

[00:00:00] <music>

Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you. Today we are in a special series called Summer Lovin', That Sounds Fun podcast series, in which we want to restore hope in dating and bridge all the helpful conversations, practical resources, and amazing experts so that you see changes in your dating life, starting with you.

During Summer Lovin', we're going to talk through a lot of aspects of dating. Each episode is going to feature an expert, which y'all already loved Ben Stuart last week. I know. Me too. And every expert is either someone who has written on the subject, works with a ton of people who are single or dating or is a licensed therapist, or a combo of the above.

And in a lot of the episodes, we sit down with a male and a female who aren't married to each other or in life at all and we get their perspective on it all. You're gonna love that part of today's conversation. These friends are my friends or friends of friends or our staff who are normal people navigating dating in 2023. And of course, they don't represent everything about dating or don't represent everyone's experience, but I love how they've shared beautifully from their own stories.

This series is not an all-in-one guide to every part of dating, but it's a great jumping-off point that hopefully offers you some good wisdom that you can start implementing right away. We want to bridge you to these experts and their resources so you have something practical to walk away with. At the end of the episode, we'll make sure and tell you how to find each expert and how to find their resources.

But before we dive into today's conversation, I gotta tell you about our incredible sponsor, [Athletic Greens](#). Okay, even though it is summer, that does not mean we have to let go of all of our healthy rhythms, you guys. While I'm out on tour this weekend, I want to make sure I'm getting my daily nutrients I need. So AG1 by Athletic Greens is packed in my bag, so is my Born to Slay shaker. In fact, I have travel packs with me which makes packing so easy.

And AG1 is such an incredibly simple way to incorporate healthy habits even when you're busy or traveling. It's as easy as adding one scoop of AG1 powder to cold water instead of keeping up with multiple different products. AG1 was designed with ease in mind so you can live healthier and better without having to do a lot.

Every scoop is filled with 75 vitamins, minerals, and Whole Foods-sourced ingredients of the highest quality that give us major benefits like gut and mood support, boosted energy, even healthier-looking skin, hair, and nails, all things that

will support you in your dating, which is really important to all of us out on tour while we're sharing a bus all month. I will tell you, we are here for you but we are not here for your germs. You know what I'm saying, people on tour with me?

You don't have to set a reminder to order AG1 or worry about running out because it's delivered like clockwork every month, so it's super easy to make a daily habit. And those single-serving travel packs can be thrown in your purse or carry-on when you're on the go. AG1 is powerful because it's easy to fit into your lifestyle and it's the healthiest thing you can do in under a minute.

If you're looking for an easier way to take supplements, AG1 is giving you a free one-year supply of vitamin D, five free travel packs with your first purchase. So go to athleticgreens.com/soundsfun. That's athleticgreens.com/soundsfun. Y'all go check it out.

Intro: Today on the show, we continue with our Summer Lovin' series with our second guest expert, Debra Fileta. Debra is a licensed professional counselor specializing in dating, marriage, and relationship issues. So she was the exact right person to join us for this series. She's the author of six books, including *True Love Dates*, and she's also the host of the Love + Relationships podcast. It's like a hot lifestyle show where we will call in to get the relationship questions answered, which I think it's so cool. Y'all are gonna love it.

Joining us are my friends, Bekah and Lucas, and together, we're going to talk about dating in your 20s versus 30s, 40s, 50s, and so on. We're each sharing our experiences and hang-ups and what we hope for. Debra has so many wise words to offer along the way. You are really going to love this one. So here is my Summer Lovin' conversation, Dating at This Age, with Debra Fileta and my friends Bekah and Lucas.

Okay, friends, welcome to Summer Lovin', an episode about how you date different in your decades. Are you ready?

Lucas: Oh, yeah.

Bekah: So ready. Thanks for having us.

Lucas: I think. I think.

Debra: I am ready.

Annie: I'm so glad you're here. I've just been so excited to have you on the podcast.

Debra: It's so good to be here.

Annie: What a gift! Thank you.

Debra: I just love you guys. I mean, I already feel like it's more fun just walking in this office.

Annie: Okay, so let's introduce ourselves. This is the first episode our friends are hearing where it's not just me and the expert. So this is the first time they're getting to hear other people like them that are single and dating and kind of out in the world. We'll start with you, Lucas. Tell us your name, your age. Please be specific, Lucas, for this particular episode. And are you single, are you dating, are you in a relationship, are you engaged? Kind of where you are in that. And what you do.

Lucas: Yeah. So my name is Lucas and I'm grateful. I've been friends with you Annie for a long time now.

Annie: Oh gosh. The whole time I've lived here, I think.

Lucas: Really?

Annie: Yeah. Like 14 or 15 years.

Lucas: Yeah, yeah. It's been a good amount of time. I forget what book you mentioned. I think you mentioned the Family Dinner thing. Which book was it?

Annie: I don't know either.

Lucas: Anyway-

Annie: But yes, Family Dinner.

Lucas: That's, I think, how we met back in the day or when we started hanging. I'm 39, turning 40 in July.

Annie: Dear everyone, he's not in his 40s. His 30s.

Lucas: Thirty nine.

Annie: We get it. Hey.

Lucas: Hey, but I'm not like cringing about 40 there. I'm looking forward to, I don't know, new decade.

Annie: It's awesome. I love it.

Lucas: I think it's gonna be great. What was the question?

Annie: What do you do?

Lucas: What do I do? So I've worked in entertainment and the music industry for probably around 20 years. I mean, if you include college and different things. And it's interesting, I'm kind of in a shift right now of doing different things. So right now I'm kind of working more in the nonprofit space, in the ministry space-

Annie: Oh, cool.

Lucas: ...and doing some different things.

Annie: I don't know that. I saw you on a tour, so I thought you're still tour managing.

Lucas: No, no. I used to... Well, that was part of the years in the entertainment world, touring and on the road. So I've kind of done different things in music: management, live events, and touring, publishing, and sync and film and TV stuff. And then, more recently, I've shifted into the nonprofit.

Annie: Okay. You're cool. Beks, who are you?

Bekah: My name is Bekah Wirtz, and I'm 37 years old. I'm a graphic designer and illustrator. I've lived in Nashville for almost nine years. When I moved here in 2014, I quit my corporate job and started out on my own. So I've been working with a lot of companies that are either starting up or looking to grow their business and found myself here working with That Sounds Fun Network.

Annie: This is where you office.

Bekah: I office here with all these lovely co-workers. So it's been a gift.

Annie: Oh, you are a gift. Where are you in the dating world currently? Single? Dating? What are you doing?

Bekah: I am single. I am not actively dating, but you know, it's still on my radar.

Annie: Great. Where are you, Boto?

Lucas: Pretty similar. Like, I mean, not not dating, but also not like every Friday, Saturday I'm... You know what I mean? It's kind of just like, you know, not forcing things, but not like avoiding. Just open-

Annie: Available.

Lucas: Trying to be open. But yeah, single.

Annie: Will you tell us who you are?

Debra: Yes. My name is Debra Felita. I'm a licensed professional counselor. I'm an author, I have a podcast. I have such a heart for singles and dating. When I first started my ministry 10 years ago, my first book, *True Love Dates*, was for singles. And, you know, life has evolved over the past 10 years. I write about marriage and sex and emotional and mental health.

But I have such a heart for this state... I feel like God hasn't given me the green light to be done with singles ministry. Because I truly believe if we want to see a dent in the divorce rate, if we want to have less of a need for marriage ministry, we've got to focus on singles and helping them get healthy and supporting them and encouraging them. So I just feel like such a heart and passion for this stage and for you guys. I'm just so glad to be here.

Annie: Thank you. So one of the things I want to start with... So these two guests of ours are in their 30s, I'm in my 40s. A lot of our friends listening are 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s and single. Is it different... Do you see dating... I mean, my experience... I mean, do you agree with this? Experientially dating is way different now than it was when I was 22? Is that true kind of across the board? Does dating change?

Debra: Yeah, I always say this, the culture of dating changes, but the character of dating shouldn't change. So the culture changes. Like, every decade, I think we're faced with a different culture. And I don't necessarily think it's like 20s versus 30s. I think it's more 2023 versus 2000 versus-

Annie: Because we didn't have dating apps in college, did you? I didn't.

Lucas: I was just thinking about that as you said that. I was like, yeah, the culture has changed definitely.

Debra: Yeah. And people always ask me when I speak, they're like, Tell us a biblical perspective on dating. I'm like, Okay, that includes a dowry, a bunch of camels and goats, like arranged marriage. I don't think we actually want a biblical approach to dating as far as that goes because the culture of dating has changed. But I do think

that the character of dating stays the same when we can pull out the principles of what it looks like to engage in healthy relationships from Scripture. So I think you can apply that in your 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s. I even had a 70-year-old reach out to me who's single and ready to mingle. So I just think what we really have to focus on is like making sure we're doing it in a healthy way.

Lucas: Yeah. And no, I don't think we had dating apps.

Annie: No. Did you have dating apps in college?

Bekah: Definitely not.

Lucas: If we did, it would suck. Even post-college-

Bekah: Did we even have cell phones?

Annie: Yeah. Right? I barely did.

Lucas: If we had dating apps even post-college... I mean, I remember when they started becoming more easily available and stuff... I mean, I'm sure there were websites, right/

Annie: Right.

Lucas: And I always had the impression of like, Ew, you know. But now it's like so common. And like I have a family member that found their spouse on dating app. So it's like-

Bekah: It's so common.

Lucas: So it's like the culture has changed from like, "Oh, who would do that?" to like everybody's doing that.

Debra: So this is an interesting fact for you guys. I love doing polls and surveys. I did a massive poll of married people: Where did you find your spouse? Christian married couples. A third of them found somebody through a church or related activity. About 30%. The other third was through friends and family. And with friends and family, I do think there is a level of being proactive. Like if you actually want to date, to say, "Hey, I would love to meet people.

Annie: Say it to your people.

- Debra:** Sometimes people are not as proactive to say it. And then the last third was online. So that just shows you the shift. An entire third. I think if we would have backtracked a decade ago even, it would have been higher friends and family and higher church-related activity, for Christian specifically. But a third. We're like equal. A third, a third, a third. And online dating is right up there.
- Annie:** Are y'all both on apps?
- Bekah:** I am, yes.
- Lucas:** Nop.
- Annie:** You're not right now?
- Lucas:** Never have been.
- Annie:** Never have been, Luke?
- Lucas:** Yeah. Never have been.
- Bekah:** Let's talk about that for a minute.
- Annie:** Why?
- Lucas:** I don't have anything against it. I just don't feel like it's my vibe. I mean, it's worked great for a lot of people. It's not like I'm like... I don't know. It just doesn't... Yeah, I don't know. It's just like I'm not drawn towards it. I feel like it doesn't feel like something that's naturally what I would want to do. Look, you can push yourself outside your comfort zone, no doubt. But I'm meeting people other ways. So it's kind of like... I don't know
- Debra:** My goal is to get you on an app by the end of the day.
- Lucas:** Oh, wow. Why? Why do you want to get me on an app?
- Debra:** You know, I just feel like it's just one more opportunity to meet people. And I also feel like if we could just shift our perspective of dating, and instead of seeing it as like, I need to find my spouse. See it as this is an opportunity to encourage and edify brothers and sisters in Christ. You know, like, I never know who I'm going to meet. It's just like, when I sit on a plane, I never know who's gonna sit next to me. And I say, Lord, help me encourage and edify this person. And I just think if we could shift our mentality about it and not make it so serious, so complex, so

awkward, we would do much better in dating and interactions and coffees and dinners, you know.

Annie: I think that we have a lot of friends for... Bekah and Lucas, for y'all to know this. We have a lot of friends listening, when we've done surveys, reach out who have never been on a date at all. And they're in their 30s. And they-

Debra: You're absolutely right about that, Annie.

Annie: Our whole team was surprised at the amount of people who said, "Yeah, I've never been on a date at all." I think a lot of Christian culture says you are dating to find your husband or wife and therefore a first date is very important.

Debra: Exactly.

Annie: And it keeps people from just meeting each other.

Debra: It keeps people paralyzed.

Bekah: So much pressure.

Debra: You're absolutely right.

Lucas: I mean, yeah, that is a lot of pressure.

Annie: Do y'all feel that pressure?

Lucas: Less now than I used to.

Bekah: I felt it a lot, I think, in my 20s. And I honestly didn't even date much in my 20s. It's like church culture, we would just like all hang out together.

Debra: As groups, you mean?

Bekah: Yeah, yeah. And we would like have parties so that we could socialize with men. So like anytime a date would come up, it would feel like, Oh my gosh, I feel so much pressure to know, like, you know, do I want to... you know, is this someone that I could see myself with long term? And it's like, no, you just have to know if you want to say yes to a next date.

Debra: You're certainly right.

- Bekah:** So I think that's caused a lot of anxiety in dating, at least for me personally. And I think I can see it spreading into the Christian culture of like putting so much emphasis on the end zone or the end line that you're not able to engage with the process.
- Debra:** You're absolutely right. That was the number one dating mistake in one of my surveys. What was the number one dating mistake you made last year? I thought it might be toxic relationships, having sex outside of marriage. It was "not dating". Not going on a date was the number one regret of Christian singles. That tells you something.
- Annie:** Do you think... Go ahead.
- Lucas:** No, I was just gonna say one more thing about the app or apps in general, as you're talking about it. I think some of this is principle, like you were talking about. Like what's the principle behind all of it? But some of it is personal to like in the sense of... I think for me it feels a little transactional, where I want something to naturally unfold. But that's just me. I think the goal, at least in my mind, and y'all can tell me if I'm off base here, but I think the goal is to meet people and meet new people and get to know new people, right? However, you do that, if it's through an app, through friends or family, through events, through hangs, through, you know. And then you can be intentional in that. So, for me, I'm meeting new people pretty much every week through different things, like service sort of things. Like, my community has kind of become this organization called people living in Nashville. So we do stuff every single week. There's new people coming every single week. I meet people constantly. And then I'm doing other things, other hangs with friends, other church-related things. Like constantly doing things and meeting new people.
- Annie:** And meeting people, like people living in Nashville, Debra, is like go and do something you love and then look around.
- Debra:** I love that. I mean you're saying you don't really feel a need to explore another stream of meeting people because you have so much right now?
- Lucas:** And I might one day. I mean, it's not like I'm saying I'll never do an app. It's just like it doesn't really feel natural to me. I'm meeting people, so I don't feel the... you know.
- Debra:** I think what I often see is the opposite—people who are in total isolation and they don't have anybody, and then they go to their Christian mentors, and they're like, "I really want to get married one day." And the mentor or the pastor will say, "Just wait on the Lord." But what's interesting is we don't give that same advice... Like if you came to me back and you're like, "I want to buy a house next year," I'd say,

"You know what? Let's look at the interest rates. Let's start saving. Let's start shopping around and see what kind of houses you like and what kind of house..." Like we're gonna come up with a plan. But with Christian singles, we often just say to them, "Wait on the Lord."

Annie: Right. We don't tell people who want to have a baby not to do something. Right?

Debra: Exactly.

Lucas: Yeah.

Debra: Passive culture instead of a proactive culture.

Lucas: And like even waiting, I've thought a lot about that. I mean, talk about biblically classic waiting. It is. And I do think we should wait on the Lord. But the way we wait on the Lord, like there's an act of waiting. Sometimes that might mean being alone for a little bit. But sometimes, a lot of times, I think that means doing something. And that's something I've thought about recently in a lot of realms of life is just... It's like what James talks about, you know, faith and works. I think, if faith is paired with action, you know.

Sometimes that action might be like, "No, I've been going, going, going, I need to do nothing." But like, if you've been doing nothing a long time, and you're seeking the Lord, maybe He's asking you to step out of the boat, you know? I don't know. So I think that comes in someone's personal relationship with the Lord.

Debra: I agree.

Annie: Debra, something I've experienced is meeting men in my age bracket, in their 40s or late 30s outside of apps, you don't know if they're marriage minded or not. So you meet them and there's a spark and there's sort of a thing, and then they're like, "Well, I was trying to get this together. I wasn't trying to fall in love. I was trying..." And it ends up not working because you've... you... me, I've met up with someone I've gone on dates with someone who in the long run is like, "Oh, we aren't on the same page right now." So when we're thinking of people in every stage of life, where other places we can look to know that the people we're meeting at people loving Nashville, and interested in are actually thinking about the same long-term thing?

Debra: Yeah, you're right. Well, the tricky thing is even people on dating apps may not have that long-term mentality, either. Some people are just there to have fun and play around. So I think what it comes down to is being really clear in our communication and being proactive. Oftentimes, we talk about the verse "guard

your heart for it is the wellspring of life, out of it flows everything." But what's interesting about that verses, it says, "Guard your heart." Like protect your own heart. Nobody's responsible for that but you.

And I think we also have this culture where women are kind of taught to just not say anything until he says something. And now I'm like four months in on going dates and I find out he's actually not interested in dating me. And I feel like that's a poor job of protecting our own hearts.

So I really encouraged, especially women, because of that culture that we come from, that Christian culture of like don't pursue him, which personally I disagree with. But I think it's important like... Bekah, let's say you're hanging out with this guy, it's been a couple of months, he hasn't said anything. It's time for you to say something and be like, "Listen, we've been hanging out a lot, and it's fun and I'm really interested in getting to know you. I'd like to know if you want to be exclusive in this relationship or if you're thinking something different." Like you have to get to a point where you decide to change that ambiguity.

Annie: Yeah, yeah. That's right.

Bekah: Do you have any advice... Like as someone's looking through an app, do you ever engage in that conversation before you even meet up with them or is that just something you would look at later?

Debra: I think that might be a little too early because they don't know what their plans are and you don't know what your plans are until you actually meet and connect. I mean, you might go on that first coffee day and be like, "Nevermind."

Annie: Nice to meet you. Bye. Bye, bye.

Debra: "It was fun but..." you know? So I think it's a matter of like in time. Think of this. Dating isn't about cultivating intimacy. It's the season of investigation. I'm here to investigate, see if we connect. Are we a good match? What's your personality? Like we take out the intimacy part and we just see it as... I know, it doesn't sound Hollywood romantic, okay? It really doesn't. Like, oh, it's about investigation. But I think really, that's a healthier perspective to have, especially those first three to six months.

Annie: Is that true for people who are re-singled, widowed, or divorced? Is that still true? Is it still investigative if you are doing it again?

Debra: I think it's especially true because just looking at divorce in general, oftentimes, two people were involved in that divorce, two people have things to heal, and

change and transform and do differently. So I think all the more reason to take your time and investigate the second time around so that you can make sure you have the information you need to move forward in a healthy way.

Annie: Bekah, how different does dating feel like for you now in your mid-30s versus your mid-20s?

Bekah: I think because I know myself better now I think I have more clarity on what I'm looking for. And I think I also feel more freedom to like relax in dating, rather than try and be someone that I'm not.

Annie: Same question, Boto. How's it different now than right when you were in college or right after?

Lucas: Well, kind of like Bekah was saying, I didn't really date much in my 20s, which man, we could dig into that for a while.

Annie: I mean, I've seen both of y'all be in relationships.

Lucas: Yeah, yeah, I guess you have. I mean, it's been a while for me to be in a relationship. I don't date a ton. But I would say the way it's different... You're talking about for me personally how it's different?

Annie: Yeah, yeah.

Lucas: I would say in my 20s I was just living life in the way of following what sounded interesting to me. Not just in dating, but in everything. Like career-wise. In the little bit of dating, I did, it was here and there and sporadic. And honestly, I kind of just dove into career stuff for most of my 20s. I kind of blinked and my 20s passed.

I actually remember on a tour bus, a moment where it was almost like a little switch flipped inside, where I was like, "Yeah, I think I'm getting close to wanting to be married or wanting to... It's not like I never want... or ever didn't want to be married. But like something shifted to where it was a little bit more like in the mindset of "Oh, yeah, I feel like I'm moving towards that now because we have these expectations of timelines." And it gets interesting once you start finding you had expectations you didn't know you had when you pass it on the timeline. And you're like, "Oh, I didn't know. I thought I'd be married by this point."

Annie: Do you feel that too, Bekah?

Bekah: Oh, yeah. As you were talking, I was just thinking how like because I didn't date a ton in my early 20s, went on some dates maybe like later 20s, I have struggled with

this lie that I'm behind. So even in my 30s, as I'm dating, I've felt very much like a beginner in dating. I've had to accept that it's okay that I'm practicing it and I can learn more about myself with each person I meet and each date I go out on.

Annie: Do you feel behind?

Lucas: No. Maybe it depends on the day. I will say for me personally my goal in life is not to be married. Well, no, that sounds weird.

Annie: It's not a goal.

Lucas: The goal is not marriage. The goal, I think, is to follow the Lord. And do I want to be married? Yeah. Like I'm single right now, I want to appreciate now and my singleness, I think. And that's something I think God's helped me with over time to see things from a different perspective. Like, man, there's things I can do now when I'm single I couldn't really do when I'm married. I'm not saying marriage is worse. It's just different.

So there's things now that's unique to now. And if I get married, it'll be unique to marriage. So I don't want to chase marriage. I think chasing it in an unhealthy way. And another thing I'll say about the shift from like 20s to 30s, and I don't know if this is true from a female perspective or maybe it's different person to person, but I think even though I wanted character in a woman in my 20s, it was much more driven on the front end by the physical attraction.

Debra: By chemistry.

Lucas: Yeah, physical attraction. And do I still want chemistry? Sure. Do I still want physical attraction? Sure. But there has been a shift, I mean, through different experiences. I mean, I lived in LA for several years and around a lot of physically attracted people. And, you know, you start to see, Oh, physical attraction can be there and not the other things that I'm looking for. So then it's like, okay. If you had asked me that back then, I would have said that. But when you experience it, it's different-

Annie: Yeah, you know how to feel it.

Lucas: So now what is attractive to me has changed and kind of narrowed in some ways just because I've changed, I know myself better, and as I get to know different women, I think, intellect, good conversation, character, trajectory in life and what to prioritize, like those sort of things all of a sudden can be really attractive or unattractive.

[00:26:27] <music.

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation to share about one of our amazing partners, [Thrive Causemetics](#). Listen, I'm a big fan of Thrive Causemetics. You know this. Not only are their beauty products incredible, but they are certified 100% vegan and cruelty-free and made with clean skin-loving ingredients. I am here for that.

Okay, listen, their Liquid Lash Extensions Mascara, it is in my makeup bag at work, it is in my makeup bag at home and it will be with me on tour. It is my actual favorite. And considering it has 25,000 five-star reviews, I would say it's a favorite for a ton of y'all too. Not only does it make my lashes look longer and fuller but it lasts all day without smudging or flaking. And you know that matters, you guys.

Its nourishing ingredients support longer, stronger, and healthier-looking lashes over time. Plus, when it's time to take your makeup off, you actually aren't even going to believe this, it is so easy. You just use warm water and a washcloth and it literally slides off. It is bizarre. No soap required. It's amazing. It is the bestselling product from Thrive Causemetics and I know why.

Thrive's helping us stock our makeup bags with incredible clean skin-loving products that make us feel like a million bucks, while also helping us help others. "Cause" is in the name for a reason. As part of their mission, every purchase supports organizations that help communities thrive with partners that help people emerging from homelessness and surviving domestic abuse, and recovering from cancer, just to name a few.

Y'all have gotten to try Thrive Causemetics to see for yourself. Right now you can get an exclusive 20% off your first order when you visit thrivecausemetics.com/tsf. That's thrivecausemetics.com/tsf for 20% off your first order.

Sponsor: And one more amazing partner tell you about, fastgrowingtrees.com. Okay, whether you want to breed some life into your backyard or into your house this summer, fastgrowingtrees.com has got you covered. From shade to fresh fruit to privacy to natural beauty, let fastgrowingtrees.com help you plant your dream garden with their expert advice and fast reliable shipping. I love our fiddle-leaf tree and our Ficus plant from Fast Growing Trees.

We have them in our office and we got them at a good rate price. [Fastgrowingtrees.com](https://fastgrowingtrees.com) has your perfect plant match too. Happy plants, happy home. Am I right? But sometimes it's hard to know which plants will do best. No problem because with fastgrowingtrees.com you get customized recommendations based on

your specific needs. Plus their plant experts are always available to help keep your plants growing healthy through the season and beyond.

No more waiting in long lines and hauling heavy plants around. With fastgrowingtrees.com you order online and your plants arrive at your door in just a few days. Whether you're buying plants for your first home or working on a season garden, fastgrowingtrees.com has experts in the field ready to support you and your plants for years to come.

Plus with Fast Growing Trees' 30-day alive and thrive guarantee, you know that everything will look great fresh out of the box. Join over 1.5 million happy fast growing tree customers, you guys. So go now to fastgrowingtrees.com/thatsoundsfun to get 15% off your entire order. That's fastgrowingtrees.com/thatsoundsfun.

Okay, now back to our Summer Lovin' conversation with Debra, Lucas, and Bekah.

[00:29:53] <music>

Annie: Debra, talk about that for a minute, Lucas saying is true for him, I think it's true for me too, that what is attractive to me at 42 is very different than what was attractive to me at 22.

Debra: Yeah, for sure. I think as you grow and evolve in yourself even, you realize-

Annie: Like Bekah was saying, knowing yourself

Debra: That's more important, you know? and I think as you get healthier, you are drawn to healthier relationships. Human beings are magnetic, and we attract people on our level of emotional, mental, spiritual health. So as we get healthier in life, the pool looks a little different. It's almost less people are appealing because we've gotten healthier. And I actually think that's a really great place to be.

Annie: Talk about what we all have felt based on... They both said. Actually, I haven't said it out loud of like, are we behind? I don't know that any of us thought we'd be sitting here at this age and not be married. I mean, it just wasn't... right, Bekah?

Bekah: Right.

Annie: I mean, I don't think any of us thought that would be our story. How often are you hearing that from people in their 30s, 40s, 50s and the woman reached out to you in her 70s? Have we all just worked on our career too much?

Debra: No. I think the culture is changing and I think people, for some positive reasons but also for some negative reasons. Like I do think that for some people marriage is on the back burner and yeah, all these other things have kind of taken the front burner. But I also think because of sin, because of just the world and the craziness that we're facing, the chaos of the world, I think, has also affected dating.

I think part of the way that we're engaging in dating today, all the unhealthy things, the hookup culture, all of that, the Tinder culture, you know, I feel like all of that is part of the influence of the enemy. Like, he wants to taint everything including the dating culture. But one thing I always ask people when I'm doing dating coaching or dating counseling is like, what's your desire to get married on a scale of zero to ten? And I'd love for each of you to answer if you guys feel comfortable. Ten is like I definitely want to get married and I want to do everything in my power to make it happen. And zero is like, I have no desire to get married and perfectly content without it.

Lucas: What would five be?

Bekah: Probably where you are.

Lucas: Yeah. I was gonna say I'm pretty strong five I think.

Annie: I think I'm an eight.

Bekah: I was gonna say between an eight and nine.

Debra: Good for you for being honest.

Lucas: I change mine. Six.

Debra: Okay, thank you.

Lucas: Because I lean towards yeah, I prefer to be married.

Annie: You had to move up to that "I would like to be married."

Lucas: Yeah. It's not like I'm at sea of apathy over here.

Debra: Although I feel like there's some shame in being an 8, 9, 10. It's like, I don't want-

Annie: Especially in women because it means you're doing it and you're making it happen.

Bekah: Or you're desperate.

Debra: Or you're not relying on God and God's not enough for you. Like, why do I have this strong desire for marriage? Isn't God supposed to be enough for me? But I feel like it's so important to be honest with your desire. And then take inventory of 'is your actions matching your desire'? Like if I asked you, Annie, how badly do you want to grow your business as an entrepreneur? How badly do you wanna do the next thing? If it's a nine out of nine, I'm assuming your actions are going to match that nine to nine. Oftentimes, though, we say it's an eight or nine but our actions are more like a two or three.

Annie: Yeah. I mean, true for us is we're both paying for an app. I mean, it is funny to hear... even if apps were the only scale like, yeah, Boto, is not doing it but we are. So he's a six and we're an eight point five. Which is fine. Absolutely not the thing. Don't hear me say that-

Bekah: I have mixed feelings.

Debra: I think that's general. Love-hate relationship with it.

Bekah: I mean, not to derail the conversation, but I feel like what I've noticed with what's added or changed in the dating culture is it's almost... I think it's changed our mentality that there's so many options so I'm just gonna keep looking, I'm gonna keep scrolling. And when I have to take a break is when it feels like I'm shopping. And I'm like, "I do not want to shop for..."

Lucas: Transaction, yeah.

Annie: A transaction, yeah.

Debra: You're right. I think you're right. That's definitely something that is a mindset shift.

Annie: Let's talk about mindset. Keep talking about that.

Debra: The first unhealthy mindset is "I need to find the best." Because first of all, are you even the best?

Annie: Hey, say that Debra.

Debra: It sometimes drives me loony. I gotta be so candid here. Okay?

Annie: Yeah, thank you.

- Debra:** I've worked with men... And I'm gonna say the porn culture has certainly influenced Christian dating. Let's not pretend it's just the world.
- Annie:** Men and women.
- Debra:** Men and women. And I've worked with people... And I say men because I have a couple specific cases that came to my mind, where they're like, "I really want somebody who looks this way. I want a nine out of ten in her physical appearance." And I'm like, "Dude, you're like a four out of ten." Let's be realistic.
- Lucas:** Rewind 200 years. It's like, Who's the one person in the little village that I might want to-
- Annie:** That's exactly right.
- Lucas:** ...versus every human on the planet?
- Annie:** Exactly right.
- Lucas:** I mean, that's just like... The reason I paused earlier was because something you were saying just made me think about what you were saying, I think, that the enemy wants to just ruin or derail everything, no matter what you're doing. I agree. For me, I think one of the reasons I'm on six on that scale, so to speak, is maybe I haven't always been there. But look, if the Lord says, My sheep know my voice, I want to know His voice. And you're talking about what's best. It's like, Well, do I define what's best? I think, if I really believe He is who He says He is, I'm gonna believe He knows better than me. And if He knows better than me, it's not just like, Hey, let's see how much He can take or how much Annie or Bekah can take. It's not like, let's see how much they can endure before they just crack.
- I feel like there's a subliminal thing sometimes. It's like, that's not the Lord. You don't see that anywhere in Scripture. So I agree. I do think we have an advocate, and we have an adversary. And I think there's this analogy that I think God's used to help me over time. And it's just that, like, what's on your plate right now, right now in life? You know, it doesn't have to just be relationships, it could be anything. But since we're talking about relationships, it's like, whatever your situation is, the Lord can use for you. And whatever is on your plate, the adversary will use against you. So take loneliness. I think there's a loneliness epidemic, personally, in the world.
- Bekah:** I agree with that.
- Lucas:** But I will say that even loneliness, when you give it to the Lord, and it may be over time over a long period of time—I've seen it in my own life. This is why I say

this—He has used it for me. It's been formative. And He's used it in ways that have built compassion and empathy and character and strength and endurance and like formative things, you know. But meanwhile, of course, the adversary is going to use that to just be like, "Look what you don't have. Look how worthless you are. Look how..." And I think when I realized, like, Okay, what's on my plate and I just think that's helpful.

So for me right now, being single right now, it's like when you talk about we have a lot of listeners that have been single and never been on a date, Man, it's like I just want to talk to them and be like, It's all good. The Lord sees you. You know what I mean? The people who were used in the greatest ways in Scripture were single their whole life. It's like if we really believe what we say we believe, this portion of our lives is a blink. And it's like, if that's the case, man, I want to follow the Lord wherever He wants to lead me. If He's like, "You think marriage is gonna be great, and trust me, marriage is good," but for you, you have no idea what I got for you if you'll follow me and stay single. It'll blow your mind. I don't know best. You know, I just want to know the shepherd's voice and follow. Does that make sense?

Debra: It makes so much sense. I'm gonna challenge you a little bit.

Lucas: Yeah, go ahead.

Debra: Because I feel like that's such a beautiful gift that God has given you. But I will tell you, you're unique. You're an anomaly. Like my experience is a lot of singles have a really high desire for marriage. And they almost feel like because they don't feel like you, they must be lacking in their faith or their walk with the Lord. Like God has clearly given you an anointing. God has clearly given you a contentment and a peace for where you're at. And I think that's a beautiful gift.

Lucas: I may be misrepresenting myself a little bit. And here's why I say that. Because as I hear you talk and say, the contentment, I made this... When I say misrepresenting myself, I mean, I do really want to be married. I just don't want to be married for married sake. Does that make sense?

Debra: You wanna be if it's God's will for your life.

Lucas: Yeah, it's a strong desire, but it's not so strong that like I just want to be married.

Annie: Because the other thing women are dealing with that I don't think men are dealing with, but correct me if I'm wrong, is men can have babies until they're 80. And the women that are peers with Lucas and I, we are having to go, Not only am I not married, but I am knocking on the door of it... So two dreams are not coming true for me-

Lucas: Yeah, yeah.

Debra: You're absolutely right.

Annie: I mean, does that feel true, Bek?

Bekah: Yeah.

Annie: I mean, I feel like a lot of our friends, a lot of my peers are facing this, like, do we freeze our eggs? Do we have children by ourselves?

Lucas: That's real.

Annie: Do we just go ahead and do this? Because I am content and I'm doing my job and I'm feeling like God's doing what God's called me to. But also if I don't get married, I don't get to have kids. This isn't me. I'm just giving examples of my friends. How do we balance that? How do we balance the truth of what He's saying, that is the yes...and of this? Yes, we are grateful for the lives God has given us. Also, they're friends of ours listening who are 48 and 55 and are going through menopause and have never had a child.

Debra: First of all, I think it's important for us to affirm that even a high desire for marriage is okay. Like marriage is a part of God's plan. The Bible talks about the beauty of marriage, obviously, also the beauty of singleness-

Annie: But it bounces back because it feels like He has desire for marriage and contentment in where he's sitting too.

Debra: But honestly, they're both a gift. And I think you get to choose which gift you desire. Right? Like if you desire singleness and that's the road you want to meet the Lord, get sanctified through singleness, you're content in that way, wonderful. But I do think our desires lead us. You know, the verse that says, He has given you the desire of your heart. Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. I really believe that means that He gives you the desires of your heart. The prerequisite is delight in Him.

Lucas: You mean like He implants?

Debra: He implant?

Lucas: Yeah.

Debra: When you delight in Him. That's the caveat. Not just you get whatever your desire is from God. No. If you delight in Him, and you're still an eight out of nine, eight out of ten in your desire, you can trust that, Lord, you put this desire in me, and that's okay. And I'm going to pursue it. I'm going to pursue you. I'm going to pursue this desire, I'm not going to feel shame that I have this desire, the Lord is in it. And I'm going to trust him with this desire. And I'm going to trust that when I'm grieving that this desire hasn't happened, He's grieving with me.

Lucas: Yeah. Yeah.

Annie: That's good, Debra.

Debra: He's like, I want this for you too, Annie. Annie, the day that you're bummed and crying because you've had an amazing day and nobody to share it with, God's like, "I'm grieving with you, Annie. I'm here for you. And I want you to hold on to that desire." There's always that balance because I want people to be content with the life that God has given them today, the abundant life Christ is enough. I also don't ever want them to feel shame-

Annie: Or shut down there.

Lucas: No, yeah.

Debra: ...for the desire they have-

Lucas: For sure. ...

Debra: ...that's so real. And that God grieves. Just like a woman who can't get pregnant, she grieves and we grieve with her, and Jesus grieves with her. So I feel like some people are listening are more like Lucas and they're like, "You know what? Life is good. And I'm happy. And whenever it happens, it happens." And I'm so proud of you and I'm so grateful that God has given that to you. That is beautiful. But I also feel like for those who are listening that are like, "I don't feel that. I feel like I really want to get married and I really hope this is what God has for me and I have the strong desire," that's okay, too.

Annie: Because it makes sense to slide up and down the scale. Because I'm thinking of like last year when my nephew passed away, and I tore up my knee and we had trauma at church. Someone said, "Are you seeing anybody?" and I was like, "Barely myself." I was like at one. Couldn't do. I couldn't. But then as I started coming out of that grief, I was like, "Okay, this is coming back up the scale." Was that normal?

Debra: Totally.

Bekah: That is normal for me 100%. I might even change in a day, right? I feel like my capacity for somebody new to enter my life changes depending on where my headspace is. I've had seasons of like-

Debra: Headspace. That's an important word.

Bekah: ...extreme contentment and like, you know... I think I've come to an acceptance of I really like my life. I have amazing friendships. I have a family that is near and nieces and nephews that if I am never able to have kids, I'd love just to be a great aunt to them and I still would love to be a mom if that's possible for me. I think currently, I'm probably not feeling as confident in the dating world. But I've watched enough like close friends get married, quote-unquote, later in life. And I think, honestly, that's something that gets me a little fired up is because I think our culture has like-

Annie: Because in New York we're not late.

Bekah: No. Even in Europe. Like I spent the fall of 2021 in Paris and you would see older couples with a baby all the time. And I'm like, Why do we have to put so much fear around-

Debra: The timeline

Bekah: Timeline. So anyways, that's something I'm consistently having to surrender in my own process.

Debra: The other thing that affects our desire level is our past experiences. Some people come from a past where their parents had an awful marriage and they grew up as that's the template of marriage. So without even realizing it, subconsciously, it begins to change your own template, your own desire. Or past dating relationships or siblings who've been through awful divorces, or whatever. But all of these things sometimes do affect our desire, because our desire is impacted by our fears.

Annie: Our desire is impacted by our fears. Yeah, that's interesting.

Bekah: Like, what could happen? Will I get a divorce? Will this guy be, you know, healthy?

Annie: I've been single this long, do I want to give this up? Is it gonna be worth it?

Debra: I just heard that from a single woman the other day. "I've been single for so long, am I even going to be able to integrate somebody new in my life at this point?" But

all those fears do impact our desire. I mean, think about it. Like, you could be so excited to go to an amusement park, and you get there and you're terrified of all the things that could happen. There goes the fun.

Lucas: I'm an external processor. So I think y'all are also helping me in the sense of when you mirror back what you heard me say. Because then I'm like, Well, wait, man... No, I mean, like, I do really want marriage. It's helping me see...

Debra: I'm up to a seven now.

Lucas: No, that's exactly what I was thinking. That's exactly what I was thinking, like, "Oh, maybe I'm seven," you know.

Debra: I love it.

Lucas: But I think what I'm saying imperfectly to is like in the midst of that desire, I think God's helping me appreciate my singleness more.

Annie: More than 10 years ago.

Lucas: Oh, yeah. And enjoy it more and see the positive side of it more, which in a weird way, I think makes me in a better place for marriage. I know that sounds contrary but... And honestly, Annie, I feel like you do a good job of this, at least from my perspective, in the sense like, you're going, you're doing life, you're you're seeking the Lord, you're trying to obey Him in your work and in your relationships and your whatever. It's like you're moving as you're desiring. You know what I mean?

Bekah: Yeah. You're not saying still, you're not stagnant.

Debra: Because on the flip side of all of this is the reality that marriage can't complete you. Marriage can't give you purpose. Marriage can't delete your insecurities. It is a beautiful gift—and I say that as a married woman—but it is not everything. Right? So we want to keep the desire and check with truth. Everything's got to stay in check with true.

Annie: Yes. One of the things you talked about before we started was this sentence that we hear a lot, especially I think as we age, of 'there aren't any good men left'. And men probably hear there aren't any good women.

Debra: You know, I hear it from both sides. I hosted a singles event and I heard from the guys, there's no good ladies out there. And the women are like, there's no good men out here. And I'm like, "Hello."

Lucas: Either you're all terrible, or you're all wrong.

Debra: Exactly. Exactly. And I think it's "you're all wrong".

Lucas: Yeah. Yeah.

Debra: You know, I have feeling you guys are gonna be getting a lot of calls after this.

Annie: I know. That's one of my goals that everybody falls in love after our show.

Lucas: I love that you had us on this spicy series. We're talking about the spices.

Annie: That's right.

Debra: But your mindset about it all is so important. Because if you fill your mind with negativity, your dating life is going to follow suit. I always talk about how your thoughts lead to your feelings, which lead to your behaviors. I see, Annie, you've got this book in front of you that I wrote recently called *Reset*. The whole theme of that is thoughts lead to feelings, which impact your behaviors.

So if there's anything in your life you want to change, you don't start with just the peripheral behavior even if it's your dating life. You shift back. What am I feeling about this? Am I feeling desperate? Because if I'm feeling desperate, I'm going to date desperate. If I'm feeling like there's no good guys out there, I'm going to start feeling this hopeless feeling that then I might decrease my standards. I might date that guy next door even though I normally wouldn't because I'm feeling so desperate. Like it affects your behavior. And those feelings come from your mindset, your thought life, your belief system.

And there's so many times as singles, I mean, all of us, we're applying it to our single life right now that our mindset is so unhealthy that it's affecting our feelings and then our dating life. So our mindset about ourselves, our insecurities. "I'm not good enough. There's something wrong with me. Why haven't I attracted somebody? I've made so many mistakes. My story can't be redeemed."

I've heard so many things that are just based on lies from the pit of hell. Some of them come from childhood. Some of them come from our experiences. But that impacts your feelings. You're going to start feeling insecure, you're gonna start feeling hopeless, you're going to start feeling depressed. And all of those things then impact how you date. So if your dating life is a disaster right now, what you really need us to kind of peel back the curtain and start to take inventory of your thoughts and beliefs about yourself, about people, can people even be trusted, about God, you know all of that.

[00:51:10] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to share about one of our amazing partners, [Thrive Market](#). Okay, this will not surprise you about my personality type, but avoiding things that I usually dread that is like a no-brainer for me. And do I sometimes dread going to the grocery store? Yes, yes, I do. Parking and lines and decision fatigue and hard pants and a lot of option... there's just a lot of unfun things involved, you guys. But great news, Thrive Market has become my rescue.

Thrive Market is my go-to for all my grocery and household essentials. And the convenience of getting it all quickly shipped to my doorstep is a huge time saver. They've got my Chomps snack sticks that helped me get enough protein even on the go, my clean cleaning supplies so that I know my house is getting clean without introducing unnecessary chemicals into the situation.

And as a Thrive Market member, I can save money on every single order. On average I save about 30% each time, you guys. On my last order I saved \$30 on \$107 order. And today I literally just got an email about some of my favorite things being on sale. So my savings is right along the average. And on top of the massive savings on each order, Thrive Market has a deals page that changes daily, gives me cashback on so many brands and they have a price match guarantee.

Not only does Thrive Market save me money and save me drive time and waiting in line time, they also save me shopping time. I love the filters on their website and app. They have over 70. So whether you're looking for certified gluten-free snacks like I am so I can stay awake and not be like a tranquilized bear cub is going to do that to you too. Or if you're looking for non-toxic cleaning essentials, you can curate your own shopping experience with the click of a button.

When you join Thrive Market, you are also helping a family in need through Thrive's one-for-one membership matching program. You join and they give. So join Thrive Market today and get 30% off your first order plus a free \$60 gift. Go to thrivemarket.com/thatoundsfun for 30% off your first order. Plus a free \$60 gift. That's thrivemarket.com/thatoundsfun.

Sponsor: And one more amazing partner to share with you, [Indeed](#). Okay, listen, whenever we're hiring here at Downs Books Inc. or at the That Sounds Fun Network, we hire using Indeed and it never steered us wrong. They are the experts at helping us find the best fit for the roles we want to build our team with. If you're hiring, you need Indeed too.

With Indeed instant match over 80% of employers get quality candidates whose resumes on Indeed match their job description the moment they sponsor a job, according to Indeed data U.S. When you're ready to hire, you're probably already overloaded with too much work on your plate, that is why you're hiring someone, and you don't need one more thing to add to your list. And that's where Indeed comes in.

Indeed helps make sure the hiring process doesn't become a second full-time job. You can reclaim your time and find top talent fast with Indeed. Their suite of powerful hiring tools like assessments and virtual interviews allows you to find top talent fast. They can help you attract, interview, and hire all in one place. So you don't have to spend your valuable hours digging through multiple job sites looking for candidates with the right skills. Instead, you can do it all and fast with Indeed.

So join the 3 million businesses worldwide that use Indeed to hire great talent fast. Start hiring now with a \$75 sponsor job credit to upgrade your job post at indeed.com/soundsfun. The offer is good for a limited time and just for my friends. So claim your \$75 credit now at indeed.com/soundsfun. indeed.com/soundsfun. Terms and Conditions apply. If you need to hire, you need Indeed.

And now let's go back and finish up our Summer Lovin' conversation with Debra, Lucas, and Bekah.

[00:55:03] <music>

Annie: I feel bad saying this to you in front of Lucas because I'm so bad at saying this. But I'll tell you. A while ago when a relationship... not a full one, but a relationship thing ended, what I found in my head was going, "You know what? All the guys who meet all my qualities exist, they're just married. They're married to other people. And the mature..." Sorry, Lucas, this is not true about you. I feel bad saying this with you sitting here-

Lucas: You don't have to feel bad.

Annie: ...because I love you so much.

Lucas: I'm a work in progress. You don't have to feel bad.

Annie: I know. We are. But that is a mindset I felt really negatively affecting me for a couple days. But my counselor and I worked it out. Because I was like, "Well, they do exist. They're wonderful. But if they're mature, and if they're spiritually mature, and emotionally mature, they got married. So we're left with..." and that's not fair.

And that's not true. So for a few days, it really affected how I was thinking about someone that I had met.

So how do we go back and even identify? Because at the time, I just thought, "No, this is just science." Like when the first thought came to me... I mean, Has that happened to y'all where it's like, well, I'm having this thought because of my experience, not just out of nowhere?

Lucas: Well, I think, again, this is personal, it's not maybe prescriptive for everyone's... maybe it is. I don't know. I think a lot of times we do earthly math. Does that make sense?

Bekah: Yeah, we do.

Lucas: Like we do like, Well, this and this add up to this in whatever the situation. When I look at the instructive things throughout Scripture, I just see things that transcend earthly math constantly.

Bekah: You're right.

Lucas: And I think for anyone who might be listening who's like, Yikes, that's churchy, I think what I would say is-

Annie: No, it's right.

Lucas: You know what I mean? Like people who aren't familiar or don't see Scripture, the way I might see it, like it's God's Word or whatever, I will say it's the Lord's taught me a lot through it, I think.

Bekah: I love that.

Lucas: To not do that sort of math.

Debra: Think of it this way. God's reality is more real than your reality.

Lucas: Yeah, totally.

Debra: So I think it's important to understand that your belief system, sure, it might be rooted in your real life experience, that doesn't mean it's rooted in truth.

Annie: Yeah, that's good, Debra.

- Debra:** Just because you see, it doesn't mean it's true. Just because you think it, doesn't mean it's true.
- Lucas:** That's right.
- Debra:** Just because you feel it doesn't mean it's true.
- Lucas:** Like what narratives are in my mind. That's another thing I think God's helped me with is like revealing narratives. Like, Ah, I didn't even realize that's kind of the narrative I was thinking for a long time. And He can do those things. He can do those things in a moment. He did that for me one time at church. Like there was... It's kind of guided prayer. Like they would give a prayer question and you would sit with the Lord and pray. And like, I mean, in a moment. It was crazy. It was like a counseling session-
- Debra:** He's a good counselor.
- Lucas:** It's wild. It was like I was connecting all these dots throughout my childhood through all these things, all of a sudden, it was like, That's a narrative I believe.
- Debra:** Well, that's something really important to address. And not to turn this into a counseling thing-
- Annie:** No, do.
- Debra:** But you know, that's what I do.
- Lucas:** Counsel us.
- Debra:** That's what I do. But those mindsets sometimes they're so subtle.
- Annie:** And they stay with us for so long.
- Debra:** And they stay with us. They're so familiar that we just "it's just who I am. It's just part of how I think." But where's that even coming from? The narrative of rejection, where's that coming from? The narrative of fear of abandonment, where's that coming from? The narrative of just 'I don't know if I can trust these people', where's that coming from? And oftentimes, how we date or don't date is reflective of a deeper narrative that's sometimes rooted in our experience. Sometimes I say this: it's rooted in our trauma rather than God's truth.
- Lucas:** Yeah. Is it coming from my advocate or my adversary?

Bekah: When I feel the scarcity versus abundance mindset, I think that can be sometimes where I waffle, like, grew up with probably more of a scarcity mindset. So I see that translate into the dating pool. But when I can rely on God's abundance and trust that like, "No, there's not just one person out there for me that I like, I have to get it right and like go find them," it's like, there are good men out there. I might not see it just on the daily. But I think, to your point, of just like trusting that God knows what I need better than I know myself.

Debra: Bekah, that's so insightful. That scarcity mentality from childhood for who knows what reason. You know. Obviously, we're not going to get into the depth of that today. But I feel like the Lord even wants to free you of that in your hearing now. And the ripple effect of that will be to change the way that you look at the dating pool. You know, because those are the mindsets that affect how we date. We see them. Because here's the thing, relationships are like a mirror of our childhood hurts and wounds and our past. Even dating begins to reflect things about us that we're like, "Ooh, didn't know that was there?" Why did him ghosting me affect me in such a deep way?

Bekah: Why do I feel like I am about to die?

Annie: And I met him twice?

Debra: Exactly. It starts to reveal things. And that's why I think it's a beautiful gift. I think relationships are a beautiful gift if we allow them to be the mirror that God uses to heal us to the next level. See, now we're making data and this whole new thing.

Annie: That's how it should be.

Debra: I just feel like it's an invitation. Like, Okay, let me heal this area in you, Lucas.

Lucas: As you're talking, I mean, the thought that comes to my mind is like, do we believe redemption is possible? Usually, we think about that as becoming a Christian. I don't mean necessarily just in that way. I mean this of the situation, you know? So for example, this isn't something I think about a lot or worry about, but I'm trying to think from a guy's perspective, I don't want to assume anything from a female perspective. I know it's different. Like y'all were saying, there's different things we deal with. But for me, I'm gonna be 40 this year, I'm never going to be a young dad if I ever am a dad.

Annie: Yeah. Dude, I had to grieve that too.

Lucas: Do you know what I'm saying?

Annie: I'll never be a mom in my 30s.

Lucas: I'm never going to be a young dad. But then comes the crossroads of how do I think about that? And that's what I meant earlier about, like, what's on my plate? My Plate is I'm never going to be a young dad. Do I believe that there's potentially redemptive... there's tension in that that is the precursor to some sort of redemptive, powerful thing that God's gonna do that I've no clue about? You know what I'm saying?

And as I think about that, I'm like, that's who He is. I don't need to understand or know everything but I can be expectant that redemption is possible, that the fact that I'm never going to be a young dad there may be really mind-boggling purposes in that that can go way beyond, for me personally what being a young dad would have accomplished or how I would have savored being on dad. Maybe this other thing that God's gonna do, the big question mark, I will savor that way more than I would have ever. You know what I'm saying? That's just hypothetical.

Annie: No, that's real thing. It's helpful.

Lucas: But again, it speaks to the narrative and the perspective of like, how am I looking at that plate? Am I listening to the voice of the adversary or the advocate, so to speak?

Bekah: You naturally do a really good job of keeping your mind in healthy spaces. Like for sure, that's something you do.

Lucas: I've not always been. I mean, like I said, work in progress. I've been in less healthy places, you know.

Debra: I love that. I think the only caveat... Positive thinking is so important. The only caveat is some people, and Lucas you are not in this category, at least I don't think you are. Some people feel like they have to be so positive that they don't have a chance to grieve.

Lucas: Like a denial thing.

Debra: I call it toxic optimism. I don't think you struggle with that because even said clearly, like, "I grieve the fact that I'm not going to be a young dad." Because there has to be that lament. There has to be that wound and we have to be okay with facing the hard stuff. Because if there was no wounds, we'd have no need for a healer.

Lucas: Totally. Totally.

- Debra:** So for those who are listening that are like, "Huh, this hurts. This is hard. I have wounds. I have fears. I lament the fact, I grieve the fact that I'm not going to be a natural mom or I'm not going to be a young dad, or I'm not..." God is with you in that lament too, you know?
- Lucas:** Totally.
- Debra:** And then once you've grieved with Him, you get up, and you change your mindset and you trust that His reality is better than your reality.
- Lucas:** Totally. I love that. And I will say too as a precursor to where I'm at right now was years of being down. Years at a time. You know what I mean? But now that I look back on that, it was transformative. God used it in crazy, wild ways, that now I look back, I'm like, "Man, I don't know that I'd be who I am if I hadn't had those years." And they weren't enjoyable.
- Annie:** Right.
- Lucas:** Do you know what I mean?
- Annie:** Right.
- Lucas:** So yeah, I definitely agree. That's great stuff.
- Annie:** Debra, we just want so much more of your wisdom. This is one of the gifts of this series is every episode has a different expert so that we can just bridge people to the rest of your work. So will you talk for just a second as we wrap up, where else can we find you, where's your podcast? Tell us all the things. And then *Reset* comes out really soon, right?
- Debra:** March 14th it came out.
- Annie:** Oh, good. Good. Good. Good. Good. Okay. So it's available.
- Debra:** So a couple weeks ago. Yeah. So you can find me right now. I've been hanging out a lot on Instagram. It's my platform of choice these days. My podcast is called Love and Relationships. And it's a hotline-style show where people call in and talk to me as a counselor, and we just talk through things. I have a counselors network where you can get plugged in with a good Christian counselor.

And as far as my books go, I have six. But the two I'd love to highlight today are if you're kind of in a dating journey, and you want to get healthy and attract and engage healthy relationships, I'd start with *True Love Dates*. And then when we talk

about getting to some of those roots of our mindset, and our beliefs, and how they impact our feelings and then our behavior, my newest book is called *Reset*, and it's 31 practices to kind of help you get to some of those roots and achieve a deeper level of healing.

Annie: You're about to get a lot of phone calls from people. "I heard you on That Sounds Fun. I'd like to now be on your podcast and help me." Lucas or Bekah, do y'all have any other questions for Debra or any other thoughts?

Lucas: I've got one. What's the first podcast episode if someone's a new listener? What episode would you say, Listen to this one first?

Debra: Oh.

Lucas: Is there one that comes to mind?

Debra: You know, I would say a series comes to mind. And it's the On Air Counseling Session.

Lucas: Oh, cool.

Annie: Right now we're in the middle of a *Reset* series of people who want to reset things in their life, like their relationship with food, or toxic relationships, or porn, or toxic optimism was one of them that we just talked about. So I would start with those on-air counseling sessions because I think you could really just learn from other people's journeys.

Lucas: One other question.

Annie: Yeah, do it.

Lucas: I could pick your brain forever. But different people have different levels of trauma in life that they bring into a relationship or potential relationship. Maybe when would you recommend bringing up those things? And then how would you recommend approaching, tackling those things? Not in marriage, but in the relationship?

Debra: Well, I love that you mentioned that "in the different levels," because some of us, I put myself in that category, who come from a family where there wasn't crazy trauma, there's still little t trauma.

Annie: Little ts.

Lucas: Sure. Sure.

Debra: Little believes that I have brought into relationship. So the number one thing is work on yourself standing alone. Before you jump into the dating world, take some time to work on yourself to date inward, to deal with some of those things, to get in counseling, to process some of that stuff. And more things come up in relationships, because like I said, earlier, relationships are a mirror.

Annie: Are a mirror, right.

Debra: People start triggering buttons, pushing on things that nobody's ever touched before, and causing you to have these emotional reactions. So work on yourself first. And then after the three to six months of investigation is over, and you're starting to pursue exclusivity, I think you can slowly start to bring up some of those things piece by piece. Remember that trust is something that has to be earned. It's not just something you give someone because you start dating them.

Lucas: That's good.

Annie: That's good.

Debra: It's little by little.

Annie: That's really good. Beks.

Bekah: I was gonna ask what was the biggest lesson you learned in your own dating?

Lucas: Ooh, that's a good one.

Annie: That is a good one.

Debra: It would be you have to know who you are in order to understand the type of person who's going to be a good match for your life. I went through a dating situation for a year and a half, dating a guy that wasn't a good match for my life. And it wasn't because he was a bad guy, it was because I had no idea who I was. It's like a puzzle piece. There's two pieces and there's all these other pieces and you're trying to cram them in and see if it fits and you end up with broken pieces. But if you know your shape, and you know your colors, you can easily look at all the other pieces and be like, "Oh, that one matches.

Annie: That one will never match. It's not about them.

Debra: It will not match.

Lucas: What helped you know your shape? Like what helped you figure out your shape?

Debra: Honestly, for me, it was taking a season of intentional dating inward. In *True Love Dates*, I talk about dating inward as the first step to healthy dating because that's, for me, getting to the root of my beliefs, dealing with my trauma, dealing with some of the things from my past, understanding what I want and what I don't want, knowing my past, my identity in the present, and also having a vision where God is taking me because that's a big part of knowing if somebody can match your life or not.

So even in the single season, you guys, this is not wasted time. Like God is, first of all, doing amazing things through each of you. I mean, I could hug all of you. I just love what you bring to the table. And I want to affirm that you are so valuable in the body of Christ, you are so valuable standing alone. But this isn't wasted time just twiddling your thumbs waiting for that person. This is time that God is preparing you, growing you, healing you, transforming you so that if and when you do get married, you've already done the work. And that's my prayer for each of you actually.

Can I pray for the three of you?

Annie: Yes!

Lucas: It'd be awesome.

Annie: Let's end the show like that. Let's do that.

Debra: I love that.

Annie: You pray us out.

Debra: Jesus, I just thank you for Annie and Bekah, and Lucas. God, I just thank you that they are faithful to you even when the timeline that they had planned doesn't match up with your timeline. God, I thank you that they trust you more than they trust their timelines. I thank you that they believe that your reality is greater than their reality.

And I just pray, God, for whoever's listening that needs to believe that too, that you would begin to download your truths over their life, that you would begin to help us all get to the roots of some of our unhealthy mindsets that might be rooted in our trauma or our negative experiences, or the things that are happening in this world today instead of rooted in your truth.

And I pray, God, that you would fill them up in this season. I pray, God, that you would give them a vision for what you have for them. Help them to be proactive in every area of their life moving forward and faith, whether that's in relationships, whether that's in ministry, whether that's in their career, whatever calling you have over them. I pray that this would be a season of preparation. That you would help them to get healthy standing alone and prepare them for whatever you have for them in the next season. We trust you, God. We trust your plan for each of their life, and we know that it's going to be so good. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Lucas: Amen.

Bekah: Amen.

Annie: Okay, aren't they the best, you guys? Aren't they just the best, all three of them? But man, I'm so grateful for all of their wisdom. I'm really grateful to Debra for stepping in with us and leading that conversation. Make sure you check out her book *True Love Dates* or her podcast *Love + Relationships*.

And again, for a full list of her books and all the resources from our summer love and experts go to anniefdowns.com/dating. Also, if you are single and you still want to drop your email into the link in the show notes, we'll let you know about any future things we do like this, "this" meaning things that are created with you in mind and will for sure add you to the AFD Week in Review email list to keep you in the loop on all the things.

Okay guys, make sure and follow along with the rest of Summer Lovin' so you get to hear the whole experience. We are just getting started. And if you're single or dating or you just love someone who is, be sure to share the show with friends or loved ones, especially your married friends who can help you understand better what is going on. It's a great conversation starter. It has been for me.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and on the road for the Here For You tour this week. Oh my gosh, I cannot wait. Five shows this weekend. Let's go! Grab your tickets, if you haven't already, come hang with us on the Here For You Tour. It's hereforyoutour.com.

And 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. What sounds fun to me today is rehearsing for tour. That is how we are spending our whole day and am I ready. I am ready. Y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday for our conversation

about the Enneagram and dating with Enneagram coach Jackie Brewster and my friends Kelly and Toby. We'll see y'all then.