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

Before we talk about anything else, I got to know, which city are you coming to for the Here For You tour? Is it Grand Rapids or Indy, Kansas City, Dallas, Charlotte, Columbus, or any of the other fun stops? Well, you've got some time to pick a city, plan a road trip if we're not coming right to your neighborhood. Carlos Whittaker and I cannot wait to see you. Just go to hereforyourtour.com for all the details. I'm telling y'all you do not want to miss these nights.

And even though we've tried to make it easy, you know we're not expecting you to remember that URL and everything. Just pop to the show notes for that link along with all the links to all the things, sponsors and transcripts, and things we talked about in the show and the spot to sign up for the AFD Week in Review, our weekly email newsletter, and more.

Intro: Today on the show I get to talk with my dude Mike Donehey. Y'all, I love this guy so much. You may remember Mike from when he was with us before on Episode 155 and Episode 344. He's a singer, a songwriter, an author, a generally brilliant and kind friend. I'm really excited to get to connect with him today.

His new book is so timely for the way our culture seems to have conversations these days, y'all. It's called *Grace in the Gray: A More Loving Way to Disagree*. In it, Mike helps us to see the grace and good that's often hidden when we let limited perspectives and assumptions get in the way of listening and extending grace.

Y'all know this is so important to me, for us to figure out how we stay friends with people that we do not agree with on everything. And I learned so much as always. I learned so much from Mike. He's like a sage. So I can't wait for y'all to hear this. So here's my conversation with one of our very favorites Mike Donehey.

[00:02:04] <music>

Annie: Mike Donehey, welcome back to That Sounds Fun.

Mike: I can't believe it.

Annie: "I thought I'd never come back here."

Mike: I keep thinking, "There's no way they'll ask me back."

Annie: You keep thinking, "I'm never walking in that room again." And then we do ask and you do come back.

Mike: That's not true. What a pleasure!

Annie: Dude, people request you to come back so often.

Mike: I'm gonna just pretend like that's true.

Annie: Why would I lie? I would lie with headphones on. I would lie with headphones on.

Mike: That's so funny.

Annie: No, it matters so much. Your conversations, what you bring is so pastoral. That is not pressure on you when we're about to talk about-

Mike: I feel no pressure.

Annie: Good. Because I'm so thankful. When I watch your life online, when we get to run into each other, I just always think you're kind of a secret ninja pastor that nobody knows is actually out there writing songs and pastoring.

Mike: Which would be a great Instagram handle.

Annie: Yeah. Secret Ninja pastor.

Mike: Secret Ninja pastor. Like, swoops in... and out.

Annie: Go. Bye. Okay, so we're recording this at the very bitter end of December. People are going to hear this to start in January. Tell me what you are thinking about 2023. What are you looking at next year?

Mike: I don't know.

Annie: Really?

Mike: I really don't know.

Annie: Oh, your sweet little Enneagram four heart. "Don't make me think about '23."

Mike: It really is true.

Annie: I know.

Mike: I think with the band ending, it's so strange. I'm still trying to get my feet under me of when you're in a band, there's so many people to think about and so many people's lives. So you're on... not a wheel, but just on a rhythm.

Annie: And when you're a successful band, you know things way in advance.

Mike: And I would say Tenth Avenue North was successful enough to keep going and never successful enough to take a break.

Annie: Oh, wow. Wow.

Mike: So it just was, go, go, go, go. So I'm in a weird "Oh, I can actually just sit and wait and think about what I'm gonna do," which is a gift, you know. This book I wrote is going to come out and kind of spend some time and energy trying to tell people about it. And then I just put out a new single that I'm really excited about.

Annie: Oh, don't I know. It is so good.

Mike: Thank you.

Annie: Oh, my gosh. *Friend of Sinners*. Is that what you're talking about?

Mike: Yeah, yes.

Annie: Jesus. Parentheses for the-

Mike: Yeshua.

Annie: Yeshua.

Mike: Which is His real name apparently?

Annie: Thank you.

Annie: Tell me more.

Mike: Well, you know, Jesus is a Latin derivative. It's not what His mama would call Him. His Aramaic name would have been... or Hebrew would have been "Yah", which is short for Yahweh, "Shua" the God... So it's God who saves is His name. Yahshua. It always intrigues me that we never call Him... I mean, my mom doesn't call me Mike. Well, she calls me Mikel Berry, but that's another... That's off the point.

- Annie:** That is very burying the lead three episodes in. Your mom calls you Mikel Berry?
- Mike:** Yes. I had this really profound thought about the name Yeshua is also where we get the name Joshua. And no offense to any Joshuas out there, but I love that Jesus had the most basic name.
- Annie:** Yeah. Right?
- Mike:** We tend to think Jesus... You know, you'll hear someone named Jesus. "How dare you be named Jesus?" Well, actually, that's actually kind of the point that Jesus assimilated with us. He didn't lord over us, but He came to us even in His name.
- Annie:** I'm gonna read you this thing. A friend of mine that was our tour guide in Israel named Aviel.
- Mike:** Oh, please.
- Annie:** When he was tour guiding-
- Mike:** You just got back from Israel.
- Annie:** Yeah, we just got back in October. It was awesome.
- Mike:** That's awesome.
- Annie:** Have you been? Yes.
- Mike:** No.
- Annie:** Okay. I refuse to let you go without me watching you there. So I'm going on the same trip as you. I would die to see you see everything in Israel.
- Mike:** Okay, done.
- Annie:** It's unbelievable. We'll figure it out. I'm going to take you on a trip with your family, whoever you want to come.
- Mike:** I'm coming. Whenever Avi would teach about Jesus, he would call Him The Lord. But he never called Him Jesus. So randomly a couple of weeks ago, I messaged Him and I was like, "Avi, I've been thinking about this. I feel like you explained it and I just wasn't paying attention, or I was asleep or something. Why do you say "The Lord"?"

And he said that whenever people talk directly to him, they use a title of respect: rabbi, Lord, teacher, Messiah, and Christ. And that's the same when they wrote letters. And he said, Yeshua was so common. And he says, usually it only appears in the historical writings of the gospel because they wanted it to be more neutral. And then he says, "When I speak about Him, I prefer to follow the example of those who showed Him respect because He is not neutral to me."

Mike: Wow. "He is not neutral to me."

Annie: "He is not neutral to me." I mean, it made me teary then, it makes me a little teary now. He is not neutral to me. And I thought, "I have only ever called Him Jesus." And as I've been reading the gospels for the Let's Read the Gospels podcast, no one called Him Jesus. Everyone called Him Lord, Savior, other things. It is fascinating, right?

Mike: Think about the inverse. He says, "I no longer call you servants, I call your friends." So He is not neutral to me and I'm not neutral to Him.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. That's beautiful.

Mike: That's the fuel.

Annie: Okay, so you came prepared with your favorite verse from the Gospels?

Mike: Yes, I did.

Annie: I'm ready.

Mike: Which seems counterintuitive because it used to be my least favorite. It's actually two verses. Can I do two verse-

Annie: Yeah, of course.

Mike: ...just to complete the thought.

Annie: Yes.

Mike: But Matthew 6:14-15. It starts really great. "If you forgive others their trespasses, I'll forgive you." Like that sounds great. "If you don't forgive others their sins, I won't forgive you." Let's try to fill in the blank. Let's pretend we didn't know the first half and someone said, "If you don't fill in the blank, I won't forgive you." What do you think Jesus would say? And growing up culturally... Like no context.

Annie: Nothing that He won't forgive for.

Mike: Correct. Or you'd start listing off really bad things.

Annie: Murder.

Mike: Murder. "Going to do the murders. Here's the knife. You need to do some murders." I'm quoting your version.

Annie: Yes, I know it now.

Mike: But He doesn't say any of the things we expect Him to say. He says something more problematic. He says, "If you don't forgive others." Right? And I struggled with that verse a long time because it sure seems like God's saying His love is conditional. And I thought, "God's love isn't conditional. So what's this weird condition on it?"

So I was talking to God about it, I was like, "Hey, God, what's up with this? I thought your love is unconditional." And He goes, "Yeah." "So you're saying you get unconditional love but then you're gonna put a condition on it for everyone else? Didn't you just turn my unconditional love into something it's not? Isn't the one condition unconditional love needs to have is that it remains unconditional?" It doesn't work the other way.

But really, if you look a little deeper, it seems like what Jesus is saying is like, "Look, if you're not at a place where you're forgiving other people, then you're not living forgiven." This is a litmus test. I mean, that's what He says of-

Annie: Yes. Because if you're not forgiving other people, you don't feel forgiven. You need to hold them to a tab because you feel like you've still got a tab that you've got to have to pay off.

Mike: Yes.

Annie: Mike, you're right. Exactly right. So he's not saying that because He doesn't want to forgive. He's saying because He wants us to be free.

Mike: Of course. Of course.

Annie: Of course.

Mike: And it's not any shock then that Paul goes in 2 Corinthians and says, "Hey, you want to know what your ministry is? Your ministry is reconciliation." It says he has given us the ministry of reconciliation. I just wonder how many people wouldn't describe their ministry with that word. They'd say, "I have a ministry of podcasts. I have a ministry of writing books. I have a ministry of singing music." No. That is the method through which you deliver the ministry. But the ministry we've all been given as His kids, the one who is reconciling all things unto himself is reconciliation.

Annie: I mean, my bigger question is when other people look at our ministries and say that's a ministry of reconciliation. Because a lot of us will label it ourselves. But are the people experiencing our work on the other side saying, "This is reconciling me to God, to others, to myself, to my history, to Jesus?"

Mike: And I think a really helpful layman's terms for people listening is, what does it mean I've been given the ministry of reconciliation? It simply means you're on the earth to forgive other people and help them know they're forgiven. Now, that's a hyperbolic statement but probably oversimplified, but I think it's helpful. And then it calls me out that wow, cool, I'm singing songs about Jesus, and I'm writing books about Jesus. Am I reconciling?

I just read Tim Keller's book *Forgive*. He always says it so pointedly.

Annie: So good.

Mike: And he pointed something out to me. And I want to get really honest here. I mean, I had a friendship with someone in the music business for the last three years has been torn apart just because of some legal stuff, blah, blah, blah. In his book, Keller points out, he goes, "Isn't it interesting two places in Matthew He says, 'if you have something against your brother, go to him?'" And then later in Matthew, or maybe it's the other way around, it says, "If your brother has something against you, go to him." Which means the impetus of initiating reconciliation always starts with me.

Annie: Yeah, the gift of going second is what Jon Acuff says. Wow.

Mike: Now the caveat is you can't control whether or not someone will reconcile with you. But we're told to make every effort to keep the bond of peace. Every effort.

Annie: In every way possible, be at peace with everyone. I talked about it during our Advent series when I said, everyone is actually everyone. And that's complicated. It's actually everyone.

Mike: So me and this buddy... I was reading that, I'm like, "I have not made every effort."

Annie: I know. What did you do?

Mike: And so called him up-

Annie: Oh, no. Did you?

Mike: ...said, "Hey, let's go for a walk around Radnor Lake." The two of us got together, walked and had an amazing conversation.

Annie: Does it fix things? Is it just like da da da da?

Mike: No. But it starts to fix things.

Annie: Yeah, yeah.

Mike: I wrote this book.

Annie: *Grace in the Gray.*

Mike: So I've got this chapter called "Get the fork out of here," where basically I start with a story about this just ridiculous moment where I was making a smoothie. And my oldest daughter has a way of becoming very poltergeist-like. She kind of floats in room unnoticed-

Annie: Disappears?

Mike: And then you turn around, "Aaaah!" And she's just standing there staring at you.

Annie: How old are the girls now?

Mike: Well, my oldest is 13, my second oldest is 11, then I have a 9-year-old and a 5-year-old. Four daughters. Pray for me. That's fantastic. So did I tell you this joke?

Annie: No.

Mike: Did I tell you this joke about having four daughters?

Annie: I don't think so.

Mike: People are like, "When are you going to have a boy? When are you going to have that boy?" I was like "Man, it's apparent that the Lord gives girls to a family that already has a man."

Annie: "I'm all the man this family needs."

Mike: Every dad I know of just girls gives me high fives.

Annie: Yes, that will be my dad. He will agree with you.

Mike: No, it's great. Someone's always crying. Sometimes my girls cry.

Annie: Someone's always crying and sometimes it's my daughter.

Mike: Sometimes it's them. But my poltergeist daughter, she comes in, she's got a ratty nightgown on, like hair down on her over eyes, and she's just standing there. I was about to fly out. So I make this smoothie concoction every morning to force nutrients into them. Ninja pastor, like ninja nutrients. How do I sneak them past the gates of brown taste buds that you ward off anything that resembles cellular respiration? I'd use Ka'Chava powder right now.

Annie: I don't even know what that is.

Mike: It's a fancy powder that I subscribe to.

Annie: Ka'Chava?

Mike: Yeah. I'm not even being paid to tell people about this.

Annie: Is that a brand?

Mike: It is.

Annie: Or is that the plant? Knowing you it could be like, "Yes, Annie, it is from South America."

Mike: This is a tree that I grow in my yard.

Annie: That could be so true.

Mike: Thank you.

Annie: Ka'Chava. It's the brand.

Mike: I receive that as a compliment.

Annie: It is.

Mike: Ka'Chava is brand. So I throw that in and then I throw in frozen spinach and avocado and chia seeds and all that stuff.

Annie: Do you put fruit in there or do you just give them all green things?

Mike: No, it's all green and chocolate. I found that I can do fruit. But they eat fruit. Fruit has sugar. I'm trying to cut down the sugar.

Annie: Okay.

Mike: So I'm making a smoothie and my daughter scares me. "Oh, what are you doing?" Because I've gotten up early at 4:30 in the morning and I'm making a smoothie to put in the fridge so my wife can give it to them before they-

Annie: Oh, that's kind of you.

Mike: I'm just really great husband. I'm losing my roared though according to Jesus. I'm telling everyone about it.

Annie: That's all right. Just this time.

Mike: Anyway. So I'm making the smoothie, she scares me. She's like, "Hey, dad, can I come help you make the smoothie?" I go, "Sure, you can make smoothie," forgetting that I was in the process of forking out some avocado in the smoothing.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Mike: Caveat-

Annie: You kind of dropped the fork into the-

Mike: Correct.

Annie: Oh, Lord have mercy.

Mike: Into the 500 horsepower Vitamax that can blend up your shoes. And I drop it, I forget. "Oh, yeah. Okay." At this point, I wasn't using frozen spinach. I was using loose leaf springs, not realizing that frozen vegetables actually usually have more nutrients than fresh vegetables. Anyway.

Annie: That's good for everybody here. But the frozen spinach.

Mike: I just want to let people know.

Annie: Because everybody knows the bottom third of the big container of spinach you're gonna buy and put in your fridge is gonna get tossed in anyway.

Mike: And especially if you're using it in smoothies. So she gets a big handful of spinach and toss in completely hiding the fork in the smoothie.

Annie: Oh, my gosh.

Mike: So we throw other stuff in, throw some other stuff,, you know, coconut milk, blah, blah, blah. And she go, "Okay, you ready?" Put the top on. She's like, "Yeah." Hit the switch, armageddon ensues.

Annie: I can't even imagine that.

Mike: The lights are flickering. I mean, it's going kahraahdgara." Smoke is coming out.

Annie: Oh, my gosh.

Mike: I grab her, you know, aaaaaah, it's rattling like a cobra and a cage just waiting for whatever's about to happen. And then—I'm not making this up—the fork with sparks bursts through the side of the Vitamix blender and hits the wall, puts a dent in the wall, bends the fork, and smoothie cascades.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Mike: ...over the entire-

Annie: I'm sure. At 4:30 in the morning.

Mike: I mean, just an array of glory.

Annie: What a nightmare!

Mike: So we're sitting there and I'm looking at myself and going, "If that fork went... I would have put a hole in me. I think I would have died. Death by smoothie."

Annie: Right.

Mike: So long story short, we live lives like... I mean, this is ridiculous.

Annie: I love it. No, I'm here for it.

Mike: We live lives like smoothies, where we're going, "Hey, how can I get more healthy? How can I become more like Jesus? I need more quiet time. I need more Scripture memorization. I need more health. I need more exercise. I need more..." And we add, add, add, add, add, add. What do I need, Jesus? What do I need, Jesus? What do I need?" And he's like, [knocking] "Hey, can we talk about the fork in there?" "No, I'm gonna add in. I'm gonna add in."

And it's interesting, you know, we're told that make no room for bitterness and give the enemy a foothold. Like bitterness is the way in which we open ourselves to... I mean, it's a strong language, but demonic activity.

Annie: That's right.

Mike: So before I try to fill my life with anything else, I need to first open myself up to, what does God need to take out? Because of Jesus' impetus' importance on unforgiveness, I have to first look through my life and say, "Is there anyone I am refusing forgiveness for?"

I talked to my dad this one time. This is all in this one chapter. And I figured it's easier to talk about one chapter and try to talk about the whole book. But we'll get there. Or maybe we won't. So I'm talking to my dad and I have this really-

Annie: I'm glad to be here for this.

Mike: Just having this conversation with me. Myself. Thanks for being here, Annie. But my dad was telling me one time about how his father was abusive. He actually ran away to the world's fair when he was 17 because-

Annie: Your dad did?

Mike: Because my grandfather was so abusive and beat up him and his mom. He ran away to the World's Fair by moped. He lived in Boston.

Annie: Why isn't this on a movie yet? We'll link Kendrick Brothers.

Mike: He lived in Boston and drove up to Montreal, work the World's Fair all summer. And then when the snow started coming in in the fall, he said his moped gave up the ghost and he buried it in a snowbank. He remembers saying goodbye to his little moped, and got a bus home or whatever.

Long story short, quickly joins the Air Force, moves away, married my mom in Nebraska randomly. So he's at this church... Oh, so I asked my dad. He's telling me all this, I go, "Dad, you know what's really fascinating is how did you do it?" He goes, "What do you mean?" I go, "How did you break that cycle of abuse? Because I know a lot of people were... That is one of those systematic..."

You know, Jesus talks about generational sins or the Bible talks about that, that there are certain things, distortions, dysfunctions that kind of get handed down and you become subject to that kind of abuse, and then you end up performing that sort of abuse." And he goes, "Oh, I can tell you when." I was like, "Oh, wow, this is more efficient than I was expecting." My dad is usually as I am, very verbose and goes on and on. He said, "I just came to know Jesus at this church."

Annie: In Nebraska?

Mike: In Nebraska. "Pastor gets up and reads this verse and says, "Hey, listen. I don't want to offend anybody, but you need to forgive." And my dad went, "Hmm. So I went home and I wrote my dad a letter." I go, "Oh, got you, dad. Wink wink. Finger point. You wrote him a letter saying how you forgive him for everything he did to you?" And my dad looks at me, his face gets kind of scrunched, he goes, "Well, of course not." I go, "What?" He goes, "I wrote a letter asking my dad to forgive me for all the bitterness that I held toward him."

Annie: Oh wow.

Mike: I go, "Did he read the letter?" He goes, "I don't know, but the second I put that in the mail, all that weight was lifted."

Annie: Wow.

Mike: Now, it's not always like that for people. But I love my dad's story because what he's saying is, I'm just going to start with my part in it. I'm not going to come to them and demand that they apologize or make right. Even I mentioned my walk with my friend. I didn't ask him to apologize for where I felt like I was wronged. I apologized for where I knew I was wrong. It's just incredible how that's really the part that I think we need to own because ultimately you can't ever make someone apologize. You can't ever force repentance. But you can bring your side of it.

So I have this picture in my mind. Okay, go with me. Are you ready for it?

Annie: Yeah.

Mike: This is extra-biblical.

Annie: Oh, great.

Mike: People are... they're gonna write you in about this.

Annie: Okay, great, great, great. My email is annie@mikedonehey.com. That is the best way to tell me what you think right now.

Mike: I had this thought and I wrote it down in the book. This chapter is called Get the fork out of here. Like how to get bitterness out of yourself. I said, "Okay, is there anybody when you die and you get to the gates of heaven that you sure hope isn't there?"

Annie: Oh, gross. I mean, that's what you're gonna ask? That's good.

Mike: Let's make it even worse. Let's say you die and you go up the escalator, however it works.

Annie: It's an escalator for sure. That's great. I didn't know that before now, but it rings true in my spirit.

Mike: I saw *Pixar's Soul*.

Annie: That's right.

Mike: It's how I know it. An escalator of some sort. So you're standing there-

Annie: You get at the top of the escalator.

Mike: ...Peter's there, he's got the book of life. Shiny pearly doors, Peter's beaming at you, read your names-

Annie: He's my favorite. I can't wait to be his friend.

Mike: Your name's in there, which we could talk all about... You know in Hebrews it says we're being cheered on by so great a cloud of witnesses. Let us run this race. I love the image of Peter standing there going, "I deny Jesus. Keep running." You know, David saying, "I committed adultery. I killed the guy. Keep running." Anyway, that's the caveat.

But Peter's in there, he read your name, "You know, this is great." You open your eyes and the gate start opening and light from Jesus's face just pours out and you're squinting, you can't see, and you start to run through the doors. But then there's a

figure coming at you and you stop and you're shielding your eyes from the glory. And they come into view and it's that person, the person you hoped wouldn't be there, the person you couldn't imagine. And the doors slam shut behind them. And you go, "What? Peter, just let me in. We'll work on this later." And Peter goes, "Oh, sorry, I forgot to mention, you have to go in in pairs."

Annie: Oh, gosh. You have to go in in pairs.

Mike: And they even say all the apology you ever longed for. But like that is sort of the picture of heaven that I have to wrestle with is what if God redeems the person that I'm angry at. So maybe when Jesus says, "If you don't forgive others, I won't forgive you," He's like, "How do you expect to live in perfect harmony of reconciliation with all the saints, if you aren't doing that work now?" You will hate heaven.

Annie: Right. If we don't get some practice in now-

Mike: Get started.

Annie: ...eternity is gonna feel awful. That's interesting.

Mike: It's kind of what I think Lewis had in mind in *The Great Divorce*. He's like, "Get started."

[00:25:36] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about one of our amazing partners, [ZocDoc](#). When someone is just exceptionally good at what they do, like a waiter carrying four plates balanced on one arm, you know you're in good hands.

It's like at our office. We like to joke that Lily, our chief energy officer, doesn't have a to-do list, she has a to-done list. Before I even think of things to ask her, she's practically taking care of it. And because of that, we all just have the utmost confidence in her. Same when you find the right doctor, you can feel it, right? You feel heard and at ease.

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Sponsor: And I gotta tell you about another one of our incredible partners, [Kiwico](https://kiwico.com). I think I've told you about one of the things I'm really looking to learn about and practice this year is good quality sleep. Feels like a very worthwhile thing to discover more about.

Kiwico knows a thing or two about delivering moments of discovery for kids of all ages through fun hands-on projects. Each month they deliver super cool science, technology, and art projects right to your door. You can choose from nine different subscription lines for different ages and categories. There's something for every kid.

There's one about environmental science where kids learn how oil affects oceans and the creatures that live in them, and they get to explore different ways to clean up spilled oil. And one where they get to explore the engineering and the physics behind dominoes by building a real domino machine. Very cool.

I've done that one with some of my MiniBFFs and it was so fun. I think I was most impressed with how simple the directions were to follow for me, and how all of the materials were included, which made my life easier too. The kids are so proud of themselves when they saw the machine in action.

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And now back to our conversation with Mike.

[00:28:49] <music>

Annie: Something we talk about when we talk about politics here often but it could be in anything, is right now on earth there are people who love Jesus, deeply love Jesus, and could not be more polar opposite with me about some beliefs.

Mike: Of course.

Annie: And what has happened is culture has said to us, "If they don't agree with you, then they all actually don't love Jesus."

Mike: Oh.

Annie: Right. Don't you feel like that's what cul...? I mean, that's what *Grace in the Gray* is saying.

Mike: This is what the book is all about.

Annie: Yes. It's like what I have to wrestle with, I won't speak for any of our friends listening or you, what I have to wrestle with is I could have to sit across the table from someone who says, "I read the Bible more than you. I pray more than you. I actually know factually that God has more love for me than He does for you," which is not true. "But I know God likes me more than He likes you, and I believe so differently on this," and we're both going to end up with the same Jesus as our best friend. That dude. That's hard.

Mike: We should expect it. I mean, I love that they show this in *The Chosen* series. You've got Matthew the tax collector-

Annie: Matthew and Peter.

Mike: And Simon the Zealot, which he's the worst.

Annie: Yes, yes. Oh, yes, Simon the Zealot.

Mike: I mean, Simon the Zealot would have been murdering people like Matthew. The amount of ways we are bombarded with this idea from Jesus that, Hey, you better get used to being called, to being with people you wouldn't usually be with. In the book, I kind of just say, we got to shift from this paradigm that disagreement is the sign of unhealth in our relationships.

Annie: Wow.

Mike: Because if everyone in your life agrees with you 100% of the time, it's actually a sign that you're not in relationship with anyone but yourself.

Annie: Wow. Even if your friends are always agreeing with you.

Mike: Correct. Disagreement is the sign that you're in relationship. How do I know I'm in relationship with God? Because He disagrees with me. If the God I pray to agrees with me 100% of the time, I'm praying to myself. And then you have to ask yourself, If all my friends quote-unquote, are just agreeing with me all the time, what kind of culture have I curated or what kind of messaging Am I putting out there where nobody feels safe enough to tell me the truth?

Annie: Yes, yes. Because people hear about yes, man, all the time. Like don't surround yourself with "Yes, man." But it's not even that it's this more deeply embedded, safer feeling thing of, "Okay, good. Everyone around me, we all believe the same thing." This is actually really good that everyone at the pool we all believe the same thing about politics or about Jesus or about what family should look like. And we feel like it's safe but it's not.

Mike: You know, my friend, Gabby, she says, "Jesus isn't fragile." So if you're in a place where you don't like any of your thoughts or beliefs challenged at all, I would say, Jesus is a cornerstone. He isn't fragile. He can take it.

Annie: But see, the interesting thing is I don't know that me or any of my friends would say, "I don't want my ideas to be challenged." I think the deeper lie I tell myself is when my ideas are challenged that doesn't mean my ideas should be questioned, it means the other person is wrong.

Mike: Right.

Annie: Right? So I'm fine. If there is a challenging viewpoint to what I believe, I refuse to listen to it and consider whether there is truth in what they're saying that destroys the paradigm of the safe life I've built in my neighborhood.

Mike: Right.

Annie: I've got a chapter in the book called *The Four Magic Words*. And the four magic words are, I couldn't be wrong.

Mike: Yeah. And that feels really unsafe, right?

Mike: It feels unsafe because, especially for Christians, who what you believe determines your eternal situation.

Annie: Yes, Mike.

Mike: So it's easy for that methodology to bleed into every area of our lives. What I'm so grateful for, as I've gotten older, is the book of Ecclesiastes, which does make some affirmations at the end. To me is this beautiful little book where, you know, when they're canonizing scripture, there's a big fight over whether Ecclesiastes should even be in it.

Annie: And Proverbs, right?

Mike: Yeah.

Annie: I think those are the two.

Mike: Well, because, I mean, Proverbs says over and over and over "a wise man loves to be told he's wrong. A wise man loves rebuke. A wise man loves correction." And then in Ecclesiastes is like, "What on earth? What the...? What the...? Who? This guy? The rich, the terrible people are getting off free? What's going on?" And it's full of these "Maybe I'm wrong about this."

And I think that's actually the heart of wisdom, because now you're opening yourself up to hear and listen. That is the essence of relationship. Most people just want to know they'll be listened to.

Annie: Yes. Yes. And considered, right?

Mike: Seen, known... fill in the blank.

Annie: Yes, I would like to sit at the table, and no matter what we talk about, I would like to consider what they are saying. I had dinner with someone last night. It was saying things that I could not in my normal brain ever considered a good idea. And I thought, "The thing you want when you're sitting here is for your ideas to be considered." So you need to consider this person's ideas as possibly true even though they are so diabolically... And we're both Christians. But the ideas of the other person were so wildly dumb to me that I thought, "In no world." But don't we want to consider each other?

Mike: Yes. Yes. That's, in essence, all we're trying to do.

Annie: Yeah.

Mike: And the caveat is, is there a way to move from "let's agree to disagree." That's the phrase I kind of-

Annie: We just said that at the meeting you walked in on. We talked about how much we don't like "agree to disagree."

Mike: I hate that phrase. Why? Because it's insinuating a standstill not a peace treaty.

Annie: Yes, that's it, Mike.

Mike: It's laying aside our arms until I get another shot at you. I'll put it down for now. But that's a false peace.

Annie: It's like on a game board. As long as we don't land on the purple, we're gonna be fine. Agree to disagree. But anytime we land on purple, we're going to be right where we were, where to stand still.

Mike: Agree to disagree is "well, you're not hearing me and I'm not hearing you in whatever."

Annie: But we don't want to fight in this and we also don't want to consider, so we will stop. Interesting, Mike.

Mike: So the question could be, can we live in community in disagreement? I think that's cultivated by what I would say leaning in. And just going, "Help me understand your position. Help me understand." Really. And keep asking questions really to understand their position. And maybe we can move from understanding people's positions to even appreciating a position that we deem as diabolically opposed to us. Diabolically dumb.

Annie: A pastor you and I both respect his teaching, Jason Miller, in South Bend, Indiana says, "The reason in the Beatitudes that Jesus said, 'peacemakers will be called sons of God, sons and daughters of God...' Blessed are those who are peacemakers, for they will be called sons of daughters of God. And Jason says, "Because if you really make peace, you lose family." So God is saying, "I'll be your family."

Mike: Wow!

Annie: "If you actually do the work of peacemaking, you may lose family. And so I'll be your family." I bet Jason said that. I heard him teach that a decade ago maybe or something.

Mike: That's so good.

Annie: Six, seven years ago. And I've never forgotten it. Because that is so true. You think peacemaking is gonna be so fun, and it is not.

Mike: Well, nuance is horrible because-

Annie: I mean, *Grace in the Gray*. That's why your book is titled this: *A More Loving Way to Disagree*.

Mike: Yeah. I totally resonate with that quote, because-

Annie: Aren't I right? Do you like Jason Miller? I'm not making that up, right?

Mike: I love Jason.

Annie: I thought so. I thought so.

Mike: He stayed at my house last time he was here.

Annie: Oh, very good. I thought y'all are bros. Also, I was like, "I don't think I'm making up that you love Jason."

Mike: Yeah. It is so much easier, and quite honestly, a lot easier to build a kingdom around an extreme point.

Annie: Yes. We said it on every cable news station.

Mike: Who said this? That basically... Oh, you know, who was? Justin McRoberts. He is a friend of mine.

Annie: I don't know him but thumbs up him.

Mike: He said, "Nuanced, an incremental change is way more radical than being radical."

Annie: "Nuanced, an incremental change is way more radical than being radical."

Mike: Something like that.

Annie: I mean, the *Grace in the Gray*. Being in the gray takes so much more work.

Mike: Well, you're gonna get shot from both sides.

Annie: That's right.

Mike: Who wants to do that?

Annie: You're too conservative for the liberals; you're too liberal for the conservatives. You're too charismatic for the liturgical; you're too liturgical for the charismatic. I mean, the grace, tough dude.

Mike: And I get why people go black and white on things that shouldn't be black and white. Because they want to amass a following. Let's be honest, people don't like getting behind someone in the gray. Like, "Oh, you don't know what you're talking about?"

Annie: Or it feels dangerous because what if you change?

Mike: Yes. This is a whole thing I talked about where we have to stop deifying and demonizing-

Annie: Humans?

Mike: Yes. Particularly people who we're following, particularly for spiritual advice. We have a tendency of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. We're all or nothing.

Annie: Oh, Jamie that works here said, that situation... They threw the family out with the bathwater.

Mike: Yes! I do this practice all the time. It's like, "What if I quote..." I don't know. I'm not even gonna-

Annie: Use me as an example. You can use me. Is that what you mean?

Mike: Let's say like on your podcast there's people listening where if I quote Joel Osteen, they're going to immediately go, "Yes" or immediately go "No way."

Annie: Say, Richard Rohr.

Mike: Richard Rohr.

Annie: And not only do people say yes or no. They say, "Now I know you, Mike Donehey. Now I know what you..."

Mike: "Now I know I can trust you or not trust."

Annie: "Or not trust you."

Mike: And I go, Wait a second, there's a great... I already quoted Keller once. I'll quote him again. He says-

Annie: Put us in that camp all day long. Put us in the Keller camp.

Mike: This is really good. The Apostle Paul shows us it's possible to quote secular philosophers of the day-

Annie: That's right. That's right. He did it.

Mike: ...in his Sermon on the Mount. And Keller says something I think is really helpful. He says, "If you quote one man, you'll be a clone. If you quote two men, you'll just be confused." He goes, "If you quote 10 men, or if you read study 10 men, you might still be confused." And then it goes on, "If you read study 100 men, you'll start to become wise."

Annie: Wow.

Mike: "If you read study 300 men, you'll become wise and you'll start to develop your own voice."

Annie: Wow. Wow.

Mike: I just really think that's so true that I'm just really tired of you quote somebody to me and I immediately determine whether that statement is true based on the source, not take the sentence or the thought for what it is and inspect it.

Annie: The other problem with deifying and demonizing, I think, fix it if I'm wrong. When we demonize someone they never... If we do it once they never have a shot to speak into our lives, then they probably have some wisdom. If we deify them, the minute they do one thing that we disagree with or hurts our feelings, or isn't what we set them up to do they have such a steep fall there.

Mike: We have the fall.

Annie: As the receiver.

Mike: Think about how many times you've probably heard, "Wouldn't the church be better? Wouldn't it be so much better if we didn't have all these false prophets? Wouldn't it be better if we didn't have people having sexual failures? Wouldn't it be

better if we didn't have these Christian artists lose their faith and talk about it online? Wouldn't it be better?

And there's this radical... It's probably my favorite. You asked my favorite verse. My favorite parable that Jesus teaches is really unfamiliar one to a lot of people. And it's right after the really famous one where he's thrown out seeds that grows up in the thorns and thistles, some gets eaten by the birds.

Right after that, He goes, "There's another farmer." He isn't just throwing out seeds, and some weeds grow in here and there... He's got a whole field of wheat. Like "Oh, beautiful." And then an enemy plants weeds in the wheat. So what does workers say? They see these weeds growing in the wheat, and they do exactly what we say. Can we pull them up?

Annie: "Can we tear them up?"

Mike: "Let us tear them out." We're so good at tearing out people.

Annie: Yes, yes.

Mike: And then what did Jesus say? The farmer says to him... I imagine he's kind of like Marlon Brando, for some reasons. [mimicking Marlon Brando] "No, no. Leave them there." "What do you mean leave them in, boss?" "Leave them in. Because if you go around trying to tear out all those weeds, he's gonna tear out all the wheat too."

Annie: It's good.

Mike: I don't know why I went Marlon Brando.

Annie: No, I'm very into it.

Mike: Thank you. And I think I love that. And Jesus goes on to explain the parable to His disciples and He says, "Pulling apart the weeds and the wheat, that's my job. That's the angel's job. That's not your job." Isaiah says, "A bruised reed he will not break and a flickering flame he will not quench."

We've got a lot of people in our culture who are really good at breaking bruised reeds and they're really good at snuffing out flickering flames. And they do it in the name of, "Hey, I need to tell you the truth because to really love you... love isn't love if it isn't truth. And so I'm going to tell you the hard truth."

But I would say, based on what Paul says, that truth is also not truth if it's not love. And I say that because he says all over the place, but in Ephesians, he says, "Speaking the truth in love." In 1 Corinthians 13 he says, "I could have all this knowledge and speak in tongues of Angel, but if I have not love, it's nothing." And you're like, well, that's still not about posture. It's just the content of what you're saying needs to be loving. It's not really how you say it. It's what you say-

Annie: And it may not feel like love to the receiver.

Mike: And I go, that's true. Because especially if you're easily offendable, you know, you're not going to accept wisdom. But when Paul's coaching Timothy, and he's writing him his second letter, and Paul's in prison thinking he's gonna die, he says, "Hey, Timothy..." And this is really from my book, the whole outline. You don't need to read my book, just read these two verses. He says-

Annie: But also Grace in the Grays.

Mike: Whatever. He says, "This is what you need to do. The Lord servant, Timothy, must not be quarrelsome." Ouch! How do I know I'm quarrelsome? You don't. Ask someone who's your friend.

Annie: Get someone else to assess your Twitter timeline.

Mike: "Must not be quarrelsome. Must be kind to everyone." I looked up the Greek for "kind," it means kind to everyone.

Annie: Everyone, man. Everyone. People stumble over everyone. Me too.

Mike: Able to teach. Which means, hey, before you weigh in on this, are you actually able to teach about it? Maybe there's some things you need to shut up and listen. Able to teach, correcting his opponents. So you do correct them. He says, "With all gentleness. And then he gives us beautiful ending. "Perhaps God will grant them repentance, leading to the truth."

Especially that last part, it's like Paul is painting this picture of it isn't just your position but you also must consider your posture. And it's not just your posture. It's also your position. But at the end of the day, the way I argue needs to be bullied by this belief that perhaps God will be the one to change them. And what are we told him Romans 2:4? What is the method through which God brings about repentance? It is through His kindness.

Annie: His kindness, yes.

Mike: Now, it is kind to tell someone hard truth. But all of these admonitions, I have to say, not only what I tell people, but the way I say it, are meant to be in this marriage together. And I need to stop excusing that people are stumbling. We say, well, Jesus is a stumbling block. He's going to be offensive. That doesn't mean they should stumble over me to get to be a stumbling block.

Annie: Yeah, yeah. Let Him be the one. Not me. Not me.

[00:46:51] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just taking a quick break from this conversation to tell you about another one of our amazing partners, [Nutrafol](#). Is there a typical frequency for how often you should have to clean the hair off your hairbrush because it's full? I'm asking because we just don't talk about these things. And here's the thing. 30 million women are impacted by weakened or thinning hair. Millions. It means it's more than common, you guys. It's normal. A

Dealing with thinning hair can feel lonely and frustrating. And if that's you, you are not alone. There's a solution you can trust to deliver results. It's time to change the conversation and join the thousands of women who are standing up for their strands with Nutrafol.

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Three thousand plus top doctors and stylists recommend Nutrafol as an effective and high quality solution for healthier hair. And it works. In a clinical study, 86% of women reported improved hair growth after six months.

You can grow thicker, healthier hair and you get to support our show by going to [Nutrafol.com](#) and entering the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN. It'll save you \$15 off your first month's subscription. This is their best offer anywhere, and it is only available to US customers for a limited time, plus free shipping on every order. So get \$15 off at Nutrafol.com, promo code THATSOUNDSFUN.

And now back to finishing up our conversation with Mike.

[00:48:48] <music>

Annie: Do you think grace in the gray matters more now than it did 50 years ago? Does the internet make this more important? I mean, every generation thinks they're the last generation. So fair. Does it feel like the world is more contentious toward each other? Or does the internet just make that more apparent? Or am I wrong in the 50s was like this too? Not that you were there so you don't remember but-

Mike: I'm always going to resist the temptation to pit generations against one another on which one was better or worse. Simply because I'm living now.

Annie: Yeah, here now.

Mike: Are there particular challenges that this generation is going to face that I didn't? Yeah. I mean, study the trend of social anxiety with social media. Watch *The Social Dilemma*. I mean, there are particular problems.

But you know, I mean, in the early 1900s, Stalin was killing more millions of people than anyone, and we don't even talk about Stalin. We talk about Hitler, who's also horrible. And this is happening in this golden, beautiful age.

So I will say, social media, it seems, the algorithm is not helpful, I would say, in that it's feeding you stuff that you agree with. But on the flip side, there's more potential to discover alternative viewpoints than ever. So it's hard to say that it's one or the other. I think this is always the temptation of humans-

Annie: Is to say we have it better, we have it worse than?

Mike: To surround yourself with people who make you feel right. Because feeling right is an easy substitute for feeling loved.

Annie: Oh, gosh.

Mike: And if you don't feel loved and known, then feeling right next best thing.

Annie: I may not be loved, but I'm right. Oh, that is really terribly true.

Mike: I would just really say a litmus test of if you always need to feel right-

Annie: What you actually need.

Mike: ...why don't you feel loved and known?

Annie: Well, that's terrible. But you're right.

Mike: It is terrible but the gift is getting what we really need is easier than doing all the research that you come into your family reunion ready to decimate everyone. It's like really being slow to speak and quick to listen, says James. The simpler thing is the harder thing, but it's the less complex thing. And that is, oh, I just need to make people feel known and loved. And that's what I'm here to do.

Annie: I can't wait for people to read this, Mike.

Mike: I've definitely don't cover everything but I say at the beginning of the book, you know, it's... The subtitle is a more loving way to disagree. I go. Shouldn't that subtitle be "helpful ways to destroy other people in arguments," or "the best way to when you're disagreed with"? And it's not. It's a more loving way to disagree. So I go, anyone who reads that and then opens up the book, they're already doing better.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. This is the first step.

Mike: Like you're on your way-

Annie: Yeah, that's right. You're doing it. Did you read the audiobook?

Mike: I did.

Annie: Okay, good. People love when the author reads audiobook.

Mike: I did lots of voices.

Annie: Did you? A lot of Marlon Brando moments?

Mike: I was really doing a lot of Christopher Walken at that point. I don't know why, but he is disagreeable sometimes.

Annie: I didn't know that is a skill you have.

Mike: Who else should I do?

Annie: Who else do you do?

Mike: I could do Shrek. [mimicking Shrek] Look don't get in the swamp. This is massive. Listen, Shrek in the morning. I'm making waffles. I do a lot of voices actually.

Annie: You do. And you're very good.

Mike: I'm a theater major.

Annie: But that doesn't naturally mean you're good at voices. This is a skill.

Mike: I hope so.

Annie: I mean, your Shrek is spot-on Scottish. You sound like every neighbor I ever heard.

Mike: [Scottish accent] Look at the size of that boy's head. I'm not kidding. His head's like Sputnik spherically at quite pointy at pants. Okay."

Annie: Oh my gosh, that makes me so happy. If you did your audiobook in a Scottish accent-

Mike: I did this little YouTube video one time called How to Train birds where I was standing on a pier in California. And I had this big fur hat on and [With Russian accent] I was trying to be Russian like Demetri. I'm here. I'm here to teach birds how to fly. And I was doing this whole thing. And this group, I'm not making this up, this group of old Russian women comes up behind me as I'm... You know, I've got a camera on there. I'm like, "Listen, this is how we do it to birds like the little duck." And they come up to me, they start speaking Russia.

Annie: No. Because they just knew you were actually Russian.

Mike: And the granddaughter, whoever, goes, "They want to know if you're really Russian." I'm like, "No, I'm not really Russian." "I know. I know you're not Russian."

Annie: Wow, okay. That's like a back pocket party trick.

Mike: Oh, you know, thank you.

Annie: That's very good. I need you to do that. I'm gonna make a note for when we invite you back, then we're gonna only do accents. You. I can't do it. You only do accents.

Mike: I was Smeagol for Halloween and I wore a Gollum mask. But then I would take the mask off and I had painted my face and was wearing a bald cap. So I was Smeagol underneath but Gollum with the mask on.

Annie: That's awful.

Mike: I terrified so many children.

Annie: Yes, certainly.

Mike: "Hey Precious. Precious wants to harps us. Masters as a friend. You don't have any friends. You don't have any friends. You're a thief. I'm not listening. I'm not listening. You know, just trying to touch surface. Something like that. Right?"

Annie: Right. This is-

Mike: What a taters. What's this taters? Potatoes, chop them up, cook them, put them in stew. I do. I do voices.

Annie: You do do voices. Thank you for that.

Mike: Thanks.

Annie: Hey, the last question we always ask.

Mike: I'm sure that's not gonna make it.

Annie: Oh, you're dead wrong. Every minute of that is gonna make it. The last question we always ask. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you besides your accents, that's very fun to me.

Mike: You know what sounds fun to me right now, right before the pandemic shut the world down, my best friend growing up, we were best friends from like two years old to... we went to the same college, lived in the same house for all four years.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Mike: But then we really don't see each other after that because we live in separate places. But we had scheduled a snowboarding trip in Utah. And I was meant to finish a show and go snowboard for three days with him and then get back on the tour. And then like two days before that trip the world shut down. I really would love to go snowboarding.

Annie: Y'all reschedule.

Mike: I know. That sounds fun.

Annie: This is the season.

Mike: I know.

Annie: Tis' the season to reschedule a snowboarding trip. It's the winter.

Mike: Make use of all this.

Annie: Get out of Nashville.

Mike: Make use of this call.

Annie: We are rainy and dark from now until... it feels like until Easter Sunday.

Mike: Annie, this does not sound fun. You've gone into not fun.

Annie: I'm sorry. I'm sorry. You go ski out west. Go out west. Take your bro. Y'all go out west. Thanks for doing this today, Mike. I love getting to sit and chat.

Mike: Always pleasure.

Annie: Thank you.

[00:56:26] <music>

Outro: Oh, friends! Isn't he just the best? I love that dude. Gracious! I could listen to Him teach, preach, lead, forever. I just think the world of him. Be sure to grab your copy of *Grace in the Gray* and let's all get better at disagreeing. Follow Mike on social media as you tell him thanks for being on the show today, even if you didn't agree with everything he said.

Okay, we heard what sounds fun to Mike. And as you know, this year, we want to hear what sounds fun to you, our listener friends. So here's what sounds fun to one of our friends who's listening just like you.

Annie: Jennifer, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

Jennifer: Oh, Annie, I'm Jennifer Bonner from Albany, Georgia. And fun to me is authentic, good fun being yourself. Whatever sounds fun to you is fun. And fun to me is a wide variety of things from Broadway shows, local theater, decorating for Christmas with the family, getting ready for a party, or having a total chill day. I mean, it's fun.

Annie: I agree. Albany, Georgia. I love Albany, Georgia.

Jennifer: I love it too.

Annie: That's an easy place to have fun. Y'all have got some great bowl of peanuts there in Albany.

Jennifer: That is correct. We do. We do. We do.

Annie: If you're going to get bowl peanuts, where are you going? Are you going to a gas station? Do you make them? Are you getting them from someone else? What's your system?

Jennifer: I have made them and it was not as hard as I thought it might be. But if I'm going to pick them up, I go to Mark's Melon Patch on Highway 82.

Annie: Mark's Melon Patch on Highway 82. I do not know them but I am going to ask them to mail me some. Thank you, Jennifer, for doing this. That's awesome. ah, that's awesome.

Okay, if you need anything else for 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... What does sound fun to me today? This weekend is really quiet for me. So it sounds fun to me today, make fun of me if you want, but today I'm going to make my list of everything I want to do this weekend and everything I need to get accomplished so that I can have a proper day of rest on Saturday. And that all has to happen tomorrow.

So it sounds fun to me to make lists. So I'm on it. Y'all have a great weekend. I hope you get some rest. We'll see you back here on Monday with my future tour mate and one of our favorite humans around here, Carlos Whittaker. We'll see y'all then.