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**Annie:** Hi friends! Welcome to another one-of-a-kind episode so far of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm really happy to be here with you today. We are in a special series called Summer Lovin'. It's a That Sounds Fun podcast series in which we really want to restore hope in dating, bridge y'all to these helpful conversations and practical resources and amazing experts so that you can start seeing changes in your dating life, including in you.

During Summer Lovin', we are talking through a lot of aspects of dating. Each episode features an expert, someone who's written on the subject or works with a ton of people who are single or dating or is a licensed therapist. In a lot of episodes, as you've heard, we'll also have some other friends in there with us. Not today.

Today's episode is about sex and dating, and it is me and the experts. And that's it. And this is a heads up for those of you who may have any MiniBFFs who've been listening along with you today. This conversation is one that you're likely going to want to put your earbuds in or wait until your MiniBFFs aren't in the room or in the car.

I want you to be aware that we're having a thoughtful conversation today around sex and dating. Navigating sexual desire and healthy boundaries when you are a single person and particularly if you're a single person of faith, it is a really challenging thing and also a really important part of being a human. I know this is a sensitive, and for some, a heart-wrenching topic. Just be kind to yourself as you're listening or pull in a trusted voice in your life if you don't want to listen alone.

Here's what we did today. Y'all submitted over 300 questions through my Instagram Annie F. Downs. I put up a question box, you submitted over 300 questions. So we went through a lot of those. And here's what I hope for today, you guys. I hope that this conversation isn't one that you just receive and don't do anything with.

What I really hope happens is this is a launching pad for you and maybe two friends or a small group or a mentor or married friends that this is one y'all listen to. And then it starts a conversation of like, yeah, where am I on this? And what do I think about what they said? And what has my experience led to here? We are all about bridging you this series, we are not about being the final stop.

In this episode, particularly, I am so hopeful that you will hear some... Some behind the scenes, y'all. As we're even doing this intro, I feel emotional about this. Because this matters so much. And so many of us feel pain and shame and worry and frustration and disconnect when it comes to our sexual lives.

And really our deepest hope is that today's episode will bring you hope and will bring you help and will start a conversation for you and your therapist or you and your mentor, or you and your friends about how to be your full self. And that includes you being a sexual person. It is all a part of who we are.

So my hope for you right now is you will set aside the whispers of shame or the yelling of shame that is in your head right now, you'll set aside the worries, the judgments that you've put on yourself or other people and you will just listen with open ears and open heart and let this be the beginning of a conversation, not the end. Okay? So that is our hope for today's episode.

So as you listen, remember we're gonna do a Q&A episode at the end of the series sometime in the early fall. So if you have questions as you listen, the link is in the show notes. Just start dropping your questions in there and we will do our best to answer as many as we can just like we did today.

But before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about another incredible podcast to get to listen to and that is our friends, Be the Bridge. Y'all know how much I love Latasha Morrison. She was on the That Sounds Fun podcast on Episode 175. We got to introduce her to you then. But also we got to share that Be the Bridge Podcast is a part of the That Sounds Fun Network. We love Tasha and are both friends and fans of the work her and her team are doing.

The Be the Bridge podcast is a resource from their nonprofit organization, Be the Bridge, which was founded in 2016 by Latasha who is both a bestselling author and a leader in the fight for racial justice. Be the Bridge responds to racial brokenness and systemic injustice in our world and believes understanding can move us toward racial healing racial equality and racial unity.

I'm telling you Tasha and Be the Bridge have been such huge influences in my life as I've worked to better educate myself on racial justice and advocacy. The work they're doing is so incredibly important. In fact, you should go and subscribe to their podcast because I'm about to be on there. I just did an interview with her about my experience and my mom's experience. I just think so highly of Be the Bridge.

The Be the Bridge Podcast is an extension of their vision to make sure people are no longer conditioned by a racialized society, but grounded in truth. It's a resource to help cultivate courageous conversations and equip all to flourish. I trust their leadership and wisdom so much. New episodes are released every other Tuesday. So subscribe to Be the Bridge wherever you listen to podcasts, or go to the link in the show notes below.

**Intro:** So today on the show, our Summer Lovin' experts are JJ and Kait Tomlin from The Heart of Dating. Kait is a national bestselling author, a speaker, a popular relationship coach, and the founder of Heart of Dating. She along with her husband, JJ, helped thousands of men and women on their journeys through the conversations on the Heart of Dating podcast, which launched in 2018.

Let me tell you why they are the experts for today's show. Literally, their entire season right now on the Heart of Dating podcast is about sex. So everything we talked about just about on the show, they have an entire episode about. So I knew they were the right ones for us to bridge toward because they are doing full episodes on what we were only able to do full sentences about today. Okay?

I wanted to sit down with them and talk to them about sex and dating. They are trusted voices. And when it comes to helping singles navigate the complexity of this, and we tackle some of your most asked questions like, how far is too far? How far is too far? We've been asking that for every year of our life. How far is too far? And is sex still just for marriage in 2023? And how do we handle shame? Shame about the sex that we've had and the shame that a lot of people reached out and said they feel around what they haven't done. We talk about all of it. They are wise and helpful and thoughtful. I think you're gonna learn a ton from what they have to share.

So it's a little bit of a longer episode, but I hope you will stick with us to the end. They cover so many beautiful, helpful conversations that are helping me and our friends here and hopefully all of y'all really be the healthiest fullest version of ourselves. So submitted with humility and thankfulness, here is our Summer Lovin' conversation about sex and dating with Kait and JJ Tomlin.

[00:07:35] <music>

**Annie:** Kait and JJ Tomlin, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

**Kait:** We're so excited to be here, Annie, oh my gosh.

**JJ:** Hey, we love fun in our house so this is a perfect podcast to join.

**Annie:** Okay, great.

**Kait:** JJ is literally the definition of fun actually.

**Annie:** Oh, great. Okay.

**Kait:** You guys were meant to be besties. He's an Enneagram seven.

**Annie:** Oh, you're seven? How do you identify?

**Kait:** I'm three.

**Annie:** Oh, that's very sweet.

**JJ:** I know.

**Annie:** A seven and a three. That means you have the most fun.

**Kait:** Yes.

**Annie:** Because you're like, "You want to have fun? I'll show you how we have more fun than anyone else."

**Kait:** Exactly.

**JJ:** Exactly.

**Annie:** I love partnering with threes. That's really fun. Okay, this is gonna be great. This is a That Sounds Fun first, an entire episode about sex.

**Kait:** Let's go.

**Annie:** I'm stoked. I'm so happy y'all are here. I'll just remind everybody listening of a couple of things. But one of our goals is we want to bridge people. That is our mission statement here is that Annie is a bridge. So we want to bridge people to experts. So in our time today, we will not cover everything about sex. But y'all have. I mean, not everything. But on the Heart of Dating podcast really... I mean, is this series that's happening right now... I mean, are you always talking about sex or are we just in a sex season?

**Kait:** We were in a sex season for sure. Season 10, season X, season for all the sex. So we were talking about sex, specifically for singles, and how to prepare for sex in marriage. Because it's a conversation where you're just shoved out of the room as a single oftentimes. So we were like, you know, then you arrive, if you arrive to marriage and you're like, "What in the world? I don't know what's going on here."

**Annie:** Yeah. We have so many questions. So we asked our friends on Instagram and they sent in 300-plus questions. So my sweet team was doing categorizing and I was like, "Bless their hearts, they're just categorizing all these questions." And then our team has questions and I have questions and things we want to make sure we cover.

But I just wanted people to know that if this does not say [inaudible 00:09:25], if our conversation about living with someone or masturbation or sex and dating is not enough, y'all have gone deep diving on all these things.

**Kait:** Yes.

**Annie:** Okay. So here's where I want to start. And I would love to hear from both y'all because we have men and women that are listening. What do we do...? I mean, we got over 50 this question. What do we do with our sex drive when we're single?

**Kait:** Oh, my gosh, what a good question. Do you want me to start, babe?

**JJ:** Yeah, go ahead.

**Kait:** So this is the question I think that... You know, JJ and I have different stories, different backgrounds, and we've had to both come to learn how to do this individually. But this is, you know, when we-

**Annie:** Will y'all tell us at some point? Can you give us a little bit of that?

**Kait:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. We definitely will. But I think that when you hear this question first, what I love about this question is that we're acknowledging that sex drive exists and that it's a good thing. Like, there is a good, beautiful thing-

**Annie:** In everybody? Does everybody have one?

**Kait:** Ah, that's a good question. I would say some people have suppressed it so much that they would actually venture to say they don't have one. But I think by God's design, everyone has a sexual nature and by that, a sexual drive. But in each person, it varies based on various factors. But a lot of people find "I don't have a high sex drive" and there could be a lot of reasons for that as a single, such as I've suppressed it a lot or been told this is a really bad thing. Right?

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Kait:** So you know, when you're asking the question, what do I do with my sex drive, hopefully, we're all recognizing that this is a beautiful thing created by God. I think a lot of conversations around sexuality in the church had been to kind of just say, "Hey, close that off. Turn off the sex drive."

**Annie:** "Lock that door-

**Kait:** Don't think about it

**Annie:** ...until your husband brings the key." Right?

**Kait:** Exactly. And then it's zero to sixty, then you turn it on. But I'm like, Well, where's even the keyhole? I'm like, "What am I doing here?" Like seriously.

**Annie:** That's exactly right.

**Kait:** So, you know, your sexuality is a beautiful thing created by God. We see that in Genesis. So if we can get to a place by knowing, okay, this thing is amazing, this is a good thing, this is not something to be ashamed of, but then we're asking and thinking, "Okay, well, if I don't want to like turn it, zero to sixty in my singleness, what do I do with that thing in my singleness?"

And this is where we have to talk about, you know, without a sense of legalism, a sense of rules and like, Hey, do this, don't do this, we have to talk about what is behind sex drive. And really what we've talked about is behind your sexual desire is a desire for connection, desire to connect intimately with other people. And specifically, obviously, when we talk about dating and love and romance specifically designed for connecting with somebody in the terms of love and romance. But we still can't connect with other people outside of the love and romance thing as a single.

So when we think about sex drive, when we talk about it, we often say, you know, the first thing if you have a high sex drive and you are trying to steward that in a healthy way-

**Annie:** That's such a good language. Steward versus shut down.

**JJ:** Right.

**Kait:** Shut down, stop it.

**Annie:** Steward it. That's really good, Kait.

**Kait:** Because if you keep training your brain, stop, stop, stop, stop, if you do get married, then how are you ever going to turn on?

**Annie:** Yeah. Someone asked that. Like, how am I supposed to recover when I've shut this down for so long? Yeah, that's really interesting.

**Kait:** Exactly. Which a lot of people especially if you're single and 35 listening, single and 40, single and 45, and you have never been married, you're like, "I've shut this

thing down, how am I supposed to... like what am I supposed to do with this thing that I have?

**JJ:** Right.

**Kait:** Right? So you want to say anything else with this, babe?

**JJ:** Well, I just think you have to recognize culturally where we're at and what we've been fed is it is a physical thing only, which is incorrect, and it is something that you almost just have to release.

**Annie:** I mean, *Jersey Shore* told me it was a physical thing.

**JJ:** Right.

**Annie:** Right? That you just try to get your number up, just get your count up.

**JJ:** Get your number up. You got to clear your mind, "Hey, here's the physical reasons why a sexual release is good for you. Here are the really practical, good things about it." So the whole foundation of, you know, what we do and what I would ask the listeners say, let me take every assumption I have about sex, and completely wipe the board and let's start at God's word and that theology of sex, the foundation, the ultimate designer, who created that sexual drive within you and let's see what He has to say about it first. And let me build my sexual ethic and my foundation, my belief system around that. Versus trying to piece it together from a hodgepodge of Disney, *Jersey Shore*, a great sermon I heard last week.

**Annie:** And then what they told me in middle school at church.

**JJ:** And, you know, my youth pastor in seventh grade. So I think that's where, as adults, if you have never done that, this is a perfect opportunity to just say, let's start with a whiteboard completely blank and go to God's word first and see what that is.

**Annie:** Can you talk about...? What is the sexual ethic according to Scripture? I mean, a lot of people said, like, what does the Bible say about sex before marriage? And I've been told my sexual desire as a single woman stems from a spiritual lack.

**Kait:** Wow.

**Annie:** So if you're not spiritual enough, your sexual desire is because you're not spiritual enough.

**Kait:** Whoa, oh my gosh.

**Annie:** How do we find what the Bible says? Because David had a lot of wives, you know? So it's not like you can't do that.

**JJ:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Kait:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**JJ:** Well, you know, I think first and foremost is you have to understand very quickly... the Bible was very quick. In Genesis 2 talks about Adam being around when God formed Eve from the dust. In Genesis 2 it gives us this excerpt where Adam is singing song and dancing before the Lord with a naked female in front of him. And if you start to piece together what this kind of poem is eliciting is, he is literally doing a dancer joy and singing song for what is before him. So when it comes to sex, God is not bashful. You know, you move to the Psalms and Proverbs where He is talking about the delight of the breasts of the woman before him.

**Kait:** And in Song of Song.

**JJ:** And in Song of Songs.

**Annie:** Yeah, that whole thing.

**JJ:** He dedicated a whole entire book of God's word to the practice and the delight and the pleasure and even talking about the alliteration of sexual union and the taste of pleasure is just a foreshadow of the union to come. So the delight that we experience of it is a taste and sample of what we are to experience in heaven. So one of the closest ways we can experience it.

And then you get to Matthew 5, where Jesus talks about committing adultery, and He doesn't use a word about, you know... He said, "Do not commit adultery and the sense of your sexual desire, don't use it poorly. He uses a word called "porneia", which has a completely different annotation from any other sexual desire uses beforehand. And the connotation there is it's a greedy desire.

**Annie:** When you hear it, porn, you hear it.

**JJ:** Yeah. And the whole foundation of porn and greed is that it is a highly addictive. You can't get enough of it. It's insatiable and never satisfies, and you fantasize about it. So that is where your sexual desire whenever it turns from the original design, which is within covenant of giving, which we'll get all about into today, is the immediate difference between your sexual desire working against you towards lust and not against getting you closer to God is when it's for you.



**Kait:** Right.

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**JJ:** When it's taking by giving it goes directly against the original design, which, I'm sure we'll get all into.

**Annie:** Man, what an interesting moment we could all have in our singleness of going like, this thing I'm about to do, am I taking or giving? And whether that is pornography or masturbation or making out or sleeping with someone that is such a first gate that we could just go, am I taking or am I giving? Well, if it's just me, I'm not giving anything.

**Kait:** Right, exactly.

**Annie:** So that's a really interesting first gate to have that conversation.

**JJ:** The great litmus test.

**Annie:** Wow, JJ, that is really good. Okay, tell me a little bit about y'all's sexual story that got you here. And you only been married nine months?

**Kait:** Yeah, nine months.

**Annie:** Yes, I love it.

**JJ:** So we have all the marriage advice you could ask for.

**Kait:** All the great sex thing, nine months into marriage. We are experts.

**JJ:** We've got a ton of experience.

**Kait:** You know?

**JJ:** Yeah.

**Kait:** So before we got married... we have very different sexual paths. So my path and my story is I dated for 10 years back to back nonstop from like 14 to 24. I use dating as a means of finding my identity and finding that I tried to find that I was worthy and lovable. And within that story, I dated a lot of guys and I hooked up with a lot of guys.

At 16, I had sex for the first time and that just snowballed into a pattern of sexual relations with tons of men. My story also includes sexual abuse as well. So just some really, really hard stuff in my past. And then in my mid-20s, I had been in an abusive relationship that was kind of abusive in every way. Once I got out of that relationship, I went through a major season of healing and kind of removing myself from men entirely and asking myself, "Who is Kait outside of men?" Like, "Who is Kait outside of dating, outside of sexual relations, outside of performing for men? Like who am I? And do I even like who I am?"

So I went on that journey. And only years later, then I said, "Okay, let's try to re-enter into dating but this time with a different sexual ethic, this time with a new way of doing it. I did not do it perfectly. But I actually tried to work on having a more deeply rooted sexual ethic in that story as well. I dated guys that were some phenomenal Christian men and once they found out about my past, they were not okay with it.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Kait:** So one guy in particular, he was wonderful. And this is not to dog him, but he found out about my past and there are all these other wonderful things about me. I kind of picture it like he thought I was almost this amazing present on the outside. And when he opened it up, it was not exactly what he thought.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Kait:** And when he found out about my sexual past, he just could not get over it.

**Annie:** So many women wrote in that's the fear that men are gonna walk away when they hear about their past.

**Kait:** Exactly. And it eventually did, for many reasons, not just that, made him walk away, which was the best thing at the end of the day. But what had happened at that point is I had healed from so much of my sexual past and worked through that. And I wasn't ashamed to share about it anymore because I had worked through, "Hey, I have a new conviction now, I know the grace that I have from God, I know the mercy that God gives me and I am not defined by that past." Some of that makes me who I am today but it doesn't define me. And it's also not the most important thing about me.

So when he had such a hard time dealing with it, it actually kind of like was a struggle for me because I started dipping my toes back in this water of doubt. Like, should I be ashamed about this? Like, should I? Because he just could not... Like it kept coming up.

And I eventually had to say, "Hey, I actually think you need to process this outside of me." Like, "You continuing to process how this is affecting you with me is leading me into a place that I've already received freedom from. So I just need you to stop talking to me about it. It's fine if you have your journey but you can't have that with me."

**Annie:** "Have that with your counselor."

**Kait:** "I can't."

**Annie:** "Get me out."

**Kait:** So, you know, in our story, you can share your past and then our story was so redeeming in this way too. But do you want to tell her about your past?

**JJ:** Well, I mean, it's so funny because I could say, you know, when I married Kait, I was—and we're going there today about sex—I was a virgin by the standard of penetrative sex. But how I define sex now is so different. I can't say I had no sexual experiences with women or digital objects and pornography. If you look at it from that lens, you know, what we say is this is a... Kait has a very vivid external with in-person interaction in sexual relations. I could absolutely say maybe I didn't have that. But my story was riddled with pornography use for 10 years and sexual experiences with women that were not quote, you know, penetrative sex, but were everything close.

**Annie:** Right.

**JJ:** And in the same light, I think whenever you get into the territory of sharing an orgasm with another person or object, for me, that qualifies as a deeply spiritual, emotional tying experience of sex.

**Annie:** That's another great definition. You're giving us so many good gates of going like-

**JJ:** Absolutely.

**Annie:** "If you're experiencing an orgasm with another person or an object..."

**JJ:** Absolutely. I mean, who cares... I'm so sorry but who cares it's in or what it's doing? If you're sharing an orgasm, you're absolutely bonding on a spiritual soul level.

**Annie:** Wow. Wow.

**JJ:** And that's not just with humans, you know? At what point now in the digital age is that object or creation of artificial intelligence? Pornography now is dining with human beings. It's just being created by digital pixels. So you can't define sex as just a person-to-person experience. It's absolutely objectual experience now. So funny nothing separates us from 2000 years ago and ties to objects, you know, idols when we read the Old Testament, New Testament. How do you guys worship? Sticks and stones. We're doing the same thing, just with digital pixels now.

**Annie:** Love it. That's really good. Another overarching question.

**Kait:** Yes.

**Annie:** Why is that so powerful? It brings down families. It brings down... I mean, we got so many shame questions. It is what moves things forward. I mean, it is one of the most powerful forces. Why is that?

**Kait:** Well, we actually see in Genesis that the enemy uses shame, especially when it comes to our bodies. First and foremost, we see them they were in the garden, they were naked, and they felt ashamed, so they had to cover up right. But that's not what they were originally and that's not how God originally designed it. So I think the enemy uses sexual shame specifically and this entity of sex. One of the most vulnerable things that we can do with another person is a sexual experience. Truly. Getting naked, being fully exposed in front of another person is so vulnerable, and very exposing.

So I believe truly that the enemy uses that as a huge means to like if he could just get a little foothold in that area of sexuality, he can start separating us from our relationship with God. And that's why you see, Annie, too where, I think... You know, we talk about sin and the church, we talk about different sins. We often like almost put sex or anything related to sex on a pedestal. It's like, that one is higher than gossip or that one is higher than profanity.

**Annie:** Right. For sure higher than gossip.

**Kait:** Right? For sure. You know, you find out someone on staff is having sex with their boyfriend, girlfriend. I'm not saying this is acceptable. But if that's happening, you definitely are like, "Whoa, I can't believe that's happening. They need to be removed," all this stuff. But if you find out they're gossiping, "Oh, well, everybody kind of does that."

**Annie:** Right. Right. Right.

**Kait:** And I'm saying that in a general sense.

**Annie:** Yes. Yes. Yes. That's not in your church or my church.

**Kait:** Right. Exactly.

**Annie:** That's not at church we are talking about.

**Kait:** Right. Generally.

**Annie:** That's just there are companies where that happens.

**Kait:** Yeah. And that's why this is such a hot-button topic and episode because people are gonna be like, "Oh, yeah." It's such a charged conversation because I believe it can bring you so deeply close to God in the right context of marriage or has the ability to cause so much destruction, so much shame. And then as a consequence, I think just even as believers, we become so shame feels on this topic that then we throw buckets of shame at other people-

**Annie:** Yeah, that's right.

**Kait:** ...when we find out what they may be doing. Whether pornography, masturbation, sex with their boyfriend and girlfriend, like whatever it is, a sexual identity struggle. Whatever it is, we're like, shame bucket on you. So then it's just more and more isolated, isolated, isolated, isolated. And that's where what hides in the dark, it stays in the dark, and grows in the dark, you know? I think you probably have some to add to that, though, babe but...

**JJ:** I mean, that was really great. I think, again, culturally, we're taught, you know, from everything that's not in Sunday school and in theology is that sex is just physical. And we are very, very clear that if it's just physical, then why are the ramifications of it so massive? You know, you look at cohabitation, you look at all these things, everything points to it that it should just be physical is not.

A big thing is the emotional and spiritual ramifications are massive because it is an expression of emotion and spiritual need. And it's a satisfier of emotional and spiritual wants. In totality, sex in itself is a sacrament. And a sacrament is a physical act that represents an invisible reality. So the physical act of sex is just the beginning and it's just a small sample of the magnitude of a spiritual and emotional reality that's taking place. A great example is communion in church. Communion as a sacrament that we practice, if you think about it, the physical act of taking that wine and that bread is not-

**Annie:** Casual.

**JJ:** Yes.

**Annie:** It's very...

**JJ:** And we're very casual about it. But the second you start to think about the invisible reality of what it represents, the magnitude and the weight of what that blood stands for, the price that was paid, the bread and the community in the body that He suffered for, it holds a massive weight. So sex in that same lens, once we start to see that the physical act of it is small, but the emotional and the spiritual magnitude is massive.

And it's a huge power source. You know, within covenant, it is that power source that unites. And there's a bunch of different purposes of sex. You know, you can literally create life.

**Annie:** Right. Literally, the only way that two humans can create life that is-

**JJ:** That alone I get goosebumps, you know. But second to that, it's where you unite and become one for God. So the spiritual reality and what it means. So that outside of covenant, of course, it's going to devastate. Of course.

I love Kait's story, though, because it's such a great snapshot of, Okay, what is this idea of worldly shame, heavenly shame? And what's the difference that I think we've lost in the past 20 years of godly sorrow in 2 Corinthians? What's godly sorrow? What is godly grace? What does it mean to actually mourn and change and transform here after I failed?

Because what we talked about, even on the pre-calls, the church has done one thing really well—they've made one thing really clear: what the standard is. We all know what, even non-Christians know what the Christian standard is for sex, right?

**Kait:** Oh, yeah. You don't have sex before marriage.

**Annie:** Right, right.

**JJ:** We're known for it. But we're so ill-equipped to deal with the failure of it.

[00:29:16] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation, everybody, all right? We're gonna share about one of our amazing partners, [HelloFresh](#). I don't eat dinner at home

very often, you know this about me. But when I do, I want the easiest options possible. And this summer HelloFresh is here to take the hard work out of eating well, and I am here for it.

Figuring out what's for dinner is not at the top of anyone's summer activity wish list, but HelloFresh delivers mouthwatering chef-crafted recipes and fresh ingredients to your door so you can spend your summer doing, well, whatever you want to do. If it's me, I'd rather be outside than stressing over what to make.

With HelloFresh you get farm-fresh pre-portioned ingredients and seasonal recipes delivered right to your doorstep. Skip trips to the grocery store and count on HelloFresh to make home cooking easy, fun, and affordable. And that's why it's America's number one meal kit. Get farm-to-table quality with every Hello Fresh box.

HelloFresh's seasonal ingredients are picked at peak ripeness and traveled from the farm to your doorstep in less than seven days for fresh flavor and every bite. They even have new snacks, meals and more to add on to your weekly order. Like their fun s'mores bundle for the kids, it's adorable. And it's not just for the kids, okay? Or some of these crowd pleasers, like their Bratwurst bar with caramelized onions and Dijonnaise slaw, and a pineapple relish or a snack board with pretzel bites, spice bar nuts, and hot honey peach jam. Sounds like it's time to order some HelloFresh and have us a party. Okay?

Listen, if you're stuck in a recipe rut or you want to try something new, there are 40 recipes to choose from every week. Even the pickiest eaters, you're gonna find meals everyone at the table will enjoy. This summer spend less time meal planning and prepping with HelloFresh's pre-portioned ingredients that make it easy to get cooking quick.

From easy instructions to high-quality proteins and veggies, HelloFresh brings out your inner chef with every tasty, easy-to-prepare meal. Plus, it's 25% less expensive than takeout. So go to [hellofresh.com/tsf16](https://hellofresh.com/tsf16), and use the code TSF16 to get, get ready, 16 free meals plus free shipping. That's [hellofresh.com/tsf](https://hellofresh.com/tsf), like That Sounds Fun, TSF16. HelloFresh is America's number one meal kit, and you're about to get 16 free meals. [Hellofresh.com/tsf16](https://hellofresh.com/tsf16).

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Now back to our Summer Lovin' conversation with Kait and JJ.

[00:33:16] <music>

**Annie:** Talk about the people that are listening that feel so much shame because of having sex and whether... I mean there are people who wrote in that were like, "I've been abused and I feel shame. I've chosen it and I feel shame. I have watched things, read things and I feel shame." So there's so many people who... because we're gonna talk about two different signs of shame. So let's talk about the people who feel shame for what has happened or what they have done.

**Kait:** Yeah. This is so powerful. Because, again, I really, really believe that the enemy loves to use this especially outside of... Any way he can shame us, I think uses this the most to separate us from God. Like if we can feel ashamed of our bodies, ashamed of our sexual desire, ashamed of sexual acts we have done or have not done, which I'm sure we'll talk about, it can deeply create a barrier between ourselves and God.

So I think this was a big, big part of my journey is really trying to heal through like, Okay, how do I remove this shame and create a healthy conviction that is free of shame. Which is like how do we do that? Because if you just take away shame, what you see right now is others move to the other end of the spectrum, which is just grace, grace, grace, grace, grace, and almost like a cycle of abusing grace. Like,



well, God forgives me and God gives me this grace, so I'm fine." Like, everything's good. I'm like, I'm good.

**Annie:** But I think there's also people who are like, we're both Christians and we're in a committed relationship, we're not married but we want to have sex.

**Kait:** Right. Yeah, totally. So, I think, within that you have to figure out, well, what is my why, and why am I doing this? Does it matter? And back to what JJ was saying and why this is such an important sacrament, that if you understand... So here's the thing with shame. If you understand the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross, that He died for your sins, when you are in a cycle of shame, you're kind of looking at the cross and saying, like, what you've done for me is not enough and so I need to keep punishing myself. Because what you've done for me is not satisfactory enough. I have to keep punishing myself. That's what shame does. It says, "I'm just so bad. That's great, thank you, but I have to keep punishing myself."

So when you really can meditate on what Jesus did for you on the cross, that He died for your sins, that kind of sacrifice and the kind of grace that He gives us that we don't deserve, there's something so deeply, profoundly transformative in removing shame. When we can truly understand we don't deserve this but Christ sent His Son or God sent His Son in the form of a man to die for all of our sins, that can profoundly change your heart.

I know we all know that as Christians, but I think when you truly can meditate on that, when you truly take that from head knowledge into heart knowledge and you see this picture of sacrifice is so profound, like God loves me that much, that He sees me, He sees all my sin, He sees all my sexual brokenness, and He's like, "I love you just as much. I love you this much that I sent my son to die so that you would know that, and so that you'd be free from any ounce of shame."

So when we know that, it also changes us from living in that almost cycle of grace abuse, like I was talking about. Because I think that I see a lot of that in the Christian world where it's like, 'I messed up,' quote-unquote, but it's okay, God forgives me." And then we just keep on in that same cycle. If you truly want to transform out of shame and into deeper transformation, it requires a level of deep heart understanding what Christ has done for you and deep acceptance of the grace that God gives to you, and deep acceptance of the love God has for you. Because shame also completely separates you from the love of God.

**Annie:** So how do you deal with the shame or how would someone deal with the shame if they feel it from being sexually abused?

**Kait:** I have definitely dealt with that. And that was something for me that actually, in my story, I compartmentalize for so many years, because I don't know if we'll have time to go there today but-

**Annie:** They can go hear it on your show actually.

**Kait:** Yeah, definitely. But there's a narrative out there, especially for women, that women are the gatekeeper for men's sexual desire, sexual drive. I was taught that for so long. Actually, Annie, the majority of women who are sexually abused or raped actually it happens from somebody they know. It actually rarely happens from somebody they don't know. Which is, I think, what we often think it's like somebody you don't know, just somebody random. But it actually often happens from somebody you know, which is why it's even that much more confusing.

**Annie:** Confusing, right?

**Kait:** And if you've grown in this narrative of, "Hey, women, it's kind of up to you to help your brother not stumble," then in the back of your mind, if a man does quote-unquote, "stumble", you blame yourself. You're like, "Oh, this happened because of me."

So that is exactly what happened to me. I was sexually assaulted by a man that I knew and I was so caught off guard that I just was like, "Oh, you must have done this because of something I did or something I was wearing or whatever." I don't know if this relates to anyone, but for me, I was so unable to deal with that shame that I put it in this bucket. Like, I put a deep down in this closet to never look at because I was like, "I can't even face the amount of shame that I feel from that. So I'm just gonna put it down here," so much so that I forgot it happened. Until years and years and years later somebody asked me, "Have you ever been raped?" And that was the moment where I was like, "Ahh," and all these like motions started flooding up. And I was like, "Yeah, I have."

So I say that to say, you know, there is no blame for you in that situation. I think something I had to deeply learn was it was not my fault. It is not your fault. No matter what you're wearing, it was not your fault. No matter how... Even if you were flirting, it's not your fault. Nobody has the right to do anything to you against your will. If you say no, it means that.

But I think we're so often programmed that like, No, but I made these mistakes and I lead him on. Especially as women that's what we tell ourselves. And it's just not true. And I had to come to really accepting that is not true. It was not my fault. I did not deserve that. And that man is wrong. Like he was in the wrong. And God

covers all of that. But I had to really understand and rewire, like, this is not my fault. This is not my fault, which took a long time to reprogram. So yeah, gosh.

**Annie:** That's helpful. Thank you. JJ, I was shocked how many of this question came in. So I'd love for, I mean, either of you. But people saying, I feel so much shame because I haven't done (fill in the blank). "I feel so much shame because I'm 40 and I haven't had sex. I feel so much shame." "Is someone gonna want to date me because I'm in my 30s and I've never slept with anyone?" I mean, piles of men and women saying to us, "I'm embarrassed at what I haven't done."

**JJ:** It's such a good question. It's so funny it's not what you would think.

**Annie:** No.

**JJ:** Right?

**Annie:** Yeah.

**JJ:** That tells me one thing. For the enemy, nothing is off-limits.

**Annie:** That's right. That's right.

**JJ:** Nothing's off limits.

**Annie:** So good. Y'all are very good at this.

**JJ:** And what's funny about that, it means that everything about us has to be defined and placed underneath our identity in God, including our virginity and whether or not we have it. Because the second we take anything out from that covering, it's fair game for the enemy. And he will use anything against us to insert shame as a stronghold, including your virginity.

And to them, I would just say, you know, you're so much more than your virginity. And for the one who's lost it, you are so much more than your virginity.

**Annie:** Yeah, that's right.

**JJ:** It's the same message for both. Your identity, your self-worth, your value, there's so much more. For as far as hope, the right man and the right woman, they won't see you for your virginity or lack of. When Kait comes to me and she vulnerably shares that story and her past, if I'm truly a Christ follower, first of all, two things.

One, I have no choice, but to extend the same grace and forgiveness that had been extended. Because if I had to be really honest and transparent with everyone about my past and the dark thoughts and the hidden thoughts that nobody sees, you wouldn't look at me the same way.

And second to that, you know, for her, I'm like, you know, that conversation with that guy that you had is so sad to me, because you are so much more than your sexual past. And more importantly, when I saw Kait, we met on a Zoom call in the middle of COVID. And I saw her in our pre-call and she was speaking about this Valentine's event, you know, for like 400 single girls.

**Annie:** I remember.

**JJ:** She was the most beautiful four by six pixels I've ever seen. I was, you know, enamored. But I wouldn't have asked her out because I didn't know her story. I didn't know who she was. So after 40 minutes of hearing her talk about who she was in Christ-

**Annie:** You don't mean her sexual story, you just mean her as a person.

**JJ:** Yeah, both.

**Kait:** I did share some of it in that, ironically.

**JJ:** Absolutely.

**Kait:** So this person-

**JJ:** I saw all of it. I saw the... and you know, you can fill in the blank very quickly. And for me, that was so attractive because of who she was in Christ today and the healing that she had experienced today. And that's how she was defined. And for me, people who are completely transparent about their pasts, the degree to which you're transparent about your past and your sexual past is the degree to which God can heal and establish you and who He is.

So when I saw Kait, it wasn't a ding against her. It was a total bonus in a sense of she knew God's mercy, she knew God's grace, and she knew God's redemption on earth. And that for me was so attractive. I loved it.

**Annie:** Did you have worries that he didn't know what to do? Did you have worries that he hadn't had sex?

**Kait:** Oh, before marriage?

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Kait:** That's a really good question. I actually didn't have worries about that. But what I worried about was the opposite. And I actually got some counsel from girlfriends who had similar situations around where they had experienced with her husband had none. Because you have to understand you may have experience but you've never experienced covenantal sex. So you may have had sex outside of marriage but sex within marriage is a different thing.

**Annie:** Oh. I do not know that.

**Kait:** Yes, it's a different thing. And that's where there is so much hope for the person who has a sexual past. Like what I would say to that person, which I had to say to myself is like, you've actually never experienced true sex.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Kait:** Because sex was designed for marriage in a covenant. So you've never experienced sex. We said this on a podcast a year ago before we got married and now I can say confidently, after getting married, truly, there is nothing like the safety and the freedom and the vulnerability of truly knowing this person isn't going anywhere. I can be fully myself with them. God blesses this. God celebrates when we're doing this. There's something just-

Like if you read Song of Songs, it is that. It's not that outside of the marriage bed. It is that. So you've never experienced true sex. So that for me was like, "Oh, well, I have to go into it saying, I also don't really know sex either.

**Annie:** Man, that's great for anybody who's watched pornography, who's read pornography, who has had any kind of physical relationship with anybody to go, "This thing you're going to do after you get married is actually so different. Even if the parts are the same, it's so different."

**JJ:** Absolutely.

**Annie:** That's so interesting.

**Kait:** And it's like a journey because no matter... I was more nervous on our wedding night than he was. Which is funny, in a sense, if you think about it, logistically I have a past experience with multiple different things. I was more nervous because I was like, "I don't know, what am I even doing anymore? I don't know." Because it all felt so new to me which is because I prayed for that, because I had healed so

much that I was like, I pray God that this night of our wedding night is like the first time. And it's not like I'm having a... like I know everything and I'm just thinking about past stuff. Like it really was like the first time. I was more nervous than he was like. It's so funny.

So I would say there's that hope. And also this is just another tip for people getting engaged or getting married, and you have a sexual past. It also is very important, though, that if things come up while you're having sex, newlyweds acts, or whatever, that if you have a past your husband or your spouse doesn't, you're not like, "Oh, we should do it like this."

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Kait:** Hey, actually, I don't like that. It's really important to create that experience together and have it be a journey of exploration together versus like, "Oh, my favorite thing is doing this," or "mm-

**Annie:** So how do you do that? So you can't communicate what your favorite things are or you just have to do it in a...? Explain.

**Kait:** The way you should do it is... Should.

**Annie:** We don't should people.

**Kait:** I mean, the way that I tend to do it was, you know, I would gently say, "Oh, you know, I'm not sure if I really want to do that," or "I'm not sure I would really like that."

**Annie:** Verses the stance of "Hey, because I've done this. I know exactly what this should be."

**Kait:** Exactly. Exactly. And giving him the freedom. And me being like, "You know what, I may not have like that before but this is a new thing. Let me see. This is my husband, we're exploring together in a very new way."

**Annie:** And 50 to 100 more years of having sex.

**Kait:** Exactly.

**JJ:** You go starting from the starting line.

**Annie:** Yeah, I like that.

**JJ:** Exactly.

**Kait:** I wanted to say something, again, to the person who feels shame about no sexual history. Can I speak to that again?

**Annie:** Please.

**Kait:** I don't want to go back and [inaudible 00:47:40] something.

**Annie:** No, please.

**Kait:** I think for that person, because we've had a lot of people who have written into the podcasts they've never been kissed, for example, they're 40 and never been kissed. Or they've never been in a relationship, let alone never had a sexual history and they're like, "I feel so behind." That's so common. "I feel so behind not only because I'm not married, but because I've never even experienced these other things that are very... like things like kissing or even holding hands with someone."

To those individuals, I would say, first of all, if this is a value of you... I think the reason why we do something and hold strong to it, it has to be because it's a value of ours. So this is a value of yours. It's something that you can feel confident in. Because I feel like a lot of times people are like, "I feel behind," within that I feel like there's a sense of I'm unconfident because this is an embarrassing thing or it's unnatural in current society. So if you can flip the script could be like, actually, this is a value that I hold-

**Annie:** And I chose this.

**Kait:** ...I chose this, and this is a good thing about me. It doesn't mean I'm behind. It doesn't mean... Guess what? Like you could never have kissed someone in your entire life and you could kiss someone and it'd be the best because of your life. You could have kissed 100 people in your life and kiss someone new and it'd be the worst case of your life. It doesn't really matter. That experience doesn't actually matter at the end of the day, because all of it is such a journey with that person that you're with.

So I think when you reframe it as like this is a value that I have, I've chosen this and I feel confident about that. For those that are questioning it, I would encourage you to go back to why did you chose that value in the first place? And if it was because someone told you to, then let's rework that to say, Why am I choosing this now? Versus my pastor told me or my youth pastor, my mom, or my dad. Like, why am I choosing this now? Someone else may have told you, but why are you

choosing it? Because then it can be rooted in confidence and then it can be something that you're not ashamed of.

And the last thing I'll say to that person also is you're not behind in relationships, you're not behind because there's so many things that dating distracts you from. The chances are that you've actually probably done a lot in your life. You've probably maybe made a great career. You probably have stellar friendships. You have learned great relationship skills. You just maybe have not used them in a context of romantic relationship. But trust me, there are people who have dated and dated and dated and there's still some of the worst daters out there.

**Annie:** Right. Right.

**Kait:** I've seen them. I've dated some of them. I've been that in the past. And you may come in with the best character, great life experiences, amazing deep friendships, you've had to have hard conversations with friends, you've had to have the courage and boldness to do hard things, and that qualifies you way more for relationships than somebody with a ton of relational history, or romantic relationship history.

**Annie:** We have a couple of people who asked things, and I think this is really interesting. What if you never get married? Or what if you're 20 now and you get into your 30s, or you're 30 and you get into your 40s or up to 60s, 70s and you haven't gotten married? Can our sex drive bring us closer to God in unmarried life?

**JJ:** Absolutely.

**Annie:** Because it's not promised to any... It's promised to y'all. It's not promised to me.

**JJ:** Absolutely. Don't you think that that... what is it? Is it Romans 12, offering up your bodies as sacrifices to God and God seeing something that's so valuable, so meaningful, so deep and innate in you and powerful and seeing you laying it before Him and His throne? I heard John Piper talking about this the other day, these women who have such a passion and desire to mother. And they said, "God, where are you? What about the desire that you created within me?"

And to see them find a way to still channel and sacrifice and saying, I might not have children on my own but that's not going to stop me from serving alongside a family and a single mother who needs an additional help and motherly care and compassion?

**Kait:** Or fostering.



**JJ:** We have women 45 who foster at this point by themselves working full-time jobs. I mean, I am so proud. And that's just from a human perspective. That is the sacrifices that are pleasing to God, the ones that hurt and sting. You know, you think about generosity and giving.

**Annie:** Right.

**JJ:** Giving, you know, if 10% is easy for you, then that's not really giving, it doesn't hurt. When you give something to the point that it hurts, it costs. Abraham with Isaac, one of the forefathers, I mean, fully ready and prepared to give something that was the most meaningful promise to him. That is the sacrifice that pleases God.

So for the sexual nature aspect of it, to just give it and surrender it, I just can't think of any sacrifice that's more pleasing in that sense. And I can't sit here and say I know exactly why. But I do know that once we view things on an eternal perspective...

I mean, Francis Chan does this better than any teacher. The second, we stop and pause and zoom out on an eternal perspective, not to minimize it, but say, this is a short-term pain and struggle on eternal perspective that, hey, I look forward to when I'm in eternity this is going to be the least of my desires and the greatest pleasure and the greatest desire. When I rocked Kait's world was when I was like, hey, you know, we were reading *You and Me Together* by Francis Chan, you know we're not soulmates, right?

**Kait:** I was like, "Oh no." Like I know that but it's the weird concept to think in heaven we're not married.

**JJ:** We're earth mates. We're gonna be best friends in heaven, and I can't wait to see you. I don't even know if we'll kiss or high-five and say, "Good to see you." And that changes the whole meaning of marriage. The whole meaning of marriage is how do I set this person up on an eternal timeline to grow closer to God and be with him in eternity? And that changes my perspective of sex, my perspective of relating to her, my perspective of serving her. It changes everything about the meaning of my marriage.

[00:54:13] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to share about another amazing partner, [Sundays for Dogs](#). This is the one for the dogs in your life. And listen, if you want to meet somebody, dog parks, people. Dog parks. I know you put time and energy into thinking about what to feed yourself and your family and your friends. And don't forget your dogs.

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And now let's go back and finish up this great conversation with our Summer Lovin' experts Kait and JJ.

[00:57:41] <music>

**Annie:** Okay, so that is so good, JJ, because both of those thoughts just lead me to let's talk about sex and dating. And let's talk about sex when you're not dating someone. Because in dating, a lot of people want to know how far is too far. How far is too far? And that's what we asked in middle school and we're still asking it at 42. How far is too far? And what is the line?

When y'all are teaching about this, I think it's beautiful because people want to honor God, but they also want to be humans and have bodies. So what do we do with that?

**Kait:** What I would say to this-

**JJ:** We love this question.

**Kait:** We love this question.

**Annie:** Okay, good. Good. Great.

**JJ:** Of all the questions about sex, this is one of my favorites because it's such a good moment. If you were listening, like be honest with yourself. Maybe you've covered up that question and you hope somebody else asks it. But you're definitely listening with a little bit of intrigue, right?

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Kait:** I would say first, and we say this, it is the wrong question to ask because it's like, hey, the right question to ask, is what I'm doing honoring God? Truly is what I'm doing. bringing me closer to God? One of my favorite quotes, like one of my life quotes, I would say, from John Mark Comer is who are you becoming by the things you're doing?

**Annie:** But that doesn't mean you have to keep your hands to yourself until your marriage night, right?

**Kait:** Oh, no, no.

**Annie:** Oh JJ is... He clicked at me.

**Kait:** The thing about that is I think that depends on the person. And it has to be a deeply rooted conviction. Because we're not about to sit here and say, Hey, you can do this and you can't do this. Because nobody needs another set of rules right now. Like nobody needs that. That's why we started earlier saying like, this has to be a deeply personal conviction, a deeply personal why.

**Annie:** That your community may know your conviction so someone holds you to it.

**Kait:** Exactly.

**JJ:** Absolutely.

**Kait:** And it has to be built around yourself and your past. So my boundaries, knowing my past are going to be way more strict knowing my tendency. And just being honest with myself of like, Hey, this is like... if I was an addict addicted to alcohol my whole life and I'm recovering from that, yeah, maybe I can't be at a bar every Friday night around people heavily drinking. It's probably not good for me in this process of trying to move away from that.

So for me when I'm recovering from my past of a lot of sexual encounters, I just had to be really honest with myself of like, "It is not good for me to do XYZ thing." So my boundaries have to be way stricter than maybe the other person because of myself and because of my past and because of being honest with myself. I'm not saying like, yeah, I may be in my 30s and it may seem weird and uncool to be like, you can't be over after 10. That does seem weird. It does seem uncool.

But for me, I'm like, JJ knows this, I get weird after 10 p.m. I get weird. Now that we're married, it's great. But before marriage, I just like everything was loose. And I'm like, Hey, you know. It's just a different, relaxed version of Kait that comes out. And that's always where I used to cross the most boundaries.

So I think it has to depend on knowing yourself and has to be rooted in deep conviction. Because I do believe there are some people that can kiss or potentially even make out without lusting, without it crossing a lot of boundaries that they set for themselves, because, hey, they don't have maybe the same paths that I do. Their

brain isn't neuro-wired in such a way where they've gone down that path so many times.

**Annie:** Interesting.

**Kait:** I do think that can be possible for some, I don't believe the large majority that's possible for. I do think that you have to know yourself. JJ, like you can speak to this based on your past and knowing yourself, but I just think if you're gonna make these decisions know yourself, get deeply honest, get deeply honest with your community, and ask them like, "Hey, these are kind of some of the things I want to put in place for myself. What do you think?" Not people who are gonna be like, "You're weird for that." But people were like, "You know what, I think that is really respectful, and knowing your story, I think that's wise." Versus somebody who's gonna be like, Kait, that's really weird. You're in your 30s, why would you... Why can't you have him over at 10 p.m.? You're an adult. You're not 20 making these decisions anymore.

**JJ:** Well, this is the question. And my question back would be where else in our life as a Christian do we ask this question of how far is too far? Where else would I ever ask, Hey, Pastor, I want to look at women and kind of fantasize? How much skin is too much? How much soft pornography is too much that I can get away with?

The fundamental question in itself is a question of how much can I get away with, and it still be okay? And for me, that reveals, you know, there is a desire, and it reveals what is the priority of your heart? Because you're not asking, "Hey, when it comes to sex and boundaries in dating, how can I glorify God the most? See the difference in the question? It reveals the intention of my heart and the priority of my heart.

And to get real practical, you know, when it comes to how far is too far, I'll just give you a scenario. You have two couples. One's newly married and one's engaged. Very close. And the engaged couple they make out heavily, they maybe cuddle underneath the blankets, they may be dry hump each other, and feel each other and intimate parts.

**Kait:** We're getting real. You said dry hump.

**JJ:** Hey, this is very real. We're getting married next month. Like we're so close, which I would have another conversation. The next day when they wake up and they're feeling terrible. And we'll pause there—and they're feeling terrible. You have a newly married couple, and they go through the exact same. They're on the couch, they're cuddling, they kissing, they're making out passionately, they're getting

underneath and they're thrusting, not even sex and they're fondling and touching intimately. What do they call that? And how do they feel?

**Annie:** Right.

**JJ:** Well, they feel wonderful about it. And two they call it sex and they call it foreplay.

**Annie:** Foreplay. I was gonna probably call it foreplay for the engaged couple. That's terrible, right?

**JJ:** That is on-ramp to the final act of that wave and that crescendo. And they feel amazing. You know, what the engaged couple calls it? They call it "it was just a slip-up." It was just, you know-

**Annie:** That's not who we wanna be.

**JJ:** Yeah. And kind of feel bad about it. They don't call it the same thing even though it was the exact same thing. And that's why you have to view the on-ramp is designed for the full act of sex in itself. And you're saying, You know what, I'm going to reserve that for my partner. So same thing about sleeping in the same bed. Like we're in this whole thing, I'm surprised we haven't been asked, what about sleeping in the same bed?

**Kait:** Or cohabitation. There's so many questions of traveling together. I think especially when you're older, traveling together, staying in the same room. There's a lot of people who were like, Well, we're fine. We're adults. This financially makes a lot of sense. And I'm not here to judge. We're not here to shame people because we've certainly made mistakes. I do want to say that. We are not perfect in this journey. I think we have learned a lot from our prior mistakes to meeting one another. But we still made mistakes in our relationship.

**JJ:** Absolutely.

**Kait:** Definitely.

**JJ:** Absolutely.

**Kait:** But I think when it's like, hey, let's sleep in the same bed, hey, let's travel together and stay together, I just think the convenience in the moment and the convenience of... basically you're saying this is more convenient and that's worth more than necessarily honoring my convictions.

**Annie:** Right.

- JJ:** We had a great episode with Chad and Tory Masters on this. Say you traveled a lot, you're engaged in dating, and over the year-
- Annie:** Or if it's long distance.
- JJ:** Yeah, long distance.
- Kait:** Oh, yeah.
- JJ:** And say you summarize that 12 months of dating and engagement, and by sleeping in the same room in the same bed, you saved \$6,000. And I asked you point blank, Annie, what is more important? Honoring God or... Or let me put it this way. Hey, Annie, for \$6,000, would you just go ahead and dishonor God?
- Annie:** Ah, that's a terrible way. That's awful.
- JJ:** We can edit it out.
- Annie:** No, no, no.
- JJ:** You know, but if I were to ask you like, yeah, how much money would it take for you to, even just in this conversation, just diss God real quick? Can you tie a financial number to honoring God? And the Bible is very clear, you know, do not give the appearance of evil or sin. Think about the hotel manager. He's seen you check, staying the same room. And even that person alone, what impression are you getting off? And the Bible is very clear. Don't give of-
- Kait:** My family thought we were weird. Because JJ comes home for the holidays and he's like on this tiny air mattress in the hallway in the small home. And they're like, "Why are you making him sleep out there?" I'm like, "Because we're not married." And they're like, "This is weird. You're adults." And had the same thing from another family member and I'm like, "I know it seems weird to you. But this is-
- Annie:** What y'all have decided.
- Kait:** This is what I choose. Again, back to your decision is a value that's based in confidence and conviction. If it's not, you will quickly people-please, right?
- Annie:** Yeah.
- Kait:** And be like, "Oh, yeah. Okay, sure. Yeah, that's fine."

**Annie:** I'll tell you, something that helped me so much with one of the.... there's a couple of people I confess to about my life. And I went to one of them and I said, "I want you to tell me when you think I should confess to you about sex and I'll tell you when I think I should, and let's see if we align."

**Kait:** Wow.

**Annie:** Because that mattered a lot to me to go like, I need to not feel like every single thing I'm going to have to tell you. But I need to know where your expect... What would you say it stops honoring guide? And let me tell you what I would say stops honoring. So having that conversation with a mentor helped me a lot to go, Oh, well, I didn't think about that. Oh, you're right." Because then the mentor is able to say back to me, "The reason you think that would be okay is this and I think that would be..." You know, so it was a conversation. It wasn't a line in the sand. And I think that was really helpful for me.

**JJ:** Mutually agreed upon of both parties.

**Annie:** Someone that is helping me steward my life so that I am who I want to be.

**JJ:** Absolutely.

**Annie:** It is not a gatekeeper or someone who's my policeman. It is someone who's helping me steward my life the way I want to.

**JJ:** Absolutely.

**Kait:** One very, very quick thing is when we set boundaries, for example, we often look at boundaries... And actually Chad Master said this on our podcast, so I got to quote him. We look at them sometimes as being in a prison cell. We look at them and I'm like, "I'm setting these and I'm in this prison cell and I'd rather be out there with a green blouse. I'd rather be out there for free." But if we can flip that script to-

**Annie:** Dude, that's right.

**Kait:** Because boundaries are not keeping you in a prison cell. Boundaries are there to protect you. So if you're constantly seeing your boundaries as a prison cell, you're gonna resent them-

**Annie:** You're on the wrong side.

**Kait:** You're probably gonna cross them.



**Annie:** Actually, the boundaries are what keep us from going in-

**Kait:** In the green grass.

**Kait:** Exactly. Exactly.

**Annie:** In the green grass. That's why I had that conversation with my mentor, I was like, I need to know that I'm staying in the grass. I need to know that you think I'm staying in the grass. I need to stay in the grass.

**JJ:** I love that.

**Annie:** Man, that leads to such a good next thing. Because I have to tell y'all when I put the question box up, and I said, "Tell me about sex and dating," we had so many questions about masturbation. And I thought, "Wait, we're not gonna talk about that because this is..." But that is the question. I mean, the only question that got repeated verbatim probably 25 to 50 times was "is masturbation a sin?" So let's talk about masturbation and pornography for a minute for men and for women.

I mean, I think we talked about a little bit if you have an orgasm and you're not in marriage, that might be problematic. You're serving yourself not someone else.

**JJ:** It's a great litmus test. But you know, here's the reality. We've been doing a ton of studies.

**Kait:** Do you want me to read the stat?

**JJ:** Yeah. I would do. Start there.

**Kait:** The masturbation stat is actually really staggering. But 95% of men and 89% of women masturbate regularly around once per week. Now, that's not necessarily a Christian study-

**Annie:** And that's single people or all people.

**JJ:** All people.

**Kait:** Anybody. Anybody.

**JJ:** Which is even more interesting.

**Annie:** Wow, wow, that's very interesting. Right.

**Kait:** Exactly.

**JJ:** Because it also shows you-

**Kait:** 40% of men and 22% of women masturbate daily. So when you think about these stats, especially the first 95% of men, 89% of women, first of all, the reality for that with masturbation is that it's really high for women, especially-

**Annie:** For everybody

**Kait:** For everybody.

**JJ:** It's gender-neutral.

**Kait:** Well, we talked about when we did an episode on this is that often I think the stereotype is that oh, men struggle with that, because porn and... First of all, we tie masturbation and porn very closely together, which isn't necessarily right. It can be without porn, you know. So it's masturbation, porn, and then sometimes they're together, right? But we often see masturbation and then pornography, both of those things as a male more dominated issue than a woman thing.

**Annie:** I'm not telling you this was women asking us. I am sure of it.

**JJ:** Right. Yeah.

**Kait:** This is 89% of women. My story goes that I didn't even know about this really until I was in my 20s and then I started struggling with it. But I had no idea other women struggled with it.

**Annie:** So you're calling it a struggle. So did you know it was bad? Is "bad" the right word

**JJ:** Well, that's a great question.

**Kait:** Good. Yeah, yeah, thank you for saying that.

**JJ:** Because well, here's the thing. You know, it's that lens, it's back to the heart and it's back to how far. The question itself, is it a sin, I think the intention might be great, but the question that we need to ask is this. Does masturbation glorify God? Does masturbation advance my relationship with God? And once we change it to that, it kind of changes the physiological aspect and the practical reality of it and it completely makes it a matter of our heart. And really anything that, you know, we struggle with, quote, "struggle with," we should ask, does this advance my relationship with God or not? Does this glorify God or not? Because if we want to

get into theological discussion of is masturbation of sin, we can have that in a vacuum and you can kind of say, well, the Bible isn't clear. There's no real scripture on it.

**Kait:** The word masturbation is not mentioned at all.

**JJ:** It's not in the Bible.

**Kait:** Which is why it's very gray.

**JJ:** Does that mean it's not a sin? No. I mean, dating itself is not mentioned in the Bible. So the question for anything within our life that is not specifically mentioned in the Bible and we don't have clear guidance has to be addressed with one question: does this glorify God or not?

**Kait:** Because dating itself in some capacities could also not glorify God?

**Annie:** Yeah, that's right?

**JJ:** The way it's done.

**Kait:** It comes back to the intentions. There's two, but now I add a third side to masturbation because we did a post and I was shocked by so many comments-

**Annie:** Oh, I saw.

**Kait:** I was like, "Oh, okay."

**JJ:** It's not what you would think. It was the adverse reaction. How dare you shame us about our sexual nature? And we're like, "Wait a second? What?"

**Kait:** So there's three sides. The one side is like masturbation is not possible to not lust and masturbate. Because the Bible is clear on not lusting. It's not clear on masturbation, it's never said. So a) you can't masturbate and not lust impossible. It is a sin. It's self-glorifying. That's side number one.

Side two is, you know, it could be done in theory without lusting. And it could, in theory, be used to glorify God without lusting. Is that really possible? That is the secondary question where, you know, we could get into it that I actually personally tried to do that. And I was like, it was not a win for me. It didn't feel-

**Annie:** "It's not a win."

**JJ:** We're being clear about language.

**Annie:** It was not a win.

**Kait:** It was not a win for me.

**JJ:** It did not go-

**Kait:** I didn't feel closer to God. I didn't feel a connection with God. And this is after I've done a lot of journey, a lot of healing on my sexuality, removing shame. So this isn't a place of like, okay, I feel good. Look, is this possible to glorify God, you know? Which it feel awkward to say on a podcaster and on two people. But there are people that apparently say they can masturbate without lusting. Okay?

And then there's the third camp of people that are like, Oh, yeah, this is a great thing because God created it and my sexual desires great, and it's a release and actually helps do XYZ things. And so, therefore, yeah, why not? It's great. It's amazing. Which I had no idea really personally how many even Christians stood on that side. When we did this podcast and we talked about it, I thought it was just like side A and B. I didn't realize how many people were on-site C of like, yeah, absolutely, all the time. It's great. I was like, "Really? I didn't know many people.

**JJ:** And I think that's growing in popularity. Absolutely.

**Annie:** I think so too, especially in the Christian context.

**JJ:** Yes. Yes.

**Kait:** So it's a hot-button topic. I would say the biggest... we have to go back to first your sexual desire is a good thing. The fact that you desire anything sexual is a good thing given to you by God. But I think one of my favorite things, and Riley Kehoe said this on our podcast, but I, you know, like... it's a beautiful fire, okay? But before marriage, are we just going to let that fire burn and go everywhere and do all the things? Because then if we do, what does a fire do? Burns everything down.

So you have to contain the fire in some capacity. Which then people are like, "Oh, now you're being legalistic. Are you saying I have to contain my sexual desire?" I'm like, but the opposite of containing a desire of any kind is I just do anything I want because it feels good, right?

**Annie:** Right.

**Kait:** So yeah, God calls us into ways of obedience. Like He does that in a way that doesn't have to be legalism, that is healthy for our spiritual flourishing, right?

**Annie:** Yeah,

**Kait:** I think, when you are thinking about the topic of masturbation First, I would say there's so many people listening that are like, "I feel a lot of shame about this because I feel like it's bad and I don't feel like I can talk about it." First, no, so many other people are exactly where you are. Like, 89% of women, for example, are exactly where you are and 95% of men.

**Annie:** Right.

**Kait:** You are not in a vacuum. And I thought I was one of the only ones so I didn't tell a soul for years until I finally opened up to a friend and she was like, "Me too." So you're not alone. But then I would just say you got to ask yourself, what JJ said, like, is this truly bringing me closer to God? And I think there's a small majority, in my opinion, if I'm being honest, there's a small majority where this could actually be something that glorifies God.

**JJ:** What percentage would you say is small majority?

**Kait:** I don't know if I can give a percentage.

**Annie:** Small is the key word.

**Kait:** It's so small.

**Annie:** Will you give the stats we were talking about earlier about pornography?

**JJ:** Yeah. So you know, we've been doing a lot and 89% of men had admitted in the US specifically, the U.S. is one of the most frequent users of pornography in the whole entire world. It's about 89% of men have admitted to using pornography in the past month, and it's about 61% of females. I thought a good caveat was one in five youth pastors struggle with it and one in six executive and senior pastors struggle with pornography. I saw an anecdote the other day. It was about a hotel chain saying, Do you know when we see the most spikes in adult-ordered content in our rooms?

**Annie:** Oh, I don't want to hear this. Oooh.

**JJ:** It's when we have Christian conferences.

**Annie:** Christian conferences.

**Kait:** Bless their hearts.

**JJ:** So again, you know, what we talked about was the use is prolific. 88% of pornography is accessed from your smartphone. 88%.

**Annie:** It is coming toward us. When I was young that was not the case.

**JJ:** It was hard to find. It has just never been harder in that capacity of it is at your fingertips whenever you want it. It's never been more free, more accessible. So it is by every means ramp it and it's not just digital. I think one thing that we've seen is the justification and the kind of discreet use of even written pornography.

That's one of the most best-kept secrets amongst women is the fictional romantic novels where there's absolutely emotional, spiritual, and physical pornography. And that's where you have to kind of define, well, what is pornography? Is it person-to-person, you know, with AI and digital created? And is it physical to object? You really have to define as anything I'm tying and sharing my sexual nature to, especially I think that orgasm is kind of like this cementing of it. But it still includes the and why Jesus talks if you've committed adultery in your heart when you lust. And even there's not a physical action attached.

**Kait:** And when we actually break it down and define lust, lust is like fantasizing or lingering about another person or a situation for a long time. You know, you're fantasizing.

**JJ:** It's like second.

**Kait:** And then I'm thinking about it. I'm lingering. Noticing that somebody is attractive is not the same thing as lusting. So when we talk even like you're mentioning, like novels and different things like that, you know, can you really read a sexual thing in a book and not linger on that sexual engagement? Can you not linger? I don't know. I certainly cannot because I have read books with sexual scenes.

For me, it's very, very rare to be able to not lust aka linger on sexual fantasy while reading something. I mean, I think that's where especially women get tied into this equation with pornography, the 61% is that for women they're coming up with more, more creative ways to reach women and I think through novels, through different ways of storytelling. The show *Outlander*, sorry, I've watched it. I mean, there's lots of things where it's like, "Hey, this is for women, you know, and we're gonna reach them in a way that's a little different than men."

**JJ:** Just a different package.

**Annie:** All right, y'all, thank you. For starters, you have so many more thoughts, you have so many episodes, and it's all on Heart of Dating. So any topic that we want to deep dive into. But will you just finish us here? What do we do now? What's the next conversation? So we've listened to this, we send it to our friends and we listen and we agree, and we don't agree, we have big feelings and we have little feelings. What do we do next?

**JJ:** Yeah, you know, we just had Josh Broome on Heart of Dating, and he has been on all the Christian podcasts. And the one thing that he does so well is when he talks about his former past and he was a top-five male porn star in the industry, filmed over a thousand videos in pornography. The degree to which you're transparent about where you are and what you struggle with and what you've done is the degree to which you are opening yourself up for healing and redemption and growth.

So I would say, if you're gonna go work up the courage and in please work up the courage because it takes courage. Vulnerability, especially... I mean, I'm talking to the men. I would say, for men, we have to fight even harder to have that vulnerability because it is not normal. Have courage. Don't hold back punches. I mean, go there and be super detailed. Because the degree to which you're vulnerable is the degree that God will heal. You confess to God for covering and repentance, you confess to your brothers for healing and growth.

**Annie:** That's right. That's what it says in James. Yeah, that's exactly right.

**JJ:** Exactly. So I would just say, you know, if you have that feeling in your chest, that urge, that good urge, you know, don't hold punches. Be courageous and be serious. Don't let it be one conversation. Set up a system that won't allow you to fail, that won't allow you to be in the same position you were six months ago, a year ago. Enable a system that's gonna check out, that won't be-

**Annie:** Whatever shame you feel for what you have done, or what you haven't done, tell somebody.

**JJ:** Absolutely.

**Kait:** Somebody who is safe to you. And I would say one other thing because that was so good, get curious and have curiosity. If you send this podcast to a friend and they're like, "I don't believe in this thought and the other," and you're like, "Well, I believe in this thought and the other," you know, have curiosity. I think this conversation can end up being very divisive. And people have a lot of feelings, again, because it's so personal, it feels so personal and the enemy has used it to deeply shame us.

And then people have healed from this sometimes then can feel a lot of ways and certain ways.

So just get curious about somebody else who maybe has a different experience, a different opinion, ask questions. I think there's so much we can do in healing and community if we're just open to how, you know, the other person thinks, feels, what their story is like.

**Annie:** We hope this is just the start. For our friends listening, we hope this is the start of a conversation.

**JJ:** I hope so.

**Annie:** Not the end of a conversation.

**Kait:** Exactly.

**Annie:** Get with some of your people, get with your mentors and really talk through, here is my story, how does that inform where my story goes? I think that will be really helpful. Thank y'all. That was an hour of hard work that both of you just did.

**JJ:** Thank you. I mean, your team did an amazing job fielding those questions and categorizing.

**Annie:** I know.

**JJ:** This is like a team thing and we happen to have a microphone. But you have a wonderful team and they've done an amazing job. And none of this is an accident. So...

**Annie:** Yeah, that's right. Well, thank you all for doing this.

**JJ:** Absolutely.

**Outro:** Okay, you guys, aren't that great? I'm so grateful. Here's what I'm grateful mostly for. I'm grateful that they gave us a lot of thoughts and expressed a lot of wisdom that we can now take, digest with our friends and community and figure out how we want to live based on that combo. What we've learned today, what we believe scripture says, what our friends and family and community believe with us, that is what we get to do now. So as I said at the beginning, I hope this is just the start of a conversation about what it looks like for you, yes, I'm talking about you, to have a healthy life as a sexual person, whether you are single, dating, engaged, or married.



Make sure you follow Kait and JJ and check out their Heart of Dating Podcast. I'm telling you it has been so helpful for me. It is why I begged them to fly to Nashville for us to do this episode. And I'm so thankful that they did. Plus, if you would like a full list of all the resources from all of our Summer Lovin' experts, go to [Anniefdowns.com/dating](http://Anniefdowns.com/dating).

And again, if you have follow-up questions after listening to this episode or this series, drop them in the link in the show notes. And we'll be doing at least one Q&A episode in the fall. Also, I just want to say thanks for trusting us with today's conversation. Thank you all for making it this far and for being in this conversation with us. I hope it is not the last. In fact, I do not think it will be the last. It is something we get to talk about. As healthy people, we get to talk about the fullness of who we are and that includes this. So personally for me, thank you for trusting me to host a conversation about sex in your life. It matters a lot to me today.

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 tonight. We are home. It's a hometown show here in Franklin, Tennessee. We are very close to selling out, if we haven't by the time you heard this. So if you can drive to us and you want to, you need to get a ticket like right now at the [hereforyoutour.com](http://hereforyoutour.com).

Tomorrow we're in Chicago. I can't wait. So many of my friends are gonna be there. And then on to Florence, Kentucky. What a great weekend! We are having an actual blast. As you know, you're seeing it on my socials, you're seeing it on Carlos's socials, you're seeing it on African New Life, you're seeing it on... all of our friends. We're having a ball. So y'all come see us. Every show is different and it is not too late to grab a ticket. Just head to [hereforyoutour.com](http://hereforyoutour.com).

And listen next weekend, we're finishing the show in Texas, in Dallas, and in Austin. So if you're still sorting out what you want to do, be the person who buys a last-minute flight to Austin, Texas. Don't miss that last show. Just come and be at that last show with us. It'll be so fun. And Tacos, right?

All right, I think that's it for me today, friends. We have talked enough. Everybody take a deep breath, hope you are feeling loved and cared for and seen. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. I'm going to do the same. Today that sounds fun to me. I think I'm gonna go on a walk at Radnor Lake since we're home today. I think I would really enjoy that. Before we get ready for the show tonight in Franklin, I'm just going to pop up to Radnor Lake. Y'all have a great day.

We have got a super special episode for you tomorrow in honor of Father's Day. I've got my friends Charles Kelly and Cassie Kelly. You know Charles from Lady A, one of the biggest country groups in the world. Charles, as you may know, has recently been really public about his journey of sobriety. And this Father's Day weekend will be really special for them. And it is just such a moving conversation to hear them both process how Charles' sobriety has changed their family, their faith, their parenting and has us all looking toward Sunday as Father's Day for him in a new way.

So I think it's going to be a really special conversation for all of us who have friends in recovery, who have friends in addiction, people that we love that are walking through that. So I hope you will join us tomorrow and share tomorrow's episode as we continue to spend our summer, giving hope to people who feel like they have lost hope. And we are doing that tomorrow, not in a Summer Lovin' way, but in a really special way. So we will have a special Father's Day episode for you tomorrow. And then we are back on Monday.

We've got our friend Craig Allen Cooper joining us as well as Mike and Lillian. Y'all know Lillian. And we are talking about the five love languages in dating. So Summer Lovin' continues on Monday after our special episode tomorrow about Father's Day. So we will see you back here tomorrow. Y'all have a great day. You are very loved.