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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 with you today. We've got a great show in store.

Before we dive into today's episode, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors. This episode is sponsored by [BetterHelp](#). Y'all know we've been talking about May being Mental Health Awareness Month and I recently saw my counselor. She has been so helpful to me as I navigate my mental, emotional, and spiritual health. And physical health too honestly. I've benefited so much from her help.

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Intro: Today on the show I get to talk with my friend Eli Bonilla Jr. Okay, if you came to the Love Better Tour back in ye old year of 2020, when you were the love letter to her in Austin, Texas, you may remember Eli He was on our panel that night, and I have adored him ever since.

Eli is an emerging leader in the Next Gen space. He serves several national networks and various roles, including the Next Gen regional co-chair for North America with Empowered21 and the National millennial Director for the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. He is also a Next Gen pastor in Louisiana. I cannot wait for y'all to hear us talking about that.

Eli's book *Mixed: Embracing Complexity by Uncovering Your God-led Identity*, just released this month. And today we talk about the reality that none of us fit into a box — we're all unique with a mixed background, socially, culturally, experientially. And some of our friends like Eli are mixed ethnically. So how do we experience more human connection through a God-led identity? How do we develop greater empathy and celebrate multiple cultures without creating division and fight for people in the margins?

Y'all we're going to talk about all of it today. Y'all know how many books I read, right? Just think in your brain how many books I read, I've never read a book like this. I have never read a book like *Mixed* and I think you should read it. I think it will really matter to you to hear this specific but universal story. It's Eli's story, but it's so many of our friends' stories. I was really honored to get to read it and so happy to get to talk to him.

So here is my conversation with my friend Eli Bonilla, Jr.

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Annie: Eli Bonilla, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

Eli: Thank you.

Annie: I'm so glad you're here.

Eli: I'm glad to be here.

Annie: What a treat! I mean, we were on the stage together—I wrote down the date—February 29, 2020.

Eli: Wild.

Annie: The week before the pandemic locked us up on our houses. Can you believe that?

Eli: That is crazy to think.

Annie: I know. I know. I was looking it up last night and I was like, "Wait, I saw him days before our lives changed."

Eli: We had no clue.

Annie: We had no clue. I don't even think we were talking about COVID-19 at that point.

Eli: No, not at all.

Annie: The Coronavirus.

Eli: Isn't that crazy how that happens? You remember the moments right before and you're like, we were just living life. It just kind of puts things into perspective. It's like you don't know what the future holds. And wow, what a moment, a week after, to live through!

Annie: I can identify this so I wonder if you can. What were you thinking about then that you're not thinking about now?

Eli: Oh, what was I thinking about them that I'm not thinking about now? Oh. I don't know. I feel like there was a lot more autopilot back then.

Annie: That's kind of what... I wouldn't have had as good an answer as that. But yes, that's kind of it.

Eli: Maybe that I just wasn't thinking as much as I do think now. Probably that.

Annie: Yeah. That is so similar. I think I was going forward thinking nothing can stop the trajectory. Not fame blast. But nothing can stop the trajectory of what God is doing.

Eli: For sure.

Annie: Which is true, and also our entire trajectory stopped.

Eli: Right. I think it's nothing can stop what I assume is the trajectory.

Annie: Yeah, that's it. That's it.

Eli: I think there's also now we've had some time we're like, Oh, well, the trajectory, it's not that it's stopped, it just looks different. And then now you can't think of a world where that didn't happen.

Annie: That's right.

Eli: We have no idea what it would have turned out to be.

Annie: That's right.

Eli: But here we are now.

Annie: When you were with us on the Love Better tour and 2020, you had one kid?

Eli: I had one kid.

Annie: And now you have two?

Eli: Now I have two.

Annie: I mean, even that, you're like, "Oh, I was a dad of one. Now I'm a dad of two."

Eli: And of a baby. Like a baby baby. She's about to be four this year.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Eli: I mean, I have a kid, not a toddler anymore. And she's talking. We talk about all of the narrative plotlines of *Bluey* and it's fantastic.

Annie: I need you to know I was at a show last night at our performing arts center and *Bluey* is coming live-

Eli: Oh.

Annie: ...and a 10-year-old in front of me, a little dude was like, "Mom, look, *Bluey* is coming." And I was like, "Everybody loved *Bluey*."

Eli: Yeah, yeah. *Bluey* is like the Taylor Swift for kids. They will gather, they will flock, they will migrate.

Annie: Do you like it? Because I used to love watching *Dora*.

Eli: Yes. Oh my gosh, the dad on the show is like top three dads of all time.

Annie: Really?

Eli: Oh, man. I get emotional, like I get convicted to watch it and I'm like, "I need to be more left handed."

Annie: Really?

Eli: Yeah. I mean, he's so great. If you've never watched it, if you're an adult and you don't have kids, and you're planning, just watch it and watch how they relate to their kids. It's so fun.

Annie: Where do I watch it? It's on PBS?

Eli: It's on Disney+.

Annie: Disney+.

Eli: I mean, you can go on YouTube and type in *Bluey* episodes because-

Annie: I feel like *Bluey* dad. That's what I'm gonna search.

Eli: *Bluey* dad. Oh, *Bluey* dad highlights. Oh my gosh. Watch some highlights from Bandit. That will encourage you.

Annie: Oh my gosh. They're all dogs?

Eli: Yeah, they're all dogs.

Annie: And Bandit's the dad.

Eli: Bandit's the dad.

Annie: I love it. I didn't know we were gonna give ups to *Bluey* today. But this is how it goes.

Eli: There you go.

Annie: Okay, you were starting to tell me a story about Pancake Pantry this morning but I was like, "No, please save it. Please tell all of us. You're in Nashville. How was Pancake Pantry?"

Eli: Well, I actually went there out of convenience because it's really close in proximity to the studio. So I was just looking on my GPS and I was like, "I want to get breakfast before I come in." And I found it kind of on the way. And I didn't know anything about it. So I hit it, I get an Uber. Uber takes me in and I see the line outside with stanchions. I'm like, "Oh, my gosh." And I'm looking at my clock and I'm like, "I can't... there's no way." But I already paid for Uber to just drop me off. So I was like, "I guess I'll get in line." So the favor of the Lord shone on me because I was like at the end of the line, there's a waiter guy walking person to person asking how many are in their group. And I was just by myself. And he's like, "One?" And I was like, "Yeah, one." He's like, "Do you want to sit outside?" And I'm like, "Yeah, I need to sit in here." And he gives me a menu and he says, "Your waiter is going to come right to your table."

Annie: No.

Eli: I had my food in 10 minutes.

Annie: The Lord.

Eli: Ten minutes.

Annie: That does not happen at Pancake Pantry.

Eli: I've heard. I watched the line slowly inch. I mean, I ate and got my next Uber before the people that were in line with me even got in the door.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Eli: So you know today's a good day for a podcast like this.

Annie: What did you have?

Eli: I had pancakes.

Annie: Certainly. Certainly.

Eli: Eggs and bacon. I'm pretty standard.

Annie: Did you like the OG plain pancakes?

Eli: Yeah. And full disclosure, because I'm Mexican, it's Cinco de Mayo, I should have had [inaudible 00:08:30]. And I should have looked that up. I'm so sorry, Dad. If you're listening to this, Dad, I'm so sorry.

Annie: No, you went to the right place. For our friends who haven't been to Nashville yet, Pancake Pantry in Hillsborough Village is like a legendary spot.

Eli: And it's great.

Annie: It's great.

Eli: It's fantastic.

Annie: Their pancakes are unbelievable.

Eli: For sure.

Annie: So for your first time going, having the like OG basics is what you should totally do.

Eli: Right.

Annie: The cornmeal ones are unstoppable to me-

Eli: Right.

Annie: ...because they're like flat cornbread. I mean, they're awesome. A ton of butter in...

Eli: Yeah, yeah.

Annie: Yeah. Just get on it. Get on it. Shout out to some of the people that you love in Nashville because I want our audience to know like Lu... I mean, who else here that you love, man?

Eli: Luke LeFevre, he's amazing. I love Noah and Maddy Herrin. They're fantastic. Grant and Cheyanne Skeldon.

Annie: So do you know all of them through Grant and Cheyanne? Because I know all of y'all through Grant and Cheyanne.

Eli: I know Noah and Maddie. Well, I know Noah through Lee. I went to Lee University. So me and him were there.

Annie: And Craig.

Eli: And Craig. Shout out to Craig.

Annie: Our prince. We call him the prince.

Eli: Shout out to the prince of Lee University. We all were students at the same time. So I mean, we all knew each other. And not in a distant way. Like we knew knew each other. And it's wild the amount of legends that Lee produces-

Annie: I know.

Eli: Because I look around and I see so many of my friends doing great things in ministry. So I got a chance to meet him and obviously when he got married to Maddie, got to know Maddie.

Annie: What is it about Lee? I mean, you're doing college ministry now and I want to talk about it. But when you're doing college ministry, what are you thinking back and going, I want to do this because I feel like this is part of what created us?

Eli: I think Lee did a really great job of forming community. It really is something about finding the right friends in college that makes college. I mean, because the homework's gonna be there, the studies... You're there to study. That's the reason you went to that university, whatever university. I guess most people.

But what really makes the, I guess, the experience worth it is the people that you meet there, because they are truly like lifelong friends. Like I graduated seven years ago now, and I mean, it's one of those friendships that you don't have to see someone for like three or four years, and you just pick up where you left off. So I think Lee does that well. I'm blessed to come from there.

Annie: Two of my favorite kids that I knew when they were real little in Athens and as they grew up are Christopher and David Chittum. And they both were at Lee and have had similar of... Like they met their wives there.

Eli: Yeah, I did, too.

Annie: It builds a community that says like, yeah, find people here that you will keep, whether spouse or friends. Okay, so let's talk about where you are now. You're in Baton Rouge.

Eli: Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Annie: ...doing ministry to students at LSU and other universities around. Tell us a little bit about what you're doing.

Eli: So I'm at Bethany Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and I'm a Next Gen pastor. So I'm not just a young adult pastor, I'm also a youth pastor.

Annie: Oh, my gosh.

Eli: And really the age-

Annie: So like sixth grade to 24?

Eli: Fifth grade to 30 years old.

Annie: Get out of here. Hello, churches, welcome to 2023. Hustling. We're hustling.

- Eli:** We're hustling. I oversee all the youth and young adults for our campuses.
- Annie:** Eli, how?
- Eli:** I don't know.
- Annie:** For your campus?
- Eli:** Yeah, campuses. Five campuses.
- Annie:** Wait, what? Oh, my gosh. So tell me you have people at your campus under you leading and...?
- Eli:** Yes, for sure. An amazing all-star team.
- Annie:** But you're the dude over all five campuses, fifth grade to 30-
- Eli:** 30 years old, yeah. I mean, I don't know if I call myself the dude.
- Annie:** I'm calling you the dude.
- Eli:** They just found that I was crazy enough to take on the challenge. It's been fantastic. I mean, just to be in proximity with young people from fifth grade all the way through university and to watch them step up in the middle of just the craziness of culture. I mean, it's night and day what they're going through and what they have to like, you know, really endure day to day. And to watch these young people just be champions in all those spaces. If anything, I get a front-row seat to watch them be champions and then resource them along the way. So it's been great.
- Annie:** What I'm hearing from my friends who are doing Next Gen ministry is the Next Gen wants us to tell them what's black and white? They don't want gray.
- Eli:** Right.
- Annie:** And then they can choose whether they agree or not, but they don't want us to come in soft. They want us to come in and say, "Hey, the truth is the truth. What do you want to do with it?" Has that been what you're experiencing?
- Eli:** Yeah, for sure. Because I think a lot of cultures wants to coddle people into like, you know, soften things for people. I think they're sick of that for sure. They're just like, "No, be honest with me." Like how bad is it? Or how good can this be? Like, you know, don't sell me short on it. And I've really found that young people rise to the occasion whenever you challenge them.

One bend that our ministry has taken is a missional one, where I've invited young people to say, "Hey, what would it look like for you to be a kingdom person at school in sixth grade or as a freshman at university? I have a mountain of testimonies of young people saying, "Yeah, I will do that." And they do and just God's faithfulness and his hand on them. We've seen so many young people come to the Lord. This is probably also... because I go into the public schools and the universities, I have never seen a harvest so ready to receive the gospel.

Annie: Really?

Eli: I've never. Ever. Like we'll walk in and I mean, standing on tables in cafeterias, or in the gyms and the response of young people to the gospel has been insane.

Annie: Wow.

Eli: I told the young people, I'm like, Man, in the era where there's so much gray and ambiguity around certain things, to have the "this is the truth and this is the way to live" is so refreshing to people. I think Barna did a study, and their study showed that around 70% of unchurched people would say yes to coming to church if you just ask them.

Annie: Jeez.

Eli: That's a crazy stat. You would think it would be 30%. Like the other way around. So we're seeing that in real-time.

[00:14:41] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation to share about our amazing partner, [ButcherBox](#). Listen, y'all know I am not a hashtag food blogger very often. But when I find something I love and that makes my life easier, you are definitely going to hear about it. And y'all, that is ButcherBox. You know this.

They are bringing 100% grass-fed beef, organic chicken, pork that is raised crate-free and wild-caught seafood straight to my house y'all. All of their meats are humanely raised with no antibiotics or added hormones. You can pick from a curated box, which is what I do, or customize your own.

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And let me tell you what I did this time. All the chicken they sent, I cooked it at one time. Batch cooking. I know. Hashtag food blogger. And I separated it into little baggies, I seasoned it like Mexican seasoning, so it's like taco meat. And it's in my freezer and I just keep pulling out baggie after baggie and it is so helpful, you guys.

But it's not just the convenience of having these perfectly curated selections delivered straight to me. It's like the brain space that ButcherBox saves me from standing in that section of the grocery store trying to figure out what to make and what will be good for the right price. Well, when it comes to my ButcherBox, I know I can make a ton of turkey burgers to have on hand or baggies of five ounces of chicken or the bacon. Y'all know I love the bacon. And the nuggets. You know I love the nuggets. Listen, these are all the basic building blocks of my meals, mostly lunches, for the week. Plus, they are absolutely delicious.

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That link and pretty much every other link you can ever hope for are in the show notes or in our AFD Week in Review on Fridays. So be sure to check those out.

Sponsor: And I've got one more amazing partner to tell you about, [Chime](#). Listen, there are a lot of you who just graduated and are starting your first job. And listen, I can remember getting my first paycheck as an adult and thinking I have made it and I cannot wait to deposit this money into my account so I can actually pay my bills.

Here's the thing, good money habits start with your very first paycheck. And you've got an opportunity to jumpstart a healthy financial journey from the start of your first job or a new job or just a new season. When you sign up for time and link a qualifying direct deposit, you get access to benefits like getting paid up to two days early, okay, and fee-free overdraft up to \$200. Those go hand in hand for me. Plus with Chime, there's no monthly fees, no minimum balance, and no deposit required to become a member.

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And now back to our conversation with Eli.

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Annie: Tell me about LSU. What's God doing on that campus? Because I'm a Georgia Bulldog, so we've been against them for a long time. But I also know that God shows up well uniquely on different college campuses.

Eli: Yeah, man. No, it's been fantastic. We started with one young lady, she was a senior at LSU. As a matter of fact, she's part-time staff at our church and she just had a heart for reaching the students on her campus. It was just her by herself. Then we got a couple of leaders around her, like four of them. They would go... There's a place called Free Speech Ally in front of the Union.

Annie: Interesting.

Eli: It's everyone that has something to hand out.

Annie: Yeah, stand there.

Eli: Yeah. It feels like a miniature Time Square.

Annie: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Eli: Like you're trying to avoid everyone handing you... that's exactly what it is. So we'll set up out there. We call it Lunch Club. Like we'll set it out there during lunch-time and invite people over to talk about Jesus with them. And man, she's been leading the charge and we've grown like several small groups out of that like from scratch.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Eli: Just university students just looking for truth and searching for truth.

Annie: And community?

Eli: And community. Yeah, yeah. And belonging. And belonging and the sense of just being present with people or being known by people. There is a depth that comes with a biblical community that this young lady, her name is Emma, she has led and so many other people that have been drawn to it.

Also the bad reports on universities, like there's no way to break in. The same with the public school system. There's just something about taking a stand and being black and white about this is the truth that resonates with people more than the small minority of loud people that say, "No, there's no such thing as the truth." So be brave. Get out there. LSU is rockin' and rollin'.

Annie: There's a... I don't even know who they are. There's a couple that get served to me on Instagram. Like reel, they get served to me. And they are in the like Winston-Salem area. And they do a dinner once a week maybe for college students. And they don't ever talk about their faith, but I'm like, there ain't no world where y'all aren't Christian.

They started because of one kid that they wanted to feed. And this week on their final dinner for the school year, 1,000 kids. They pay to feed 1,000 kids. Food trucks... We're not the same age, but they're our age. They're in their 30s. They have one kid. And I just watched them. And I'm like, Oh, they aren't having to tell me.

Eli: Right.

Annie: Now, there's a world where someone's gonna email and be like, "They're not Christian." They don't have to tell me they're Christian. What they're doing looks real Christian.

Eli: Really?

Annie: The fruit on the tree looks real Christians.

Eli: The fruit.

Annie: Because it says we're just gonna gather them and feed them and give them community. So there's something about that that college students seem to really respond to besides free food.

Eli: No, for sure. Yeah, exactly. There are places that offer free food. Everyone's offering free food and a free t-shirt. Like that just happens. But at the end of the day, you don't want to just build a crowd because a crowd is not a community. Community, you need intentionality.

And students will stay if you're honest about wanting to know them. And I think that that's been the biggest win on these college campuses because we're on several Loyola Southern. We're looking to branch out to southeastern. But really it's not complicated. It's, you know, remembering why you're on that campus. And it's to make disciples. And disciples are made over time and genuine love-

Annie: Disciples are made over time. That's it. That's what we have to remember. Because I sometimes think when we see someone accept Christ and become a believer, we expect them to be different tomorrow, when the only thing that's changed on that moment is the long part of the story.

Eli: For sure.

Annie: Then we need to develop them. I mean, go and make disciples. We need to let them develop and change. I'm thinking about our friends listening who were like, "Oh, I love college students," or "Oh, I love high school students. I love middle school students." At our churches, how do we know where to volunteer? If we want to support the next generation, how do we know if we're a small group leader? How do we know? Do we just go to the youth pastor or go to college pastor and be like, "Put me in, coach?"

Eli: Yeah, I mean, that is, I think one of the greatest blessings you can do for youth and young adult pastor is saying, "Hey, I'm here to serve. Where do you need help?" And regardless where you're placed. Like having a servant's heart, whether that is we need... For example, I have some dads that just sit at the entrance of our youth knights just to have a male presence or fatherly presence there. That's one of the things that I told parents when they come to the youth group is that so many of these kids that come from broken homes, their mere presence to be around, to see a dad, to see a mom, and in a positive light.

Annie: I love seeing other dads. Like I just was like, "Oh, that's a different way to dad." And you don't know that until you're around other dads. Yeah.

Eli: Exactly. And I think there's so many different ways you can serve young people but I think the first one is proximity and presence. That's number one. I don't think it's jumping to, can I lead something? It's saying, "Can I get close?"

Annie: Wow.

Eli: And asking for permission to get close. I don't know a youth pastor that would say no to that. And if a youth pastor did, I would tell them they're shooting themselves in the foot.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Eli: Our goal is to partner with parents. And we believe that more than ever we need parents in the lives of our young people. And if they don't have any, we know that the community in the body of Christ has parents that can step up and step in. And we've just seen that. So that's number one. I think just go, get in proximity with the youth pastor, young adult pastor, and say, "Hey, I'm here to serve. What do you need?"

Annie: It's one of my favorite things, even though I'm not married yet, getting to step into college students' lives. I mean, I like mothered college students for a lot of years here who are now old people. But you know, they needed someone to tell them where things were in the grocery store because they didn't grow up here. So getting to mother like that is such a gift for those of us who aren't married yet or aren't mothering in a traditional way or fathering in a traditional way. It's like, Go dad at a youth group. If you're not dading in your house, go dad at a youth group. You're still gifted in that way.

Eli: 100%.

Annie: I think that's very cool. Did you ever imagine? What did you think you were going to do with your life?

Eli: Oh, I mean, I think... I'm fourth generation minister on my dad's side and third generation minister on my mom's side.

Annie: A family business.

Eli: Yeah, the family business. I don't think though I had like a, for sure I'm going to be in ministry until I was around 16. Sixteen was that moment for me where I gave my all to the Lord and I said, "You can have all of me, not just that church. You can have me at school as well." So I started leading a Bible study at school. I did that for about two and a half years. And it was senior year, getting ready to go to college, and you know, really the Lord asked me, "So what do you want to do?"

I kind of had like a Peter moment. After Jesus tells everyone to drink his blood and everyone leaves and He says, "You guys gonna leave too?" And he's like, "We have no place to go."

Annie: "Where do we go."

- Eli:** You have the words of truth. And I felt like I had that moment. I was like, "Oh, God, I have nowhere to go other than to serve you. So where do you want me to go?" Both my parents are Lee alum as well.
- Annie:** Oh, wow.
- Eli:** And both of my wife's parents are Lee alum. They all met at Lee, and then we met at Lee. So my kids are going to meet their spouse at Lee.
- Annie:** That's right. Yeah, yeah, put it before the Lord.
- Eli:** They have no choice. But yeah, in that moment, around 18, I knew I was going to be in full-time ministry and in local church ministry. So I get the chance to travel now but really, my heart is to be in the grind of local church day in day out.
- Annie:** Will you talk about that a little bit? Because I think when I'm talking to people in their 20s that are wanting to do ministry full time that looks like this part of my ministry, one of my things I say a lot is, if you want to do global, you got to do local.
- Eli:** 100%.
- Annie:** So why does that matter to you?
- Eli:** Oh, man, that matters to me because you just mentioned fruit about that couple. It's like, you know, I can tell they're Christians by the fruit of their lives. To want to go global before local is to go empty-handed with no fruit, right?
- Annie:** Yeah.
- Eli:** You have to have something to give to people. And the reality is only roots can produce fruit.
- Annie:** Wow.
- Eli:** So you have to dig deep, you got to be with people, you have to have your pulse on what's going on. Because what the global church doesn't need are philosophers in the faith where they're just trying to invent ways of like, where are we going and what's happening next? They need practitioners. They need people that are in real-time with people and that when they show up to meetings about steering where the future of the church is going, they're experiencing the church in real-time, they're leading in real-time. That's invaluable.

And so if you're a young person, you're like, "Man, I want to get out there," I would say, first, that you have to really consider, one, why you want to get out there. And two, if you get out there, what are you bringing? You know, because people don't need your personality. People are in dire need of the presence of God. And that cannot be conjured up. That has to be cultivated. So there's a cultivation in local church. So yeah, I would challenge any young person, get your roots down.

And if God gives you the opportunity to go out, take it, you know, from there. But you do not want to go out there just because that's the thing to do and that's the trajectory you see successful people are on.

Annie: Right. I mean, I taught... I'm sure you're like this, too. I taught high school Sunday school with my friend Kevin for years before I did anything public. And I just started asking the Lord to open doors. But I think we get to be part of the local church. That's what we get to do. And then anything beyond that, great. But the local church ain't going anywhere.

Eli: No, it's not.

Annie: No.

Eli: Absolutely.

Annie: Did you think you'd write a book? Was that part of the whole trajectory?

Eli: No, not at all.

Annie: Okay. So what made you sit down? I told you this when you walked in, but I want to say it on the mic. You're an incredible writer.

Eli: Oh, wow, thank you.

Annie: You are. It is my first note when I was reading. Great writer.

Eli: Oh, wow.

Annie: I mean, this is a really well-written book, Eli. What made you write *Mixed*? What made you sit down and go, "I need to write this story"?

Eli: Man, it was kind of therapy for me in 2020. You know, because 2020 wasn't just known for the pandemic year. I mean, racial tensions in the US were insane. There was so much going on. It was so dynamic. And it felt like it was tragedy after tragedy. On top of that, because we were in lockdown, we were locked into the

screens. It was just a flood in touring of different news cycles talking about various things.

So I kind of had a moment where I was like, "Man, I need to get this off my chest." So I just kind of started writing about it and I started posting about it. It was kind of a righteous indignation because I felt so angry. And on top of that, I felt so misunderstood and I felt so homeless in the conversation.

Annie: Will you explain why that is?

Eli: Yeah. What ended up happening was I was raising my voice for the Black community during that time. And as I was raising my voice for that—and for the listeners, I'm Dominican, and I'm Mexican. So my mother's from the Dominican Republic, my dad's from Mexico, and I grew up in South Texas Santos. So two hours from the border—so I started making comments about Black Lives Matter and all the things that were going on at the beginning of that year.

And as I was posting on Facebook and on Instagram, I would start getting comments from Mexicans about, "Hey, man, awesome that you're getting loud about this but we've had children in cages on the border for several years now and we haven't seen a post. And if you have posts, can you be as loud for that as you are for this?"

And then I remember I kind of put together something that was like, "Okay, let me try to do both. And I tried to put both. And then I had my Black friend saying, "Hey, man, right now is not the time. You're diluting the conversation by bringing this up. So if you can, let's stay on task. Like we have to all be in on one thing or else progress won't be made."

And at that point, I was like... I was trying to do the math. I'm like, "Oh, but all of these things are happening all at the same time and both of these things affect me as a mixed kid. You know, because my mom is Afro-Latina, so she's a Black woman but she's from a Latin American country like Dominican Republic, and my dad's from Mexico and I'm the combination of both cultures and heritages.

So I'm like, "But I feel strongly about both. So do I have to wait? Like which part of me has to wait to do? So I think out of that angst, I began to write. And I went kind of through like an emo phase. Like, if you scroll back on my timeline, things were like grayscale.

Annie: Oh, great. Great. Well done.

Eli: So I'm like, you know-

Annie: Listen, have grace for yourself for 2020. We were all figuring it out.

Eli: I think we were all grayscale in 2020. There was no vibrancy there. But you know, I kind of had a moment of like, "Okay, so then when do I begin to talk? What part of me gets to talk? You know, how does this taking turns thing work?" So I just started writing. And I kind of crescendoed into people taking notice about me talking about this conversation. And I had been working with the Latino church for years. Sam Rodriguez, I worked for him. And he's the one that really introduced me to a national platform. And he asked me to be his Next Gen director for his organization. So I've had interactions with the Latino Church, the broad and really diverse Latino church.

Annie: I think that's important to say because I don't know that a lot of us know how diverse even the Latino churches-

Eli: Oh yeah.

Annie: Because there's so many different countries represented and skin tones represented.

Eli: Yes. All the different races, 20 different countries, all very different historical backgrounds and context. So I kind of was already in the space talking about race and ethnicity before 2020. So 2020 wasn't the moment where I was like, "Oh, let me think about race and ethnicity." One, make the argument over my life, I was born into a complicated, you know, category, if you will, or non-category of being mixed. But two, when it came to 2020, and I had to write on race, but I was serving in the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. I got to a place where I was like, well, then let me just write whatever I feel. People took notice and one thing led to the next, and I found myself sharing about it on platforms.

That's when the opportunity to write a book came along. And when the publisher came to me, I had already written like... It was somewhere around 15,000 words.

Annie: Oh, geez.

Eli: Yeah, yeah.

Annie: You're like, "Yeah, I'm a third of the way done."

Eli: Yeah. It was so crazy amount.

Annie: Wow.

- Eli:** Which also was kind of like when I got on the Zoom with them, they're like, "Oh, thank Lord." So that's kind of how it started rolling.
- Annie:** I think this is really interesting. On the cover you list... For people, they can see on my Instagram or when they go ordered on Amazon, you'll see it obviously where you tick off what ratio are. It says, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, other, and you wrote in mixed. But Hispanic has a question mark?
- Eli:** Yeah.
- Annie:** Why?
- Eli:** And it's still to this day. So Hispanic, Latino is considered an ethnicity. And you have to, especially like in government forms, you have to check what race are you and then what ethnicity are you. So Hispanic Latino is not in the race category. So up until I was like almost 20 years old, I was always told, "If you're Hispanic check White, which is-
- Annie:** Wow. And then when you get to ethnicity, you would-
- Eli:** And then you can, yeah, put Hispanic which was always odd to me. And there's a whole history that we probably can't get on this podcast. It's something fascinating. Look it up, the history on why-
- Annie:** You write about it some in the book.
- Eli:** I write a bit about it. So I was checking white my whole life and I am not white at all. So whenever I got to making the cover, I was like, I tried to put how confusing these boxes are for us that we don't fit in that and we were asked to check something that was completely incorrect. So that's a bit of me throwing like, hey, look how confusing this is. So I'm gonna choose a different box and I'm gonna write in my own... Thank God there's a blank here—I'm gonna write in my own word for that. And my word was mixed.
- Annie:** I loved the question mark. I thought that is not an accident.
- Eli:** It's not.
- Annie:** There is a story here. That is fascinating.
- Eli:** As a matter of fact, when they made the cover, they put it without the question mark. And I told them to put the question mark because I mean Latinos will know, oh, well Hispanic is not under that category and so I'm raising the question on it.

Annie: Yeah. Dude, that's stuff people don't know. The Easter eggs.

Eli: The Easter eggs.

Annie: You got to pay attention to all of it.

Eli: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:35:24] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to share about another amazing partner, [Indeed](#). With all the new graduates searching for jobs now is a great time to post the open positions at your company. And Indeed is the place to do it, y'all. Indeed is who we use when we're hiring, and they have never steered us wrong. They do all the hard work for you.

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Sponsor: And I have one last amazing partner to share with you, Ritual. Okay, if you're anything like me, skincare tricks and solutions keep crowding my bathroom cabinets and counter space. Are you the same? I'm like trying my best to take care of my skin but it is a lot of different things to keep up with. But did you know there's an option to swallow your skincare? You guys, for real.

Ritual's HyaCera combines hyaluronic acid and ceramides in a once-daily capsule. You can enhance your skincare routine from the inside out with just one capsule with a soothing vanilla scent, you guys. Each one you and contains two of the best clinically studied ingredients shown to help minimize wrinkles and hydrate skin. It's non-GMO, vegan, gluten-free, soy-free, has no artificial colorants and is third-party tested, so you know you're putting the best option in your body.

I loved this option. Also, it makes it so easy for traveling. We already have to think about enough things when it comes to packing up all the toiletries and skincare and I don't have room for it all. If you're flying and you're just carrying on or are you not, I don't know. I mean, thinking about the bus, how do I get everything on there for tour? Are there certain amount of liquid you're allowed to fly with?

Listen, listen, listen, with Ritual's HyaCera, you don't have to worry about any of that because you're just back in your daily capsules. And they've seen proven results in 90 days. So think about it. If you start now, you can have healthier skin by the end of summer, you guys. Aging like fine wine, addressing the fine lines and making your skincare a little simpler every day. HyaCera from Ritual is a skin supplement you can actually trust.

Ritual is offering my friends 10% off during your first three months. That's all you need to prove it works, right? The first three months. So visit ritual.com/thatsoundsfun to start Ritual or add HyaCera to your lineup today.

And now back to finish up our conversation with Eli.

[00:38:43] <music>

Annie: One line that really stood out to me that I want you to talk about is you say the farther you are from the purest version of the group, the less weight your views and voice will have. When I tell you I've never thought... because I am just a white girl, right? And I love my family. So it is not like "just". I just mean I don't have any other flavor except, you know, nothing that we really know of. So I am not a mixed race. I've never thought about that your experience is less of a voice because you put them together.

Eli: Yeah.

Annie: What I loved about this book is I thought people are going to be heard who have never felt heard before. How do we start listening to people who are multicultural in themselves?

Eli: Man, that's a fantastic question. So for all of us that are of mixed race or ethnicity, culture heritage, there's a term called third culture community. We're a third culture community. So we're not-

Annie: I've heard that about missionary kids before. Third culture.

Eli: Yes, yes. Exactly that. It's the same term where you're not from here or there. Ni de aquí ni de allá. That's Spanish. So I'm not from here or there and So that's what we experienced? Because I take part of my mom, but I'm not completely my mom and I take part of my dad and I'm not complete my dad. I'm kind of a mix of the two, which is something completely different.

So I think whenever I wrote that, one of the terms I also use this like a visitor's pass. That I'm not all this and all that. You know, it's kind of like, you don't know you have a true friend until things are going bad. Right?

Annie: Yeah.

Eli: It's the same thing. Like when times of tension and hardship happen, people will gravitate to purity and simplicity. Let's just say, for example, all the things that I said about what people were saying about me on social media. They're like, "Well, if you're not passionate about this, well, you're also not completely this. So that's why you're diluted. So we're not going to listen to you because, you know, you're already conflicted. You got a conflict of interests, you're also a part of the other group. So leave this to the purists. Leave this to the people that have experienced it to the full." Right?

Annie: Mm-hmm.

Eli: So that was what I meant by that line. It's like, Hey, I can't be... It's kind of like the President of the United States. You can't be born in another country and be our president. That's just a law we have in place. It's kind of the same thing for these groups. It's like, Hey, you can be here, but you can never be our president. So I experienced so much of that, where I'm not this enough. Like you're not Latino enough. I wasn't American enough, Dominican enough. It was like, "You're not this enough." You feel a little nomadic. And I mean, I have a whole chapter on that, where I call Jesus the King without borders.

Annie: That's where we are going. Go.

Eli: So that's to begin that purity and getting to the center what happens when you get stuck on the border and you have no home.

Annie: Talk about Jesus... I mean, what you write about Jesus being a mixed-race person as well. We have a podcast, Let's Read the Gospels, where we're reading the gospels out loud every month. So I have read the Matthew, Mark, Luke, John out loud five times. My mouth is so tired. And we're loving it as well. But, I mean, this is a mixed-up making of a Messiah. Will you talk about that a little bit?

Eli: Yeah. I mean, you just look at the genealogies. Like we see several Gentile women in His lineage... And this is also me, just for people to understand. I'm not saying that Jesus is mixed ethnically. Like the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary. I get that. Just to be clear. The heretic hunters, just to be clear, I'm not calling Jesus mixed in that sense.

Annie: Yeah. We work really hard not to have heretics on the show. So it's a goal.

Eli: So just to be clear. But to know that Jesus was born into a context, a context, He got to choose to be born. And what a context to choose to be born in during the geopolitical era, the town he was born in, then the pressures of the government trying to hunt Him down that forced him into Egypt, and then having to come back and then settling in a place with a reputation like Nazareth.

Annie: And Egypt, they were there a long time.

Eli: Yes.

Annie: Like, He is living in Africa as a young kid. So He experienced... this was not the culture that His mom knew.

Eli: Exactly.

Annie: Or Joseph knew.

Eli: Exactly.

Annie: I think I downplay how long He was in Egypt.

Eli: Yeah. And maybe sometimes we downplay what those formative years really are. When you were a young kid... I mean, listen to any podcast that talks about young kids in development. You know, those early years are super important formative. So when we talk about Jesus, and we see in the Epistles where we know Him as one that can empathize with us, we see how many dynamics are thrown His way as He's growing up, and then having to navigate ministry.

So what I tried to do is I try to highlight in the book like, No, Jesus had to trudge through so much that is very similar to all of us. That I have to trudge through a mixed company, a mixed bag of cultural norms and tensions and the geopolitical side, and then handling His interpersonal relationships with not just as disciples, but His mom and His siblings. You know, "Who's my mom and who are my brothers?"

Annie: "Jesus, they're right out there."

Eli: Yeah, exactly. And "did you not know I'm about My Father's business, mom?" And all of those things that he had to navigate. So I gave kind of like a story at the beginning of the Jesus chapter where I'm talking about my friend and her experience as Mexican.

Annie: [inaudible 00:44:28] the great state of Georgia. Come on.

Eli: In Georgia. In Georgia. And right after that, without skipping a beat, I started with "And let me tell you about another friend." And I use kind of our modern terminology for how we would describe Jesus' journey from birth all the way to His ascension. And you look at it and you're like, Man, that sounds like that could be anybody. Like there's so many experiences there that like the common person goes through and has to struggle through. And you're like, that's your Messiah. You know, the blue-collar, work with your hands, you know, having to navigate moving from place to place.

I think that, you know, sometimes we lose the context of Christ. When we get into church, we really try to sanitize Jesus, but you don't live a sanitized life. And Jesus was so willing to get dirty and get into the complexity, and conquer so that He can lead you through your own complexity. I thought it was super important to put that in the book.

Annie: I just feel like the longer I'm a person, the longer I'm a believer, faith does not get easier, it gets more complex.

Eli: Yes.

Annie: And in a good way. So even this conversation, as I was reading your book, I was like, Oh, this is a complexity about the churches that I serve and the people that are my neighbors and other believers, this is a complexity that I have not thought about enough. Because also, I feel like publicly a lot of times, we see people lean on the most obvious of their races for whatever reason. No one else is doing this, Eli, is what I'm telling you.

Eli: Because it's not comfortable. We want to oversimplify ourselves. Right?

Annie: Yeah, me too.

Eli: For example, my name, I tried to simplify my name and shorten it. E-L-I.

Annie: Oh, do this.

Eli: No. I was gonna call you out. But it's spelled... So for people that know, I go by Eli, but it's spelled Eli because it's short for Eliezer, E-L-I-E-Z-E-R. So I try to contextualize it for people. You know, in trying to simplify, it actually got more complicated because the way it's pronounced and the way that it's said is completely different.

Annie: Right.

Eli: And I think that when we try to oversimplify our lives, we overcomplicate our lives. Like our life is complicated enough.

Annie: That's it.

Eli: But God has ordained a path for a certain direction of complexity, and not for the complexity we make for ourselves. So a lot of our identity crisis comes from, I'm going to define me. But I heard it said once, I don't know who I heard this from, I'm not claiming it, so don't sue me. But if you didn't design you, you can't define you.

Annie: Wow.

Eli: Right? So I think it's two things happening simultaneously. The boxes the world built, it's in the book as well, the boxes the world built for us and the boxes we built for ourselves. And I think a lot of the complexity comes from us just getting in our own box that we put for ourselves. And, you know, you get in there and you're like, "Oh, man, this is... you know, well, it's better than known, then me investigate who God has created me to be," or "It's better someone told me who I am." So I can just do that without having to pioneer whatever God is asking me to go and trust Him in. So I think that's a huge point.

Annie: In its end, you talk about your identity being part of your mission.

Eli: Yeah.

Annie: Will you kind of speak into that? Will you define identifiers versus identity first?

Eli: Yeah.

Annie: Because I do want us to kind of think through what we're actually saying when we say our identity is on mission.

Eli: So your identity versus your identifier. Your identifiers are things that people can identify you by. So they are things on the outside. Like the way that you dress, your skin color, the way that you carry yourself, like you smile, you don't smile. Those are all identifiers that people can know you buy at a [inaudible 00:48:17] level. Right? And your identity is something so much deeper. Your identifiers are skin deep, your identity is salty.

Annie: That's good.

Eli: And oftentimes, it's not as overt. Your identity is not as overt. And it's under layers. There's so many layers that go into your identity. And when I talk about identity on mission, I talk about the fact that whenever you give your life to Christ, you completely give it to Him. And Christ has made you a missionary like He was a missionary. He left heaven to come to earth, because He wanted to redeem the world. And He made His plan A the church, which are the people of God.

So when I sign up for this thing, and I become a Christian, guess what? I signed up for a mission. The great commission. Co-mission. I'm doing this together with Jesus. So I have to reconcile that, okay, if he destined me to be a co-missioner with Him, then that means that whatever I am is designed to be effective, where I'm going.

So I have to take inventory of who I've who I am. All the experiences that I've taken in all the relationships that have shaped and formed me, everything, I have to take that into account because I'm not called just to be, which is I think at the beginning of this book, hey, we need to grapple with who we are because we're human beings. Right?

Annie: Yeah.

Eli: And after that, once we've grappled with that, then we have to grapple with, okay, not just being but doing. So out of being, then doing. That's the missional part of identity. So that's why I make the argument like, hey, get to know who you are and who God designed you to be because you will be amazed the power that's in that to do the redemptive work of Christ in all of the world. Because you can only reach the people you can reach.

So being different actually gives you that unreached people group, for example. There's an unreached people group in your city that is waiting for a person like you

to give your all to Christ, to reconcile yourself to Him, and then to take that reconciled self to a world to be reconciled back to Christ. right? It's that trajectory from vertical to horizontal. That's why I'm so clear on the difference between identifiers and identity. Because identifiers are not to be thrown away. They're a part of you. But that deeper conversation around identity is not one that keeps you still. It sends you.

Annie: The fun part of you explaining all that is we just heard that you have done that with your life. Like you sat with this message and this experience of being mixed in 2020 wrestling with it and then you went, "Okay, now I actually can use it. Now I actually can be part of what's going forward." Mixed feels like a word I'm not supposed to say. Is that okay to say?

Eli: Yeah.

Annie: I don't know why it feels like a derogatory term or something. It's not though.

Eli: No, no. I wouldn't say. You know, we're post-2020.

Annie: Someone-

Eli: Someone's gonna say something in the comments and say that. But really mixed goes beyond race and ethnicity in this book. This is me making an argument that we're all mixed with something.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Eli: You're mixed in your relationships, you are mixed in your experiences. You're not a simple person. But that's amazing. It's amazing that you're not simple. We use Romans 8:28 to talk about the good things and the bad things happen in your life for a greater purpose. But I think we do need to take into account that all of those things that work together in you, the big and the small, the good, and the bad, that mixture is the perfect mixture when you love God to do His purpose. Right.

Annie: Yeah. That's the argument that I'm making. So I'm saying, I don't mind if someone says, Yeah, I'm a mixed bag of things, or I'm a mixed person? Because at the end of the day, you're the only one that's ever lived your life and you're the only one that's ever experienced what you've experienced.

Annie: That's right.

Eli: And God wants to reconcile all those things for good.

Annie: Yeah. And to put it on mission.

Eli: And put it on mission.

Annie: The whole story. So good, Eli.

Eli: So this is me trying to take shame away.

Annie: Yes. Yes.

Eli: For sure.

Annie: Okay, you did a very responsible thing where you showed up with notes. Is there anything we didn't stay on your notes that you want to make sure we say?

Eli: No.

Annie: That's impressive.

Eli: I showed up because I was like, "Man, I..." super nervous about this podcast. But anyways-

Annie: Eli.

Eli: Oh, no. I love your podcast by the way.

Annie: You're so kind.

Eli: I came prepared. And also I just want people to know, Annie, her, and I, we've been great friends. And you've made this so easy for me to be on here. The nerves went away when we started talking. You talk about sitting across from a friend and it's felt. So that's why I haven't looked at my notes. I'm like, "This is great." I don't mind anything on the notes.

But I really don't have anything else to add. But I think at the core of it, I hope that people don't disqualify themselves from buying the book because they're not racially or ethnically mixed. Because that's not the point of the book.

Annie: That's right.

Eli: You'll walk away with some tools when it comes to the conversation about race and ethnicity.

Annie: Oh, huge for me.

Eli: We've all been part of a moment where we felt like an outsider in our own story. And we've had an identity crisis, whether you're the middle child, or you're the tall kid at school, or-

Annie: You're the Southerner who moved up north. You're the northerner who moved down south.

Eli: 100%. There have been moments in your life where you feel like you didn't fit in, and you've had to force yourself into something and you felt unsatisfied. And when you've tried to break out, you've had a community shame you for trying to get out. This book is written to you so you can have self-reconciliation. That was a big part of my journey, self-reconciliation, where I had to reconcile two ethnicities and races on the inside of me that were at war with one another to take turns or to take dominance, so that I could put it up as a front. I call it the caricature complex.

Annie: Right.

Eli: Because I'm half Mexican, I was like, "You know, what places am I going to act more George Lopez than I am other places?" I want people to know that. They don't have to diminish any part of themselves.

Annie: That's right.

Eli: That they're not a fragmented human being. That they're a whole human being. And Christ can lead you on the journey of how it works together. Just trust Him with it. And I hope that the book helps.

Annie: It's so good. I think for our friends listening who experience a multiracial life where they are mixed, this is so helpful, I would assume. I can't read it with that brain, but I would assume. But for me, I also blew my mind on things that I had never thought of. I mean, I said that cover... I talked about it last night. I sent the cover to multiple friends yesterday and said, "Have you read this yet?" I sent it to friends that are mixed, I sent it to friends who aren't racially mixed. Because I'm like, "This is a story I'm not reading anywhere else, Eli." So I just think, what a gift it is. What a gift it is. What a gift you are. So I'm so happy that you did this.

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

Eli: Oh, go into Disney World with my kids and my wife.

Annie: Oh, have y'all done it yet?

Eli: We have. But the kids are getting older. So my oldest is about to be four. She's in her princess era.

Annie: Princess era. I knew it.

Eli: She's in her princess era.

Annie: Who's her princess of choice? All of them?

Eli: Oh, yeah. All of them. But she definitely leans Elsa and Nana. She'll flip back and forth. Moana. And from Encanto... Mirabel. So we have her whole Mirabel outfit, and she has the little glasses and stuff.

Annie: So sweet.

Eli: I mean, she has a little Jasmine outfit. She does all the princess. She is just a princess. So we talked about it recently, my wife and I, and so we were talking about like going on a road trip out there. And you know, as a dad, there's just nothing like seeing your child's eyes light up. And Disney World is the place for them. And then my son also he's getting older and Buzz Lightyear and things like that. He's starting to get it. So that sounds a lot of fun for me.

Annie: My nephew is two, almost three. So before he's born, I'm like, "Why did people take little kids to Disney World?" And now I'm like, "Do you want to go to Disney?" I want to see you do this.

Eli: That's it. I mean, I don't know how to explain it. But to watch someone get excited, there's something about that. I'm sure there's a science out there about that. But to watch, especially your kids get super excited, and go, Oh my gosh, I can't believe it. So that sounds fun.

Annie: I went last year with my best friends here and their three kids who are all elementary, but like kindergarten third, fifth. And the kindergartner was like, "Will you ride Slinky Dog again? It was July. It was 1000 degrees. He was like, "Will you ride Slinky Dog?" And I was like, "Yeah. Anything. Anything for you to have fun is a yes for me. I am sweating my life away, but also, let's go."

Eli: Oh my gosh. Awesome.

Annie: Great answer. Well done. Thanks for doing this. I cannot wait for people to get *Mixed*.

Eli: Awesome. Thank you for having me.

[00:57:20] <music>

Annie: You guys, isn't he brilliant? Oh my gosh, Eli, is so brilliant. I love that conversation so much. And also, every time I get to have friends on that are younger than me, they're like the generation below. I'm like so stoked about what's going on in the church and the way people are committed to Jesus and having really important conversations like Eli's and his books.

So make sure you grab a copy of *Mixed*. Again, I'm telling you, I've never read a book like it. I read a lot of books and I've never read a book like it. So I would really encourage you to grab a copy of *Mixed*. Follow Eli on social media, thank him for being on the show.

Also on May 30, we want to kick off the summer months by going through *Chase the Fun* together and you are invited. And if you've already gone through it once, that's okay, jump in again. There is always more fun to be had and more to learn. What I know to be true is when we chase fun, joy follows. So what are you needing this summer?

I don't know what your year has looked like so far, but I'm guessing it is held joy and sorrow. And for 100 days this summer, I want to invite you to *Chase the Fun*. Head to the link in the show notes to sign up and go order your copy of the book. Those are your two assignments. Sign up in the link in the show notes, make sure you've got a copy of *Chase the Fun*. We all know that we have a better chance of finishing 100 days when we finish together. We finish better when we finish together. Okay, so I'm so excited for us to do that together this summer. I'm right along with you. I'm doing it with you. I cannot wait. It's gonna be weird to read my own words but I'm doing it.

Okay, we heard what sounds fun to Eli, you know it sounds fun to me, doing *Chase the Fun* with you, now we get to hear what sounds fun to one of our friends who is listening just like you.

Okay, Kayla, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

Kayla: I'm Kayla and I'm from Sacramento, California. And what sounds fun to me is going paddle boarding in some of the local rivers and lakes. We've had a really rainy winter. So it's finally starting to be sunny again. So enjoying the sunshine and getting outside sounds fun.

Annie: Okay, stand up paddle. Is that what you're saying?

Kayla: Mm-hmm. Yeah. So it's like a board and you stand on it and you paddle.

Annie: So the couple of times I've tried it, I fall off a lot. Do you fall off a lot?

Kayla: No, not really. I mean, you can fall but you can sit on it too, if that feels, you know, better.

Annie: That may need to be my future is sitting.

Kayla: Yeah, yeah.

Annie: Okay, great. Until I get better at it and then standing.

Kayla: Yeah.

Annie: Do you own your own?

Kayla: No. My parents used to live close to me and I would borrow theirs. So now I just rent because I don't have the storage for it.

Annie: Right. That's right. And renting is fine for like the few times.

Kayla: Yeah, yeah.

Annie: I support that. Well done. Okay, stand-up paddle. Nobody said that. That's a great answer.

Kayla: Okay, great. And then the other thing that sounds fun to me I have to say is coming to see you in Austin for the Here For You tour.

Annie: Yes. You're gonna be in Austin show?

Kayla: Yes, I am.

Annie: Oh, I'm so glad. It's gonna be so fun. It's gonna be the best night. I'm so glad. Will I get to actually see you?

Kayla: Yes.

Annie: Okay, great. Super.

Kayla: Yes.

Annie: I can't wait, Kayla. That's awesome.

Kayla: Me neither.

Annie: Good answers. Good answers.

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.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me, y'all know this about my life, about once a month I eat dinner with Winston and Rachel Cruze. We call it Wind Down Winston Wednesday, and that is tonight. And I cannot wait. I know. It's not a Wednesday, but we don't always do it on Wednesdays. It's complicated. But I get to eat dinner with my friends tonight. It's one of my favorite families. I cannot wait.

Y'all have a great week. And we will see you back here on Thursday with my friend Kyle Idleman. Y'all have a good week.