A-Whirl. We locked eyes."

Annie: "She was making that cotton candy and I knew right then that was the woman I was going to marry."

Matthew: "It was love at first fun, okay?"

Annie: That's right.

Matthew: What's that bread?

Annie: Love at first cinnamon bread. That's it. That's exactly right.

Matthew: That story's gonna be made into a Hallmark movie.

Annie: Oh, it should be. We should write that. Okay, is there anything we didn't talk about you want to talk about?

Matthew: No.

Annie: Oh, good.

Matthew: I'm already critiquing my interview.

Annie: Oh, great. What's your first thought?

Matthew: That my answers were a mile long and I'm gonna tell Craig to edit that.

Annie: No. Oh, no, you don't get to do that.

Matthew: And then maybe take out the part where I got choked up about... Take that out. Let's see. What else do I want to cut?

Annie: No. You can do that all you want on The Matthew West Podcast.

Matthew: Leave the part in about how I brought cookies because that was very nice.

Annie: And how he buys lunch for everybody when he co-writes.

Matthew: The other thing I wanted to say was that I was a guest on another podcast in your network, Dadville.

Annie: Oh, Dadville. That was great.

Matthew: I had a blast. And I've had multiple people tell me they listened to that episode as well. So congratulations to your network on growing like crazy with awesome people.

Annie: It's really fun. I mean, we're so lucky you and I get to be at... You know, speaking of amusement parks, I mean, that's what we call it, an amusement park of podcasts.

Matthew: Exactly.

Annie: We feel like we are surrounded by really good podcasters. They're in it for the long haul. That's the one with podcasting is get in there and do it.

Matthew: You told me that from the beginning. You were like, "It's a marathon."

Annie: And you've done it. You've proved it. And you have insane amount of listeners. Okay. The last question we always ask, Matthew West. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

Matthew: Today?

Annie: Yeah.

Matthew: What sounds fun to me is... Why am I not prepared for this? We talked about every-

Annie: I know. You've done this a lot of times. You've been on the show a lot of times.

Matthew: I'll tell you. What sounds fun to me right now is I'm finishing a record.

Annie: Are you?

Matthew: Yes.

Annie: We're getting a new record? When?

Matthew: February of next year. But I'm finishing it now.

Annie: Yes. Good. Will you come back and talk about it?

Matthew: Yes. But what sounds fun to me is getting the last stinking song out of my head.

Annie: Oh, no.

Matthew: It's stuck in my head and I gotta get it out.

Annie: Oh no. Does that mean it just like Tilt-A-Whirls in there all the time? Is it just like, Yeah, I know?

Matthew: And I can't crack the safe yet. For some reason it's given me the hardest time.

Annie: Oh.

Matthew: So what sounds fun is that safe getting cracked.

Annie: Getting that jerk out of there.

Matthew: Yeah, that safe being cracked.

Annie: So what is out? Can you play it on the piano? Can you play it on the guitar? Do you know the theme of it?

Matthew: Yes, I know the title and I know the theme.

Annie: Okay. This is so interesting for creators because people are... I love hearing this because I'm working on a project now too and I have a little bit of a safe I can unlock too.

Matthew: Where are you stuck?

Annie: I know where I want it to go, I don't know the path. So I know the end of the story. I don't know the path of how I want to get it there.

Matthew: Okay, is it a whole concept, like a book concept or it's just a story within?

Annie: It's a story within.

Matthew: When's your next book due?

Annie: It's not a book. It's a project we're doing before that.

Matthew: Okay.

Annie: It's a devotional project.

Matthew: Oh, man, you're always doing something.

Annie: We all are. Everybody goes to work every day. Well, so it's stuck in your head.

Matthew: Yeah. The title is... Should I say the title or will somebody else write it?

Annie: Someone else will steal it.

Matthew: Okay. So I shouldn't say.

Annie: Probably me. So don't say that out loud. But you've got the title and you've got the concept of the song. So what do you need to get out? What it sounds like?

Matthew: The musical direction right now feels like it's not right.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Matthew: So I keep vacillating back and forth between... Like I went-

Annie: It's like a recipe.

Matthew: Yes. So I've been walking like... I feel like *Rain Man*. You remember that movie?

Annie: Yes.

Matthew: Or *Forrest Gump*. And I've just been walking in loops talking to myself.

Annie: In your house?

Matthew: Yes.

Annie: Just walking over there in the big park land?

Matthew: And I'll be like mumbling to myself in melody. Like, "I think it's this. I think is this." And a lot of times I'll collaborate with other writers. But then there's some times where a song feels like, "Suck it up, West. Write this from start to finish yourself." So I'm walking in loops.

And I was just in my own world the other day. And I'm walking... It was right after the Ryman show and this lady walks by me and I didn't even notice her. And all of a sudden she's like, "Hey." And I look up and she's like, "We were at the show. Good job at the Ryman." She's like, "Are you on the phone?" I'm like, "No, I'm just talking to myself." So if you see a mumbling me on the streets of Nashville, I'm okay.

Annie: He's trying to get a song out.

Matthew: I'm just trying to finish it.

Annie: I know.

Matthew: That doesn't sound like fun but it is.

Annie: It will be great. I mean, when the album comes out, when you come back in February, I'm going to say, "Which song is the one that you couldn't get out?" And you will remember.

Matthew: Yeah, I will tell you.

Annie: And you'll remember. Because once you crack that code... That is the trick of every creative person, whether it is legitimately baking a cake, or writing a lesson plan for school, or doing a surgery, or writing a book or a song is once you unlock it, and it starts coming out, it feels great.

Matthew: And even the struggle is like fun. Right?

Annie: Yeah. Because you're like, "Thank God I get to do this. It's hard."

Matthew: We're doing it.

Annie: Yeah, yeah. I love that.

Matthew: I kind of love that.

Annie: I do too, Matthew.

Matthew: There's a painter that I follow on Instagram. He's crazy talented. But he follows my music. Sometimes he sends me coffee from his favorite coffee place and I'm like, "This guy's amazing." But I watch his process painting and I'm like... It's just like there's a freedom and how he approaches his painting. And I'm like, I wonder what it's like when he wrestles. Because when he puts the paint on the canvas, there's no turning back.

Annie: There's no going back.

Matthew: But for me, you have a delete button on your laptop.

Annie: Yeah, you and I. We can cut.

Matthew: I have an eraser on my pencil. But he just has to go with whatever dot he just put.

Annie: Right.

Matthew: And there's something free about that. So maybe it'll be one of those things where I'll just stop walking in circles and mumbling and go, "This is what it is."

Annie: Here it is. I'll sing it.

Matthew: And I'm going to put it out and see what people think.

Annie: Wow. That's what you're doing with this book. That's what's gonna happen.

Matthew: I hope.

Annie: All the dots are there. All the lines are drawn.

Matthew: I hope it speaks to people.

Annie: It's beautiful.

Matthew: So thanks for letting me talk about it.

Annie: Well, I mean, you know, I endorsed it. I got to read it early. I think it's a really good book.

Matthew: You can always trust me. You can ask me anything. I will never leave you. Listen only to the sound of my voice. This is the God who stays. He never leaves us. I'm gonna have to write a bonus chapter in the book about that story because I feel like I'm just thankful for the reminder that He's given me that He never leaves me.

Annie: Tell that one on stage when you're out doing a show.

Matthew: You think?

Annie: Yeah.

Matthew: If I can tell it without-

Annie: Crying.

Matthew: I tried to tell it today without crying and-

Annie: You didn't do it.

Matthew: I'm broken. You broke me. Annie broke me.

Annie: Hey, thanks for doing this. Sorry we broke you.

Matthew: Thanks for having me.

[01:09:59] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, I know. He's just the best, right? Oh my gosh, that story about Lulu at that camp. Oh, I can't even deal with it. Oh, I just adore him. I hope you are listening to the Matthew West Podcast. Make sure you're subscribed to that. It is one of my favorite shows.

And grab a copy of *The God Who Stays*. It comes out tomorrow. So you can go ahead and order it today And follow Matthew, tell him thank you for being on the show today. He is just one of my favorites.

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

me, that's how you can find me. And as my knee continues to heal, I can't get away. So I'm easy to catch and easy to find.

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 listen, there are two things left on my TSF best summer ever checklist. One of them is going to Iowa and the other one is getting in my float pearl the summertime Pegasus. So I'm blowing her up today and we're going to a lake. Yes, we're gonna go to a lake today. That's what we'll do.

Y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday with another one of our favorite singer-songwriters and That Sounds Fun Network bros, Dave Barnes. You may also know him as one other person that we hear every year at Christmas. But you know, it's Dave Barnes. It's Dave Barnes, you guys. We'll see you guys on Thursday with our friend Dave Barnes.