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

Y'all, Advent starts in 20 days. The countdown is on to one of my favorite seasons of the year. I'm so excited. I can't wait to see what God has in store for us during our Advent series. I hope you'll join in. You can go to [Anniefdowns.com/advent](http://Anniefdowns.com/advent) for all the details. And also, if you're subscribed to the podcast, episodes will show up for you every day of Advent. So it's gonna be so fun.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our amazing partners, Athletic Greens. So your jet lagged friend AFD over here would like to make sure you know that in addition to a ton of other amazing benefits that I will tell you about in a second, Athletic Greens supports better sleep quality, mental clarity, alertness. And for that it gets my vote.

Wait, what is Athletic Greens exactly? Well, it's a powder that you mix into really cold water. And just one delicious scoop delivers 75 high quality vitamins, minerals, Whole Foods sourced superfoods, probiotics, and adaptogens to help you start your day right.

This special blend of ingredients supports your gut health, your nervous system, and your immune system. And we already talked about how it helps with your energy, your recovery, and your focus. Yes, please.

Tons of people take some kind of multivitamin. And it's important to choose one with high quality ingredients that your body will actually absorb. This is one thing you can do every single day to be a really good friend to yourself. And your subscription comes with a year's supply of vitamin D, which is so important to add in. And especially now that the time change means that we don't get as much sunlight.

Athletic Greens has over 7,000 five-star reviews. Seven thousand, you guys. And I love this: for every purchase they donate to organizations that help provide nutritious food to kids in need, including No Kid Hungry here in the US.

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

So 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](https://athleticgreens.com/soundsfun). Again, that's [athleticgreens.com/soundsfun](https://athleticgreens.com/soundsfun) to take ownership over your health and pick up the ultimate daily nutritional insurance.

And if you're not sure you got that whole URL, it's okay, we've got you. All the links to our sponsors, the transcript of the show, and even a place for you to sign up to get the email for me every Friday, the AFD Week in Review, all those links are in the show notes.

**Intro:** So today, here we are right at the start of the midterm elections. And so I wanted to talk with pastor, author, leadership expert, Andy Stanley. He's a hometown friend of mine. Andy founded the Atlanta-based North Point Ministries in 1995. And today, North Point has eight churches in the Atlanta area and a network of 180 churches around the globe.

He's written over 20 books. You heard that. Twenty! And he communicates through sermons and podcasts all over the world. His latest book is why he is here. It's why I was really, really thankful he agreed to come on the show. It's called *Not in It to Win It: Why Choosing Sides Sidelines the Church*. And y'all, it is so good.

It's why I invited him to be on with us today. It's because with the midterm elections going on, I just wanted us to talk about this profound wisdom that he has and some things for us to consider. He's brilliant, funny, and I know this episode is gonna give us some things to think about.

And I want to say upfront, what Andy and I say in the show: please vote. It is one of the things we get to do as Americans. It's one of the things we get to do as women that even our grandmothers and great-grandmothers may not have gotten to do. We get to vote.

And you're gonna hear Andy say this, but we can use our Christ-centered conscience to vote well. So I hope you will vote. I hope you will vote. It's how we get to make a difference, you guys.

So here is my conversation all about this, about the elections, about Republicans and Democrats and the church. We're going in there, you guys. Here's my conversation with Pastor Andy Stanley.

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**Annie:** Andy Stanley, welcome to That Sounds Fun. I'm so honored to have you here. Thanks for joining us.

**Andy:** Well, Annie, thanks for having me, and thanks for your investment in our organization through the years. It's been huge. So I feel like we're related through ministry and through communication and a lot of other things.

And as you know, you are one of my daughter's favorite people. So the fact that you invited me on your podcast, I went up a few notches in the eyes of my daughter, which is a win. So thank you.

**Annie:** Well, I will tell you. When my dad listens to this today, the same will happen. Because I mean, I may get teary saying this to you but I don't know that there's been a man of God who has shaped my dad's life more than you. And my life is better because of how you've spoken into my dad's life. And so we're just family and back and forth between the two of us.

**Andy:** There you go.

**Annie:** I'm really, really grateful. Okay, so we intentionally had you on this week because of your latest book, Not in It to Win It. So we're just gonna go there for a little bit if that's okay with you. Let's just really talk about it.

I mean, from the beginning of the book you talk about this in a book you wanted to write. You didn't want to write about political division and where that meets the church. But if there is one thing that we are watching constantly it is the church and politics colliding, it feels like. So why do you have to write it?

**Andy:** Well, I mean, this sounds like something an author or pastor would say, but it's absolutely true. Sandra and I had just begun to work on a parenting book that actually comes out in January. And I said, "Darling, I hate to do this and I hate to interrupt, but I have been so disturbed by the response of the church to everything that's happened from the end of 2019 to 2021." Multiple things that we've all experienced together.

This gives perspective. We have campuses all over the city of Atlanta. So whatever political view somebody holds, they are in one of our churches in the city of Atlanta. And of course, the things that have happened culturally have impacted the city of Atlanta. So we're in the middle of this.

And even though I'm very conservative politically, but the two of us and most of your listeners, we have a King, we have a permanent King that as children we committed and surrendered our life to. And I have just lost my mind over watching

Christians or supposedly Christians devalue the King and support of a political candidate. I don't care who it is, the party, I don't care which one it is. And to diminish the value of our King and try to, you know, drape Jesus and whatever the rosewood of a political party they're a part of.

And because of where I live and where some of our churches are, we attract lots of Republicans. One of our churches is in a county that's 85% Republican. So situated there, I felt like it was my responsibility to say to people on the right, "Hey, you can get to choose whether or not you follow Jesus, but you don't get to choose what following Jesus looks like, sounds like, acts like and most importantly, you don't get to choose what following Jesus reacts like because it has been prescribed to us. So I just felt like, you know what? I just want to speak into this. So as a result, *Not in It to Win It*.

And these were things I had been saying to our churches all along throughout all this chaos. So when the book came out, I got up in front of our church, and I said, "Hey, I've written this book, *Not in It to Win It*, you don't need to buy it. You've heard all this before. I just wanted to say to the world what we've been talking about for two and a half years or you know, two years." So anyway, that's sort of the background.

**Annie:** One of the things you talked about a lot in the book, you just repeatedly call our country a young country. And I'm interested in that, because is what happening between politics and religion happening globally? Or is this a unique American thing we've decided to do in the last decade?

**Andy:** Well, great question. Here's what's happening globally. Not that anybody died and left me in charge of disseminating what's happening globally. But here's my opinion. It's not so much politics and religion in the rest of the world. In the rest of the world, it's the two extremes who have abandoned the middle.

So all over the world, whether it's religious or political, a mix of religious and political, the call to the extremes, which is so unhealthy. You never solve a problem in the extreme. Any problem. You can raise a lot of money there, you can get a lot of followers there, but you never solve a problem there. Because again, the further away anyone is from a problem, the simpler the solution appears to be, the further away anyone is from a problem, the simpler solutions appears to be.

So when people run to their far left or far right, they look at the problems and go, "Oh, the solutions are simple if everybody would just see the world the way I do," which is 100% of the time wrong.

**Annie:** Right.

**Andy:** So in the United States, it is politics and religion. But in the rest of the world, it's simply people have evacuated the middle to run to their extremes. And so what we sense and the tension we feel here is felt all over the world, especially in the West, where there is, by the way, the freedom to even have this tension, which is something else we forget.

We are privileged, we are so privileged to be able to complain. We are so privileged to be able to publicly and verbally express our views. And again, that's because a long time ago, some people met in the middle and said, "Hey, let's create free speech." The question is, will we be good stewards of this extraordinary freedom?

And back to the point of the book, Christians should lead the way because the way forward relationally and culturally has been modeled and prescribed to us through the message in teaching of Jesus.

**Annie:** And even right now we can see politically how privileged we are because the women in Iran are not getting to say. I mean when they're-

**Andy:** Thank you.

**Annie:** ...they're being killed for saying what I'm allowed to say on Twitter publicly if I so choose.

**Andy:** For taking their hats off so to speak. And again, to squander or to be bad stewards of our freedoms as Americans, shame on us.

**Annie:** Right, right. We'll have to show our friends this. But I mean, I have got 50 sticky notes in *Not in It to Win It* for us of certain things I wanted us to talk about.

**Andy:** And it's a short book.

**Annie:** And it's a short book. It is, I mean-

**Andy:** And you have 50 sticky notes. Yeah.

**Annie:** There is a lot here, Andy, that is so helpful. I'd like to just bring up some topics and read, especially as we're at midterms, as the end of midterms are the launch of presidential political stuff that, honestly, nobody wants to have happen. None of us want this, especially public people. We don't want... I hate this. I hate what it does to us.

But you wrote, "It's difficult to take a Christ-like stand when pressured to choose a political side." Why is that? Because there are Democrats who would say, "This is what Jesus would do" and there are Republicans who would say, "This is what Jesus would do."

**Andy:** Exactly. And I have said to our church over and over... And I just got another email from a couple who has been with us since day one. They're charter members who are upset with me are leaving the church over this very issue. Because-

**Annie:** I'm sorry.

**Andy:** ...for some reason—and I guess this is on me, if they've been listening to me preach all these years and they're still stuck on this—there seems to be no understanding... This is how I pitched it recently. Think about this. When Jesus showed up on planet Earth and began teaching, He disagreed with every single person He ever met about most things. And yet, somehow He was able to lean in and they leaned in.

So there is a way to disagree politically and to love unconditionally because if we follow Jesus, everyone pretty much disagreed with him about everything. And yet somehow He connected with them, not theologically, not even philosophically, He connected with them relationally in such a way that they followed Him, and after the resurrection, refollowed Him because suddenly their eyes were opened to the reality and the truth of what He taught. So there is a way forward.

And when people say, "But how can we have relationship with the Democrats? You know, they're this." "And how can we have a relationship with Republicans?" I'm like, Wait, we're Christians. We should be experts. And if someone's sin causes you to stiff-arm them, you're not following Jesus. Because if that had been Jesus' posture, He would have never come into the world to begin with.

I say, you know, if guilt by association, you know, had been a sticking point for Jesus, He would have never showed up. So we should be so good at this. And yet we've run to our corners and on the Republican side of things, and again, it's the group I'm surrounded with, and I'm so dismayed by, you know, and I talk about this in the book.

You know, my extreme Republican friends, and I have fewer and fewer of them because they think I've sold out, are absolutely convinced that most Democrats are going to hell. And at the same time, they want to create churches where Democrats aren't welcome.

**Annie:** Right.

**Andy:** I'm like, What? So in the book, I say to pastors, "Hey, if you've politicized your church, either side, if you politicize your church, you are not participating in the great commission. You are not following Jesus. I'm not even sure you're a church anymore." And I know that's kind of, you know, harsh, but-

**Annie:** No, I like that take. I mark this: "The church or church leader, who publicly aligns with a political party has relinquished their ability to make disciples of half of their own nation." I mean, I am not a church leader and this is not a church, this podcast, but I recognize if I take really hard takes on things publicly, I can lose half of the friends who trust me.

**Andy:** When you lose your influence.

**Annie:** Yes.

**Andy:** And why we should never give up influence unnecessarily. Ever. To make a point at the expense of making a difference is a foolish decision. And I've seen too many church leaders so run to the left or the right that they'd basically stiff-armed half the country and then say, "Oh, no, no, we're concerned about unchurched people and people who are far from God." I'm like, "No, you're not. You just ran them all off." Anyway.

**Annie:** Right. I mean, everybody listening has a public platform because they all have Instagram, right? Or they all have Twitter.

**Andy:** Yeah, everybody has a microphone.

**Annie:** That's right. So how do we stay true to what we believe? Because I can hear people saying back to us, "But I stand on these four things or whatever they are. And I am going to talk about this publicly because I'm not going to compromise." That seems to be the pushback of if you don't take a stand in one way or the other, you're actually compromising. Versus what you're teaching of the way of Jesus is to lead relationally not lead politically. So how do we do that? How do we hold on to what we're convicted by, but not polarize our friends?

**Andy:** Every good parent understands this. Because every good parent understands, if you want to influence your child, approach is everything. The wrong approach with the right idea, you end up with the wrong results.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Andy:** Any married person understands this. You're driving home thinking about I gotta have a hard conversation with my husband or wife? And what are you obsessing over? Not what you need to say you're obsessing over: the approach.

**Annie:** Right.

**Andy:** And here's the thing, and this is the message in the ministry of Jesus. We adjust our approach because we care.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Andy:** So the minute someone tells me, "Well, I've got these strong convictions, and I need to stand up, speak my mind. And I don't really care what people say or how people respond," my response to them is, "You know what? You don't really care. Because if you really cared about this other person, you would adjust your approach so you don't burn a bridge in the process of making your point."

Just follow Jesus through the Gospels. This is what He does. This is the way forward. And this should be the tone and approach of the church. The tone of the church should, to the best of our ability, reflect the tone and the posture and the approach of Jesus.

Did Jesus have strong convictions? Of course, He did. He was the Son of God. And Jesus could have showed up on day one, and said, "You're wrong, you're wrong, you're wrong, you're wrong, you're wrong. And here's why you're wrong. I'm done. I'm out of here." But He came to make a difference, not simply make a point. And every Christian appreciates that. And we can do this.

And, again, the apostle Paul comes along and teases out the teaching of Jesus for Gentiles. And he says—maybe this is the kind of the crux of the matter—He says, "I want you to carry one another's burdens. I want you to carry one another's burdens. You can't carry one another's burdens from a distance. And I want you to carry one another's burdens whether you agree with one another or not."

Because here's what everybody listening knows. When I move in your direction to carry your burden, regardless of your religious or political, or philosophical persuasion, when I move in your direction to carry your burden, I will have an "oh" moment. "Oh, so that's why. Oh, so that's why you believe that. Oh, so that's why you feel that way. Oh, see, you're not an idiot. Oh, so you don't suffer from a lack of IQ. Oh, our life experiences are different. Wow."

If I had grown up there, if I had experienced that, I would believe and feel the same oh. Well, it's the only moments that bring us together. And it's not a matter of



compromising our convictions or even changing what we believe. But it's that recognition that reflects the recognition of Jesus, again, who was nothing like anyone He met, and yet they liked Him because they sense that He loved them.

We can do this. It is the way forward. We don't have to be afraid. It's not about compromising. It's not about giving up something. And Annie, you could speak to this because we both experience this. The men and women on the left or the right who have their hobbyhorse convictions and things political talking points, most of the time or oftentimes, their personal lives have not even been impacted by some of those issues. They're just easy issues to talk about because it's not their sin, it's not their temptation, it's not their life experience. So it's easy to throw stones.

This is the woman caught in adultery. I mean she's guilty, right? She's guilty. And they bring her to Jesus and say, "We got you, you know, because this isn't our sin; this is her sin." He's like, "Yeah, well, all right. You don't have to be guilty of her sin. But those of you with no sin, you throw the first stone." And the oldest people left first because they're guilty.

**Annie:** I love that detail. I love that detail.

**Andy:** We can do this.

**Annie:** Yes.

**Andy:** We can do this. And then Jesus didn't let her off the hook. He says, "Leave your life of sin." And why does she listen to Him? Because she knew he was for her. So this should be easy for Christians. And this isn't about giving up political views or changing our conviction. So anyway.

[00:19:37] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about one of our amazing partners, [Brooklinen](#). I always try to bridge you to people and products that are gonna make your life better and more fun. And I'll tell you what sounds fun to me heading into the holiday season is finding great gifts for all the people on my list.

If you're looking for thoughtful quality presents for your people this season, look no further than Brooklinen. Everything is cozy, curated, and sure to be a hit with everyone on your list. In fact, everyone at Downs Books got a Brooklinen robe last year because I loved mine so much, that was the gift to everybody.

Brooklinen's thoughtful assortments of home essentials make your space a soft place to land with bedding decor and so much more to keep comfort as close as you like. They deliver high quality beautiful home essentials by partnering with top caliber manufacturing partners and using only the highest grade materials. The result is durable, better with every use product that lasts and lasts, even get softer over time.

So whether you're picking presents for loved ones or office mates or making your own home a little homier, Brooklinen and has top-quality coziness covered. We're talking robes, we are talking robes, blankets, and of course those famous sheets. You know I've got multiple sets of Brooklinen's sheets and they are the only ones I put on my bed.

With the Brooklinen, the rewards program, it literally pays to be comfy. You get points, discounts and more with every purchase. Just sign up and start saving. It's really that easy. Curating a space that feels like home is no small feat and Brooklinen brings the ease to every step with quality and comfort that you can count on.

So let the gifting begin, my friends. Go to [brooklinen.com](https://www.brooklinen.com) and use the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN for \$20 off and free shipping on orders of \$100 or more.

**Sponsor:** And I want to tell you about another one of our incredible partners, [KiwiCo](https://www.kiwico.com). Listen, KiwiCo knows a thing or two about delivering fun for all ages. And we are about that here at That Sounds Fun. KiwiCo is here to help you give awesome to the MiniBFFs in your life.

With a KiwiCo subscription, you're given so much more than a toy. They'll get a season of discovery and experiences delivered straight to their door. Each box is kid-approved by a crew of kid testers to ensure they're both age-appropriate and seriously fun.

Okay, pro tip to all your grandparents and aunts and uncles out there. The gift of a KiwiCo subscription is not just for the kids. Their mom and dad will thank you over and over because KiwiCo does all the legwork, quality supplies all included and easy-to-follow directions. So it's really all about spending quality time tackling projects together.

Our COO Ashley's mom gifted her kids a KiwiCo subscription and they say is one of their best gifts they've ever gotten. The last one they worked on together was a felt succulent garden and it turned out so cute. But the best part was how much fun they had being creative together.

And with nine different subscription lines specially designed for different ages and interests, there's something for literally every kid. There's a cold wallet crate for little babies. Oh, my gracious! And a yummy crate for elementary-aged chefs, the tinker crate for older kids with an engineering bent. Seriously, they've thought of everything and everybody.

Give awesome this holiday season with KiwiCo. Get your first month of any crate line free at [kiwico.com/thatsoundsfun](http://kiwico.com/thatsoundsfun). That's your first month free at [kiwico.com/thatsoundsfun](http://kiwico.com/thatsoundsfun).

And now back to our conversation with Andy.

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**Annie:** Will you talk a little bit... I love the part where you wrote, "I'm convinced a significant percentage of Evangelicals would in fact disapprove of Jesus. He was too passive. He refused to fight back." And you say, "I think evangelicals would like Pilate more than they liked Jesus." Will you just talk about that for a second?

**Andy:** Yes, well, Pilate was in it to win it. Pilate was leveraging the power. And here's the thing. And this is a bigger topic that we can talk about today, maybe. One of the most famous interactions in the life of Jesus was when He was taken up on the mountain and tempted by Satan.

Think about this. One of Satan's temptations is he said, "Look, I will give you all the kingdoms of this world." And Jesus' response, my terminology, not His, was basically, "I did not come for the current kingdoms of this world. I don't want them because I have come to do something brand new." And the moment we leverage the tools and tactics, approach, and posture of the kingdoms of this world, we have already lost regardless of what we win. Because Jesus refused to even step into that arena.

So what happens is, you know, when you get all bowed up on either side of the political house, like, "We're gonna win. We're going to take America back. We're gonna change America. We're going to make America more progressive," whatever it is, as Christians, the moment that we put all of our eggs in the "win it" basket, that means somebody has to lose. And in that moment, we should know, Wait a minute, this is not the way of Jesus.

And I've heard people say this in response to my message. "Andy, hey, the time for patience and the time for love is over. We got to move beyond that." I'm like, "Yeah, you can go ahead and move beyond Jesus. Tell me in history where that has

ever created anything good or unified or healthy or safe? And the answer is: it never does.

So the temptation is always to take a side and try to win. It's not intuitive. But come on. Over two thirds of the world worships, in some way, Jesus as Savior. Martin Luther King, Jr., you know, "We are not going to go the way of violence." He has a statue on the mall in Washington DC. This is the way forward.

And of course the pushback is, "What if it doesn't work?" I'm like, "This isn't about "does it work?" This is about following Jesus. And following Jesus will make your life better, it'll make you better at life, it'll make the world a better place.

So we can't have it both ways. We can't be in it to win it. We have to be in it to follow Jesus. It's not passive. It's not passive, because Jesus died covered in his own body fluids, right? This is not passive. This is not weak. This is the ultimate strength because it's the ultimate decision to put other people first regardless. And that requires extraordinary character and self-control. So...

**Annie:** On the other side of that is the cancel culture, right? So what happens when you do that, when you stick with love, is cancel culture comes around. And one of the things... I think this is... This might be my next tattoo. Canceled culture lowers the IQ of the entire culture.

And you do such a beautiful job—for everybody who's got the book, this is page 39—because you say we're no longer willing to listen to or learn from people who don't think like us. We had a situation come up with work last week, where we had to decide, "Is this someone pressuring us to be a part of cancel culture or is this us learning something we didn't know that needs us to change our behavior within our work??" How do we stay away from canceled culture? I mean, it's so tempting.

**Andy:** Right. Well, the biggest criticism I get these days is people are so weird they criticize... I still love Twitter. I know everybody hates Twitter. But I love Twitter. I love Twitter because I can engage in conversations with people off back channel if they'll follow me. And I do it all the time. I give stuff away all the time. I learned things sometimes. The biggest criticism I get these days is, "Andy, I can't follow you anymore. I can't trust you anymore because of who you follow on Twitter."

**Annie:** Wow.

**Andy:** And I get it from both sides. I'm like, "How am I supposed to learn anything if I only follow people I already agree with? What kind of world is that?" Again, if Jesus had that perspective, you know... And again, we have a term for cancel culture but this has been going on... I mean, I grew up Southern Baptist. Gosh, we

canceled everybody. We canceled the Methodists, the Presbyterians, certainly the Catholics. And they canceled... I mean, it's not new. Again, cancel culture ultimately lowers the IQ of the entire culture because nobody can learn from anybody anymore.

**Annie:** I feel that. Do you feel that?

**Andy:** Oh, completely.

**Annie:** I feel that in our culture that we are dumber for not having discourse around things. I've only been invited into being canceled one and a half times so far. And my experience has been, wait, why can't we talk about this?

Suddenly, I just felt like no one trusted my intentions anymore and that there was not an opportunity for anybody to learn. And as far as me, they wanted me to be different from what they were experiencing immediately, before a book had time to get to my house from Amazon, much less may have time to read it.

**Andy:** It's low trust. It's all or nothing. It's party line. And if you leave any portion of the party line, you're compromising and I'm not sure I believe anything you say anymore. It's over. You can't live that way. You can't stay married that way. You can't raise children that way. You can't accomplish anything that way. Anyway. It's unfortunate. It's just immature.

**Annie:** There's a phrase for it in the book. I'm sorry I didn't mark it. There's a phrase you write about in the book about where we take what someone believes or what someone says and we attribute it to their entire character.

**Andy:** Yeah, yeah. It's an attribution error. It's a - what do you call it? It's called fundamental attribution error. It's I'm late for work, but I'm late for work because I was taking care of the kids and I was being responsible. But when you're late for work, it's because well, you just don't have a good work ethic and you just didn't wake up on time.

So fundamental attribution error, we just attribute it to other people character issues but we attribute to ourselves circumstantial issues. There was a lot of traffic or I had to take care of my sick puppy, so I'm not guilty because circumstances I couldn't avoid caused me to do something. But when you don't measure up it's a character issues. It's called fundamental attribution error.

And again, smart people don't fall for that. Jesus follower shouldn't fall for that because Jesus didn't size people up and write people off. And the moment a Christian, a Christian, sizes someone up or sizes a group up and writes them off,

they're no longer following Jesus because they would not want Jesus seems to have done that for them and they don't want other people to do that for them.

So again, this is such Christianity 101. And again, I'm not arguing for either side politically. I'm just saying, Come on Christians. We can move things forward, we can solve problems if we won't... And again, Annie, I don't know how old you are. I'm not going to ask you.

**Annie:** I'm 42. I'm 42.

**Andy:** We've both lived long enough. And you would think most adults who've lived long enough, that when we hit a political season to go, "Oh, there's that again. I don't believe any of that. Everything's exaggerated. Everything's the sky is falling." And of course, we should by now and maybe this will be new information for some of your listeners, hopefully not, this is the way politics works.

You have to always appear to be losing. But with a little more money and votes, we might win. You can never afford to look like you're winning. You have to always appear to be losing. And if we lose, if we lose, the sky is going to fall.

Well, after you live long enough it's like, the sky isn't going to fall. We as a culture—this is why United States is so amazing—we ping pong or vacillate between two extremes that really aren't even extreme. Again, you mentioned Iran a few minutes ago. That's an extreme. I mean, our Congress is split, good. Our House of Representatives is split, good. That's healthy.

So we should just tune out the politicians that want to scare us and use fear tactics. We should just not even vote for them. It's like, "Nope, that's immature. You're treating me like I'm an idiot and I'm not going to fall for it. I'm just not going to do that. Give me information. But don't just sit up there and criticize the other person. That's what we tell our children not to do, right?"

**Annie:** Yes.

**Andy:** So anyway, we just need to take all their phones away until the election is over or something.

**Annie:** That's right. It's newspapers only until the next presidential election.

**Andy:** Yeah.

**Annie:** We don't get anything in real-time. Everything is the next morning.

**Andy:** Well, what about this? And this kind of subject. As we get closer and closer to the elections, especially presidential, but even midterms, the size of the mailers get larger and larger. This has happened?

**Annie:** Yes.

**Andy:** I mean, they're just gigantic. They're spending so much money and just think, "Gosh." But anyway, again, I'm not trying to change the political system or how people run for office. It just seems to me Christians should be like, Oh, we're not buying it. We're not falling for it. We're smarter than that. And we're following Jesus, and we're not going to hate anybody and we're not going to let our rhetoric be determined by our political views.

We're supposed to be submitted to the Holy Spirit. That would be love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, you know, self-control. And loyalty, as I tell pastors, loyalty is so unimportant it didn't even make it as a fruit of the Spirit. That's how unimportant loyalty is.

**Annie:** Wow. Wow, Andy. Right.

**Andy:** Anyway.

**Annie:** Because we bend over backwards for loyalty. I mean, that's one of the things I learned in the last year is when you live for loyalty, you die when you lose it. It hurts more than you realize.

**Andy:** Or when you start cheating.

**Annie:** Yeah, yeah. I want our friends listening, I think I want our friends listening, like I want us to be voters, I want us to be-

**Andy:** Absolutely.

**Annie:** ...a part of the culture of the... And part of politics because we can help shape some things by how we vote. So what's your advice on as we're sorting out, "I'm gonna go vote this way"? Do we need to tell everybody how we're voting? Is that part of the system? Or do we just vote and keep it to ourselves?

**Andy:** I'm glad you brought this up, Annie. So again, things I've told our church through the years. Absolutely you should get involved politically, you should run for local office. I don't want to name names, but so many high level Georgia politicians or people who run for office or hold office attend one of our churches. And two of them, when they tell their story say they were listening to me preach a sermon, and

they realized, "Instead of just sitting around complaining, I need to do something." And they actually ran for office and have helped our state made great gains.

So absolutely, we should be involved. But here's the differentiator. And I didn't talk about this in the book, because, you know, I needed to get the book out. And I don't know how well I explained this, so I'll give it a shot.

If you think about it in terms of three lanes, Jesus operated in two of three lanes. Jesus called out anything that hurt other people. That's how He defined sin. Christians don't define sin by breaking ten commandments. Christians define sin by anything that is not loving another person the way that God through Christ loved us.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Andy:** So He always called out behavior that hurt other people. Then He turned right around and comforted the people who had been hurt and comforted the people who repented of their sin. Those are two lanes.

The lane He never got in is public policy. In other words, here's how to address the system or change this system. And here's why He didn't do it. Because whatever Jesus would have said in the first century to step into that specific lane would have been outdated within 100 to 200 years. And what we would have done is we would have done with that teaching of Jesus the same thing Christians have done with the Old Testament law and try to update it and bring it into modern times and sort of, you know, tweak it and decide it's still applicable.

So Jesus wisely says, "You know what? I'm going to call out sin wherever I see it. I'm going to call out people hurting other people, regardless of who they are. And I'm going to comfort the people who've been hurt. I'm going to come along beside them. And I'm going to come along and support the people who are facing the consequences of their sin."

**Annie:** Wow.

**Andy:** "But I am not going to try to address the system that creates the problems." So as the church, those are the two lanes we operate in. We call out things that hurt other people, we comfort people who have been hurt and we support people who are reaping the consequences of their own sin. We don't shame them. Jesus saves the woman who has committed adultery and says, "You know, leave your life of sin."

So when the church is bold in those two lanes, the world is a better place. When we step out of one of those two into this center lane where we're going to determine



public policy, in the name of Jesus... I don't mean we don't vote, I don't mean we don't run for office. But the moment, to your point earlier in this discussion, the moment we put the name of Jesus or sign God's name to something that He never signed to begin with, we are out of bounds and we have diminished ourself, we've become a tool, we've become constituency, we've become just another voting bloc. And we lose the opportunity to be the conscience of the nation.

**Annie:** Wow. And that is our invitation from Jesus if we do this right. We can actually be the conscience of the nation if we're taking care of the other lane.

**Andy:** Yes. Right.

**Annie:** Yes. Wow, Andy.

**Andy:** And regardless of which side I vote on, I can call out the error in my party and call out the error in the other party, but the problem is, things are so divided now. It's like if you break ranks, nobody's gonna listen to you anymore.

**Annie:** Yes.

**Andy:** You know what? When I was in seminary, believe it or not, Tony Evans was a professor at DTS, Dallas Theological Seminary when I was there.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Andy:** And I'll never forget something he said. He was talking about kind of our diversion of this way back, you know, like so many years ago. But he said it way better than this. He said, "Jesus did not come to take sides. Jesus came to take over."

**Annie:** Wow.

**Andy:** I've never forgotten that. Jesus, He established something brand new, a brand new ethic, a brand new kingdom, and it's our ultimate allegiance. So anyway.

[00:37:47] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting one more time to tell you about another amazing partner, [Chime](#). Okay, be honest. What's the very first thing you do when you wake up? Is it checking on your credit score? No. Please, no. Me either. Your credit score doesn't need to be the first thing on your mind. But it should be on someone's mind, right?

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And now back to finish up our conversation with Pastor Andy.

[00:40:42] <music>

**Annie:** One of the things you said here that I'd love us to... I mean, this is the way forward. You say, "There is no middle ground. But if we're unwilling to compromise politically, we will compromise our faith eventually."

**Andy:** Always.

**Annie:** So how do we do that? Let's think forward. Help us think about this midterm election this week, moving into another presidential cycle, and our local things. I mean, we talked about this a lot four years ago where you were like, "Get involved locally. Get involved locally." But what does it look like to do this well? What does it look like to do this well?

**Andy:** It begins with this. It begins every day realizing that we have far more in common with every other person on the planet than uncommon. Way more common. The differentiators are minuscule. The easiest way to understand that is to think about our shared values. The conversations and relationships always rotate or circulate around shared value. So we already have so much in common with every other person. That's the beginning. It's shared values.

Everybody except, you know, I guess crazy people, I don't mean clinically crazy. I mean, just people who you just think, "What are they even talking about?" Most people believe that what's best for people is what's best. We disagree about what's best for people but we agree that whatever is best for people, for human beings, that is what's best.

Well, that's enough common ground that even when we divide for a moment politically to go vote, we come back together to solve problems. So everybody should vote. There are no perfect parties. There never will be. And we never compromise our character, our relationships, our language, our testimony, our influence, for the sake of politics, because it comes and it goes. And there are political parties that don't even exist anymore.

So it's really a matter of seeking first the kingdom of God than holding our nose and voting. And the way I say it to our church is I want you to vote your law of Christ informed conscience. You vote your law of Christ-informed conscience.

The law of Christ is this: you are to love one another the way that I have loved you. It's not the golden rule, the platinum rule. You have to love one another. So however you understand the values and the policies of the two parties, that in your estimation best represents the law of Christ, and it's not going to be perfect, vote. But don't allow your vote to divide you from real-life people because, again, we're Christians. So you get involved, do the best you can. And understand that politics is a game of compromise.

The other thing I would throw in real quickly, I had an opportunity to get out of the Georgia House and talk to the Senate and the House for Georgia. And the thing that it was so encouraging to me was after I spoke, they would come up and people want to say hi, they came up mostly in pairs. "Hey, Andy, I'm a Republican, this is my democratic competition but we're friends."

I mean, it was so encouraging, because at the state level, and I think this is true in most at state level, and at the national level, it just doesn't get any attention because good news never gets attention. Nobody cares how many planes landed safely. We want the one that had an emergency landing, right?

So most Republicans and Democrats know they have to work together to get anything done. And most of them do. But it's the people that gen up the extremes that make us think, "Oh, the world is coming apart. There's so much division."

But in the state of Georgia, and I bet this is true in most state houses, there was so much cooperation, even though there was disagreement around what's best for people. But at the end of the day, they wanted the same thing: what's best for Georgians. And I'm sure that's true in Tennessee, North Carolina, you know, California, all over the country. So that was encouraging to me.

**Annie:** And being up close, you write about in the book about Jesus washing the disciple's feet. And when you wash someone's feet when you're that close, it is hard to hate somebody when you're up that close.

**Andy:** You can't wash people's feet from a distance. And the fact that Jesus did that, even though there was so much division in that room took away all their excuses. And then He says to them and He says to you and he says to me, "I want you to wash each other's feet. I mean, you got to get close, you got to get dirty. That's how you carry each other's burdens. That's how you solve problems. That's how the church stays unified in the midst of division. So it can be done. So let's do it.

**Annie:** It's why we got to follow people we don't agree with and listen to them, read books by them. Because I think the other thing that's been lost, some of the pushback I get at times is about a guest I'll have on the podcast where some will say, "Well, I don't agree with that thing they said. You shouldn't have had them on." And we've lost the ability to eat the meat and spit out the bones. We've lost the ability to be, it feels like culture has said, "Do not agree with some of them, unless you agree with all of who they are." And the closer you get to people... I mean, I don't agree with me all the time.

**Andy:** Right. Wow.

**Annie:** The closer you get to people, the harder it is to cancel them all the way.

**Andy:** The way I say it is if you suddenly forgot everything you've learned from an imperfect person, if you suddenly forgot everything you've learned from an imperfect person, you would forget everything you know, including your name. So that bar is too high. We can't live that way. So come on. Just agree to disagree.

And before you push back, just admit, "You know what? I may be wrong about this. I may have something to learn. And for some reason... Well, I understand this is a big topic. Christians because of our dogmatism, especially conservative Christians, we are so quick to just throw up the walls, I think sometimes out of fear of losing our religion or fear of losing our faith, which is another topic for another day.

**Annie:** Our power.

**Andy:** Ultimately, it does come down to power, I'm afraid. And that's why Jesus said, "Satan, I'm not interested in the kingdoms of this world. Don't want it. Not why I'm here. I'm gonna do something better."

**Annie:** To all of our friends listening, and this is a goal for myself too, if we'll just read a little bit of the Gospels every day and then go and live, it is much harder to be real spicy on the internet when you've started the day in the gospels. It's just a lot harder for me.

**Andy:** Absolutely.

**Annie:** Okay, what did we not say that you'd want to make sure we cover? Is there anything we left out?

**Andy:** You know, you have such a fabulous audience, such a large audience. We can do this. Regardless of which side of the aisle you fall on, issues, policies, vote law of Christ-informed conscience, and then love one another. The way I say it to our congregation all the time is, Look, when you don't know what to say or do, you ask what love requires of you. When you're not sure what to say or do, you ask, what does love require of you. That's the gospel. That's Jesus' New Covenant marching orders. That's the way forward. And that's the way problems are solved.

**Annie:** This feels like *Not in It to Win It*. As I was reading it, I thought this is the guidebook. This is the guidebook for the next season of us going through political things. And if we will just take an hour and a half and read this and then go, "Okay, what does it look like to love like Jesus and to still vote my law of Christ-informed conscience, and then love.

It is hard. Both sides think it's really hard to love because the other people especially as Christians, the other people are not behaving, quote, "like Jesus." And we got to get past that. We gotta get past that. I have so many feels about this.

Okay, Andy, I gotta tell you, this is a left turn, but I can't let you go without doing it. The last question we always ask is because the show is called That Sounds Fun, what is more fun than politics and faith, but because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what y'all do for fun. What sounds fun to you?

**Andy:** Well, we have a lake house that we bought a few years ago, and I love to get our family out on the lake. As a pastor, weekends are not my free time. So that was just never a thing for us when the kids were young. And a few years ago, I decided, "You know what? We're gonna figure this out."

So I love to be there. I love to be with my family. I have three married kids. I have a first grandchild. And when I'm with them, whether we're eating or just messing around or fixing something. pure joy, pure joy.

So I don't have any hobbies really, which I keep thinking I need a hobby, but I love to read. But that's isolated. I love to write—I'm isolated. But in terms of what's fun, just put me with one of my kids or me and Sandra, any combination and just love it.

**Annie:** People are always looking to read parenting books by people who have adults that still love their kids and then the kids still love the parents. Right?

**Andy:** Yeah.

**Annie:** So I'm glad y'all have that book coming out in January to kind of help... You know, so many of our friends listening have teenagers and younger. And so they're going,

"Where are parents who have adults that I want my kids to be like?" Your son Andrew Stanley is one of my people. I love that guy. So he is so funny.

**Andy:** He's so funny.

**Annie:** He's so funny. Well, I can't thank you enough for doing this today and for helping lead us when it has cost you. And that is not lost on me. So thank you for leading us in a way that's really cost you, but it's helping us be like Jesus. I'm grateful.

**Andy:** Thank you, Annie.

[00:50:07] <music>

**Outro:** Y'all, isn't he the best? I'm just so thankful for Pastor Andy, for his honesty, for how much time and energy and effort, and thinking he's put into this. I hope, hope, hope, hope that we are a group of friends who can agree on most things even if we disagree on some things, and that we can choose friendship and relationship over politics.

While all that is important, I mean, I'm with you. There are things that are really important to me when it comes to voting this week and in the future, but friends matter more. Friends matter more, y'all.

So grab a copy of his book *Not in It to Win It*. Truly, it is such a resource. I feel like, like I told him, and I'm telling you, it's a handbook, it's a handbook for this season. So grab a copy of his book. Go out and vote.

Be sure to follow Andy Stanley on social media, tell him thank you so much for being on the show. The more kindness you can show Pastor Andy, the better because there are a lot of people who are choosing the opposite.

So let us be a group of friends where even if we don't agree with everything a guest says we are thankful for their time. So if you get a chance to reach out to Andy on social media, he talks about Twitter, I think it'd be really kind of you to tell him thanks.

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

And I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me is voting for real. I love it. I think I have a special t-shirt I wear. I can't wait. I love voting. I

love it. I love it. I love it. I get teary singing the Sister Suffragette song from Mary Poppins when I vote. So just know that's the level you're working here with AFD. That's how much I love voting.

So y'all have a great day. We'll see you back here on Thursday commemorating Veterans Day with Evan and Ginny Owens. Y'all are gonna love their story and love this episode. So we will see y'all then.