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Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm really happy to be here with you today. Here in the month of July, we've been calling it the TSF Hall of Fun series, in which we're bringing back some of our very favorite episodes over the years for you to enjoy and listen to. And man, I love hearing that y'all are loving them too.

Some of you have been around since day one of the podcasts, so you remember when these episodes first happened. And maybe they're some of your favorites too. But there are lots of you who are new around here, and so we thought this one would be such a fun time to share some of the best episodes you may not have heard yet.

Also, you guys, are you going through the Gospels with us over on Let's Read the Gospels? Tuesday, we start a new month of reading the Gospels together and we are going through The Message. We got to do this version back in April, and we really loved it, y'all really loved it. But this time, we'll read the four Gospels in a different order. So we'll read about three chapters a day, get through all four books in 30 days.

Maybe August is your opportunity to start a new rhythm by starting your days and the Gospels. Fifteen minutes a day may be just the daily deep breath that you need. And if you're like me, it helps to keep me on track knowing somebody else is doing it. So for starters, you know there are thousands of us doing it together. But you can also invite your friends to join us.

Share the Let's Read the Gospels, Instagram post with them or shoot them a text or an email. Who else in your life might enjoy going through the Gospels with you in August? I cannot wait to start this new round with y'all.

Intro: So today on the Hall of Fun episode, you get to hear my conversation from Episode 216 with my friend Jo Saxton. She's one of your favorites and mine. And this one takes us right back to 2020 as I recorded this episode in my guest bedroom in my house while we were all staying at home during the pandemic. Gosh, can you believe that season of our lives, you guys?

Jo and I definitely talked about what it was like to deal with all the changes and pivots that year. She had a new book at the time called *Ready to Rise*, and we talked a lot about it. It is so good, you guys. If you have not read it, this is a good one for you to pick up for your summer reading. Jo is so full of wisdom. She makes me laugh. She always speaks truth over us. I just love friends like that.

So here's my TSF Hall of Fun conversation from April 23, 2020, with Jo Saxton.

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Annie: Are you just doing like a billion interviews right now, like book launch?

Jo: Yeah. I mean, it's surreal launching a book in a whole new landscape. That's what we're doing right now.

Annie: Okay. Do you remember last year you really spoke a word over my life that it was time to do some pivot for me professionally and ended up being personally as well? It was a real word from God through you.

Jo: Oh, wow.

Annie: We use the word all the time. It's one of our key words at the office-

Jo: Oh my gosh.

Annie: ...because it was so on point for what God's saying to us. But tell me, what does it look like? You're having to pivot right now in the middle of a pandemic, and you're launching a book. How do you do that?

Jo: I mean, I think there have been multiple things. I've, one, given myself permission to feel all the feelings that it takes. I think there was one day when I was with my team, and I just wept. And I said, "I'm weeping for the losses and the losses of how I thought things were going to be." I guess there are big things and small things. We had a tour plan, there were events planned. And I'm an extrovert like you, so like being people and I love to cha... I mean, I love all the things I get to do but I love the chance to talk to someone eye to eye. And I said, "I'm grieving that loss.

And then there's the other losses. One of my trips was to England, which means I'd see my family. My family was in isolation. Do you know what I mean?

Annie: Yeah.

Jo: And then I have a niece in Hong Kong. So there's this kind of this well, this groundswell, and this welling up of just the grief of the losses, even whilst knowing that my... And I'm not doing the 'your loss is better than that loss'. But at the same time, having perspective that there are still so many things that are wonderful.

Annie: Man, that is such a challenge that we've all been doing for weeks of giving ourselves permission that the things that suck, really suck and are really sad. Nobody in my life is worst-case scenario today.

Jo: Yes, totally. And I think there has been that sense for me that I've... There's that bit in the Bible, it talks about God storing our tears in a bottle and being aware of those most vulnerable parts of our life. So I'm like, Okay, this matters to you. But I am still going to recognize my kids are home and they've got Chromebooks where they're doing online school, which takes them approximately 35 minutes to do a day. But I'm also keenly aware...

Annie: What are teachers doing all day?

Jo: I want to know.

Annie: No, no, they're doing a lot.

Jo: And I'm feeling for these teachers who are sending out emails.

Annie: I know.

Jo: I'm like, "God bless you. Your spring break was a joke."

Annie: I know.

Jo: I'm like, God bless you for this. You are not paid enough. You never were. And now I'm advocating. But at the same time, I'm keenly aware that that's in our part of the city, that's in our district. Even in the place where I grew up, that would not have been a viable option. So some of the lament is, oh my gosh, it's terrible. And this is terrible for everybody in so many agonizing ways.

So I think one of the things in terms of launching the book has been feel your feelings and accept your realities, but also I think like you, explore the thing of, what does it look like to launch things, anything, whether it's job... Because you and I know in the sphere in which we're in, the books correlate often with events. So those are gone. And it's like, Okay, what does it look like to embrace this change and operate in the light of a world that no longer exists? So you're navigating a new way and navigating new ways of doing things and new ways of feeling.

I think, to be honest, all of us have had crisis points where we've had to do something differently. So I've drawn courage from that, that there are times in our lives when you have to do something differently. And I've kind of looked back at

the people I've respected who've had to do things differently. There are parts of the Bible that have really drawn... There were two things that stood out to me.

One was in Jim Collins book, *Good to Great*, the one that was on every church shelf for many years. He talks about the Stockdale paradox and this guy, James Stockdale, who was a prisoner of war. He was invented in Vietnam. And he talks about how he had this paradoxical view. One, a brutal, honest look at the circumstances and then hope that something good could come from this.

James Stockdale's perspective was he said, it was the optimist who died first. He goes because they died of a broken heart. They'd be like, "We're here till Christmas. We're here till Thanksgiving. We'll be home by Easter. And it was that kind of, yeah, you're gonna get through this without any reality. Whereas he was like, "This is terrible, this is devastating, and this is hard."

I think that helped me kind of say, "You know what? This is tough and this is difficult. This is not what I planned or my team. These are not the things I prayed into. This is not the world I prepared for." However, now, what does it look like to see what else could happen?" And we'll go where the grace is and we'll go where the opportunity is. And you were beginning to think in different ways anyway. So it's faster than I thought. Not quite on the timescale that I was planning, but we're here. And for as long as we're here, then there's something to work with.

Annie: I glean so much hope from what you're saying, because in the same way that I've gotten a lot of hope from people giving me permission of no 'one's ever done this before', so be gracious with your feelings, be gracious with your decisions, be gracious with your people because now there is no... you know, 1397 is the last time there was a plague like this, so we don't know what to do. But at the same time I hear so much hope in you saying, like, No, everyone has done something in a situation that you didn't know how to do.

Jo: Absolutely. I mean, the breakup that you thought was going to end in marriage. I mean, you have plans for that person and that relationship And you had conversations even and your families had gotten ease with one another, and then it's over. Or the career plan that you hope to have, and then you didn't get the grade or the house you'd hoped to buy and you imagine that your family or the family you thought you'd have and then the doctor diagnoses you and says, "Look, actually biological children might not be in your future." You know, the job promotion, all of these things. And yeah, they're small things, but they're still genuine losses, which rearranged our landscape.

Annie: I mean, how do you reconcile the prayers you and your team and your publisher all prayed and believed about the timing of when this is all supposed to happen and what's actually happening?

Jo: I think I've reconciled it, but probably because life happens to us all. Life happens to us all and I'm loved as much as anybody else. So therefore, why do I get a, "Hey, Jo, you're one of my favorites. So I'm gonna make this especially easy for you." I think there's part of that. And there is a sense of it's not over yet.

I think we haven't got the long view. It's still here. It's in a position where... and there are certain things within the book where I'm like, Huh, so maybe I wouldn't have talked about that chapter as much. But oh, now this one is actually really relevant. There are certain things about it where I'm like, wow, I'm really thankful I told that story, or wow, I didn't expect that to be relevant now.

And it may take longer, it may be different, but that's okay. That's okay. It's like, okay, I want to do... John 5:19 is Jesus talking about doing what He sees the Father doing. And I'm like, I thought I know what you were doing. I thought you were doing what we would do. I thought you were doing what we were doing. I thought we were all in this, but now there's some mystery here. It may cost me in ways that...

As with many people around the world professionally, things have cost them financially and there's a vulnerability there. It may cost them time and energy and sleepless nights but I do believe in redemption as well. Redemption doesn't have to look like a comeback. Do you know what I mean? It doesn't have to look like a comeback. It looks like redemption.

That's what I'm looking towards and pursuing. I'm saying, Okay, well, let's deconstruct... I mean, being the Gen X woman that I am, there is something about me which does find distinct appeal and deconstruction as well.

Annie: Yeah, sure. Don't we all? Don't we all?

Jo: Absolutely. Like, hey, this baby and Father, let's see what emerges.

Annie: That's right. That's right. And I think partly from just my faith background, my church journey over the years and stuff, have felt as I looked at the landscape, this wasn't sustainable for all. So if we can see a world emerge, which is more equitable, which acknowledges what people do in a different way, then, that's not a terrible thing either.

Annie: One of my favorite parts of the resurrection story is when Jesus is talking to Mary, and she thinks he's the gardener. And she says, What have you done with his body? Just tell me where they've taken it. Because it's just such a good reminder to me that resurrection doesn't look like life.

Jo: So good.

Annie: He didn't look like Jesus to her.

Jo: So good.

Annie: So when God restores and redeems and resurrects, it doesn't mean you're gonna get the thing you had before the death.

Jo: Absolutely. Absolutely. I love that.

Annie: How does that play into... Because I mean, you know, you've been on the show a couple of times, we love having you here.

Jo: Oh, thank you.

Annie: You preach your guts out when you're with us.

Jo: Thank you.

Annie: And that's what it's like to be friends with you. I mean, to be friends with you is to be friends with someone who can always bring the right word at the right time. But this is also a death season.

Jo: It definitely is. It's a death to dreams, it's a death, like you say, to expectations, it's a death to resources, and all of that. But you know, the thing I have seen... And I think again, to many of your listeners, and I know for your story, death is not the end. It precedes new life.

There's been a stripping away. What I've been pleased to see as I've been wrestling with this... And there has been tears and there has been kind of frustration in that. And in the wrestling, it's like, okay, let me come back to basics again. Let me come back to the basics of my faith and the basics of this moment with God.

I know you've been hanging out in Matthew 4. I've been hanging out in Matthew. I was struck by Matthew 14 and just this kind of whiplash of a journey it is. It begins with Jesus learning that John the Baptist has been murdered, His cousin and Him

pulling away and then people wanting to spend time with him and the demands of the crowd pulling Him and feeding 5,000 people, walking on water.

And I was struck by one of the demands of just how demanding it is and how much capacity you need in these demands. And it's like in these demanding moments that we face, there is a time to dig deep and to draw on our deepest resources, draw on the faithfulness of God, even when we've not known it or felt or not understood it and haven't been able to articulate it and draw on the good people in your life.

Looking at it, I was reminded of the part where he feeds the 5,000 families, and the disciples were like, Send them home, send them to villages because that will help them out. And it was sensible. The sensible thing was to send these thousands of people home. And Jesus is like, No, you feed them. And they're like, we ain't got nothing to give them. And he's like, No, but that's enough.

And it made me think actually, in these moments, these vulnerable feelings that we have, these vulnerable offerings can go a long way. You know, whether it's the phone call to a neighbor, whether it's the text message to somebody you've not checked in on for a while to say, Hey, are you okay? Can I drop something off? Is there anything I can do for you at this time?"

And I thought, actually, that's important right now. That's important right now. How can I serve my neighborhood? How can I serve my street, my kids, my kids' friends, their families at this time? That's primary in this moment.

Then the other one that struck me at the end of it is when Jesus and Peter are having that conversation in the storm. John's account is like... they've been rowing for three or four miles in this storm. So they are at the end of themselves, just completely spent. And Jesus comes in the middle of the night and Peter is like, if this is you, tell me to come, which I think is a real ridiculous thing in the first place.

Annie: Right, Right, right, right, right.

Jo: I'm like, What is this, Peter?

Annie: That's not what I would've said to Jesus.

Jo: I would've screamed and just been like, That's all you need to hear—my screaming. I'm touched by Jesus meeting them in the storm of their life and thinking there is a moment even in this turmoil that we're all experiencing. Like in your case, I remember the text before was just, There had been a tornado. Do you know what I mean? We haven't even had time to process that before something else is happening.

Annie: Right, right.

Jo: You know what I mean? It's just like the storms are just whipping everybody, the storms of our lives, of our emotions, our relationships. And Jesus being in the storm. And I thought, Okay, I can take note of this. You are hear in the story. And then Peter getting out of the boat and not walking on his bravery, but walking on the word that Jesus gave him. And it's a ridiculous word telling him to come.

So I'm like, oh, I'm gonna walk on the word right now. What's the word to my life in this moment? And I'll do that. And my word right now is to serve whoever needs being served. That's it. That's it. He'll take care of the rest.

Annie: I mean, that is living up to the title, *Ready to Rise*, of going like, I'm gonna rise right where I am.

Jo: Yeah, absolutely.

Annie: I mean, that's what it says. Gather your community, step into your influence, own your voice. I'm like, Jo, you had no idea that the actual invitation was gonna be for the people that you can see out your front door.

Jo: Absolutely. It's like, are you gonna write the book or are you gonna live the book?

Annie: Oh, brutal.

Jo: It's that thing, isn't it? I mean, I don't know if this is your story, although I suspect it might be. But those titles that you come up with suddenly come back at you.

Annie: Oh, yeah.

Jo: There's a moment, okay, I can't change these circumstances and this is not how I planned, but is God still faithful, is there still something people need to hear in this moment? When I was first thinking of this book, it was a kind of joyful, like, Yay, let's go! Ready to rise! Let's go! Woo, woo, woo. Kind of my ambitions to be a cheerleader still coming out in the wheel of ways.

And now it's more like, okay, people, this is tough, this is really hard and it's painful and it's costly, but it's time to get ready to rise. It's time to get ready to rise on behalf of the vulnerable in your community. It's time to get ready to rise on the lonely neighbor. It's time to get ready to rise... And you have nothing left. You have nothing left. But He will get you... But we need your voices in this moment.

Because who else is gonna be the hope bringer? Who else is gonna be the helper? Mr. Rogers used to talk about, who else is gonna be that person?

You may feel you've got nothing to give, but actually if your generosity feels like five loaves and two fish because you've dropped off some food for somebody who needs it, it goes a long way, it still goes a long way. It's still a powerful thing. So yeah, it's weird because in some ways the title has come back round to me in a different way now and a good way.

Annie: In a good way. I mean, when all this passes away, will I still be that woman kind of way?

Jo: Yeah. Whilst none of us invite these kinds of challenges, I think these times where we don't get what we hoped for and we don't get life the way we intended are very revealing of who we are. They're very revealing of the idols that we hold, that we called ideals. They're very revealing of the good stuff and the strength in our character as well. They're very illuminating about what really matters to you.

Annie: And who really matters to you.

Jo: And who really matters to you.

Annie: Who are you making time to FaceTime and who are you, you know?

Jo: Oh my gosh. Yeah.

Annie: Not just sit in the group of dinner that you're used to, the six people that always eat together.

Jo: Totally. It's just been one of these moments. and I think it is one of these time standing-still moments for us as people, as human beings, as men and women, as those of us who would call ourselves Christians. It's a time standing still moment where we're like, Okay, so who are we now and what will we do with you?

Annie: For the audience's sake, because this story seems to change at such a fast clip, I do want to tell we're recording this the week before Holy Week. This is coming out right after Easter. But Jo, from what you're seeing so far, can you give us... We've had a couple of friends on like Ellie Holcomb, Charles Martin, who are kind of giving us the like Christians pastor eye view of what's going on in the world around us.

Can you give us the prophet eye view? Looking down on the globe, what are you experiencing in your quiet times? What are you hearing God say? What do you

know about what's going on on the planet right now and what we need from it? That's such a big question, but I feel like you always have those answers.

Jo: Oh, you're so amazing. You're so kind. What I'm aware of, the maps that we used to use won't work anymore. The GPS won't matter anymore. The maps don't work and the landscape is completely different now. We have a choice and a chance in this moment. It's understandable to grieve. Like we said before, completely legit to grieve, absolutely necessary to grieve the losses. Because it's not like everything we've lost is terrible. Some things are beautiful and wonderful and good.

But for us in this moment, will we be nostalgic or will we be prophetic in this moment? Will we look back on what was comfortable and easy? We can't meet as church in the way that we used to. We can't meet as friends in the way that we used to and we don't know how long for and how long. But what will we be when this is over?

I was reflecting like, when this is all over, who do we want to be? Who will we choose to be when this is all over? If that gets to a point where it's like you're free to open the door, will we remember the fault lines of inequality that have been revealed by this time? You know what I mean? Will we remember that?

Annie: Tell me more about that. What kind of inequality are you seeing?

Jo: Like I was saying with my kids in school, I was thinking, you know what, we are blessed in our district. We are blessed. And I'm so grateful for such thoughtful, kind, gracious people. But not every teacher has those resources. And there are teachers around the country who would love to give their kids all these things, who are going beyond the call of duty, beyond the call of their capacity to serve. Will we advocate for their resourcing in some way?

When we think about the food that we are getting and we go and get fresh fruit, will we think of those who have picked it while we've been locked in our homes? Do you know what I mean? Or will we, later on, say, these are people stealing our jobs?

Annie: Right. Wow.

Jo: When this is over, will we care? It's so good to get outside right now. Will we care about the planet when we get out again? Do you know what I mean?

Annie: Yeah.

- Jo:** I'm not getting you to hug a tree, but maybe pat it on the back or something. It's been a while.
- Annie:** Right. I mean, just a difference you're seeing. Did you see that picture? Someone put out a picture today of the skyline of LA in December and the skyline of LA today and how you can see all the buildings. Are we gonna care about this still and appreciate this and make changes? Or how much of us will jump back into, okay, now that we can go, let's go? I mean, I think about that in our personal lives too.
- Jo:** Yeah, absolutely.
- Annie:** I haven't had an evening activity in 18 days. I've been in my bed in the tents for 18 days.
- Jo:** Goly.
- Annie:** What will I go back to after this? Because some of this has been really life-giving.
- Jo:** It's a weird feeling, isn't it? The conflicting kind of like, this is terrible and yet I'm seeing some things in me and around my life that I've forgotten and I missed.
- Annie:** Yes. Yes. We didn't know, I didn't know how much I thrived in slowness. And I'm seeing that when the world releases us, when the government releases us to go back to being... I don't think we'll actually go back. I think this is a new normal, like after 9/11.
- Jo:** I agree.
- Annie:** But when we go to the new normal where we are allowed to leave our houses, our homes, who will I be?
- Jo:** Will we rush again? I noticed myself in the first couple of days of the stay-at-home orders and stuff rushing. And I'm like, where am I rushing to? I ain't going nowhere. What's the hurry though?
- Annie:** That's right.
- Jo:** You're not going anywhere. And I thought, the hurry is within me. The drivenness is within me in this moment for all kinds of reasons. The drivenness is within me, and this is an opportunity to stop. Will I embrace that? And this is an enforced opportunity to stop and to care about something different and to not miss the world that's happening before my very eyes, the neighborhood that's happening before my

very eyes because I'm too busy doing what I feel should be done. I mean, the thing is, Annie, when it's over, do we want to go back?

Annie: Today I do, but I don't think I do.

Jo: No.

Annie: My fear, Jo, is that I'm gonna find a new normal where I go, Okay, I was home seven nights a week, my life was this quiet and simple. I'd like half of that. So I start by going, okay, four nights a week, I stay home and have a slower life. And then I go, Oh, but da da. And all of a sudden I'm back to it.

Jo: It's surreal, isn't it?

Annie: That's my fear.

Jo: That's the unnerving part of it. It's because it's so easy. And at the time, certain things were necessary. It's almost like, what's the new normal and what's the new necessary in the future? And I'm not sure what that is. I do think we as family units... when I say family unit, I'm from a family which was not kind of 2.4 kids and nuclear. It's extended. Not even all our people are blood relatives in our family. But so when I say family, when we look at our family units, our community units, what are we gonna choose?

And I think there'll be just questions for us to ask about ourselves. I hope that it will invite us to reflect on that. Now, for some of us, there are other things. There are job losses and there is a loss of loved ones. I mean, the landscape is decimated. So the grief journey will go on long after we finally get to go outdoors on a regular basis. But for those of us for whom that's not part of our story, will we have run off and left them behind, or will we be...? Do you know what I mean? We'll be like, Yeah, back.

Annie: Right. Right. Will the disparaging difference between the rich and the poor be exaggerated because of this? Or will we turn inward and to each other instead? What can we be doing right now, Jo? What does the spiritual disciplines look like right now that get us better prepared for who we want to be on the other side of this?

Jo: I've been thinking a lot about this and I'm thinking there is an invitation for us to practice prayer in a particular way. But I think there's even a posture in that. In terms of will we walk out with a greater dependency on God and a greater...? And when I say that, I don't just mean like, are you praying more? I mean, is there a raw

honesty in your relationship with God? It's almost a quality thing rather than an amount thing.

Will we come out of this thing and I've talked out everything, everything, every sorrow, every grief, every anger, every hope, every dream I talked out. I've wrestled with God on this. That'd be my hope for us.

My hope for us is that there'd be in some I... and I know we are doing the social distancing spatially and physically, but in terms of a practice as a discipline, is there somebody in our life we are doing life with talking this out with? Have we found a place to process pain and disappointment? Have we found a person? And for some of us, that actually may need to be a professional, that may need to be a therapist, a psychologist.

For some of us it may be the smaller disappointments or the daily things that we're processing with friends and loved ones. But is that gonna be part of our spiritual practice? Because I think relationships are spiritual. I think life is spiritual. So I wonder that. I think that's something that we can be thinking of now and practicing now because we need it now. We need each other. We need people now. We need the kinds of conversations where we know that we are known and see somebody else fully as well.

Annie: So talk to me about the changing in prayer and what prayer looks like right now, when we're... Because one of the goals for me in this... we're being told April 30th. As of right now, the beginning of April. We're being told April 30th is how long we'll most likely be in this.

And yesterday I thought to myself, I wonder what it would take for me to be a better prayer at the end of this. What would you say is the new practice of prayer and the new ways that we can grow in our prayer life?

Jo: I mean, in some ways on some of this stuff, it's probably quite old school really, and not new at all. But I think there are... I think it's worth us looking at our days and what does it look like to build a rhythm of prayer individually, but also community-wise?

Annie: Oh, interesting.

Jo: For those of us who maybe adhere to the prayer, and we lean really heavily into the community, what does it look like to do it on our own? For those of us who lean on our own, what does it look like to do community? And to build that muscle.

I would encourage us to see these things as habits as training, rather than things that we achieve in this time. Because training we know is rubbish. Do you know what I mean? You are training for a marathon in all of this stuff. That means it doesn't look good, it's not glamorous, but you are building muscle.

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

Jo: You're building discipline. So I would encourage us to... and it may take a while because every part of our life is a new normal. The time for you is gonna be... it may take a while. It may take a couple of weeks even to work out the best time to pray, but experiment anyway. And then think, what do you want to say to God? What would you say to God if you didn't feel obliged to say the nice things?

Annie: Oh, Jo.

Jo: What would you say?

Annie: Say that.

Jo: Because it's not like He doesn't know. What are the questions you have for God? What does your honesty look like in the presence of God? I think that's worth considering and that's worth... where do you just want to say, God, I'm so tired of this and I'm so lonely and I'm hurting and I'm vulnerable and I'm just really disappointed right now. I'm disappointed in you right now.

You know when we have those friendships, those relationships are forged because we've been through stuff with them?

Annie: Yeah.

Jo: That's what I'm hoping for in our relationship with the Lord. That's what I'm hoping for from this time. That there's something that grows with me and God because We've been through this together.

Annie: Oh, that makes so much... it's almost like in a battle together where y'all beside each other in this battle.

Jo: Yeah. You're beside each other and you've looked each other in the eye and you're like, I don't like this. I don't want to be here. I'm really sad about this. Or I'm really thankful for this and I'm grateful to you for this and I'm humbled by these things. I think that would be good. But I think in our prayer life together with others... Again, that's gonna look different for all of us, what that looks like in our family units. I have two teenage girls and one husband.

Annie: I cannot believe they're both teenagers.

Jo: I know. It's ridiculous, isn't it?

Annie: Wow.

Jo: Ridiculous. We sat down and we kind of do a family devo and they just cried. That was the prayer time because they're like, "I miss my friends. I miss my friends. That's all I've got. I miss my friends." But we had to hold that space, hold their grief, and hold it before the Lord and say, "God, this is not what they hoped for. This was not the dream. They're both athletes and they're both watching all their tournaments canceled and all the travel and all that kind of stuff. And they're just sad. They're just really sad.

And I don't need you to say it, but I believe in Jesus in the end. He doesn't need that from you. Just come as you are. Come as you are. That's what our neat and tidy family prayer time looks like on Sunday. Do you know what I mean?

Annie: Have the girls... have y'all done that for their whole lives? I mean, I would imagine... Or is that just something you started because we were in quarantine?

Jo: You Know what? I realized there are a few habits we started a few months ago that I didn't realize were so good for quarantine, you know? We used to just pray with them at bedtime and that would be our main devotional time. But then they were like, "We don't want you to tuck us into bed. Thanks, bye." So we got kicked out.

So it was probably about six months ago when I'm like, We need a good rhythm. We just need a rhythm. We kind of talk and pray and chat. But we need a rhythm where we sit down, we open the Bible together specifically. It was as their sport kicked in and it just got more and more active and I was traveling. I'm like, This is our time. This is our time. Your friends are welcome any other time, but this is our time.

So now that rhythm's in place so it's just what we do. There's a specific place in the house we sit together in and that's where... I mean, we sit there other times, but we know if we're gonna do a family devo, we all head to that space and say, this is where we sit. Our dog joins us. He's particularly unhelpful during that time.

Annie: I would imagine that's not his finest hour.

Jo: It's really his ugliest hour as an animal. It's just really unfortunate. He just is weird in that moment. But it's become our space where we talk to God, we listen to God,

we read, and laugh. And it's not even long, but it's been one of these rhythms and these check-ins that we do. As the quarantine thing came, it's like, okay, we know where to go. Let's head to those spaces."

Annie: That's really interesting.

Jo: I know.

[00:32:29] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation to share about one of our amazing partners, [Kitsch](#). I know you guys love talking about some good hair products. And they say that haircare is the new skincare. But there's one brand that has taken it to the next level.

Kitsch has created game-changing essentials beauty enthusiasts are swearing by. From satin pillowcases to time-saving towels, Kitsch knows haircare doesn't stop in the shower. I have the heatless curlers and y'all, they actually work. I was so impressed. I just wrapped my hair around the curlers before bed and when I woke up, I had really cute curls that stayed curled.

Plus it was like comfortable to sleep in. It was not a problem at all. These are the originals, you guys, the OG, and the best heatless curlers. Don't sew for the knockoffs when you can get the ones that started the craze. Whatever your budget, your skin type, your hair type, Kitsch has something for you. They are self-funded, female-founded, and now carried in over 20,000 retail locations.

Kitsch's bestsellers include their satin pillowcases, caps, and eye masks, satin that's vegan and cruelty-free, which I think is awesome. And they're so great for your hair and skin while you sleep.

Right now, Kitsch is offering my friends 30% off your entire order at my kitsch.com/thatsoundsfun. That's right, 30% off anything and everything at my kitsch.com/thatsoundsfun. One more time. That's my kitsch.com/thatsoundsfun for 30% off your order.

Sponsor: One more amazing partner I get to tell you about, [Hiya Health](#). This one is for my MiniBFFs. Listen, I want all of us to stay healthy, including my MiniBFFs. But I know getting them to take their vitamins can be a struggle. They're only interested in something that tastes good. And that's where Hiya Health comes in.

Typical children's vitamins contain sugar, unhealthy chemicals, and junk growing kids just don't need. But Hiya Health is pediatrician-approved and a superpowered

chewable vitamin. Hiya is made with zero sugar and zero gummy junk but tastes great. And it's perfect for those picky eaters. It's formulated with the help of nutritional experts and pressed with a blend of 12 organic fruits and veggies, then supercharged with 15 essential vitamins and minerals that help support immunity, energy, brain function, mood, concentration, and more.

Hiya Health Haya is designed for kids of all ages and sent straight to your door so parents have literally one less thing to worry about.

We've worked out a special deal with Hiya for their bestselling children's vitamin. You guys get 50% off your first order. Five-zero, y'all. To claim this deal, you have to go to hiyahealth.com/thatsoundsfun. This deal isn't available on their regular website, it's just for our friends. So you go to hiyahealth.com/thatsoundsfun and get your kids the full body nourishment they need to grow into healthy adults.

Now back to our TSF Hall of Fun conversation with Jo.

[00:35:31] <music>

Annie: So some mama is listening and they just celebrated Easter, and all sat together for church. But maybe it's the first time they've all sat together for church in all of this because it was Easter.

Jo: Yeah, totally.

Annie: What do you keep doing for your family? Or a dad listening. Either one. Or grandmother. Whoever is raising some people. How do you keep a little bit of a rhythm going? And why does it matter? I mean, it seems like... My family didn't do that growing up. So I've never been in a family that did devotionals as a family.

Jo: Me neither. I've realized that rhythms and our habits or whatever we practices, disciplines in life tend to be the things that we live by. I read that book, James Clear's *Atomic Habits*, which was a bestseller. And he said, You don't rise to the level of your goals, you fall to the level of your systems.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Jo: I know, right? And I read it and I'm like, "Jesus, did you have to come with me as I was reading this book, though?" Do you know what I mean?

Annie: Right.

Jo: I feel a little bit got at because, you know... I feel a little bit touched by this. And I look and I think, what are the things... When I look at my life and what I come back to in time, their habits that were formed ages ago. Again, they weren't things I was good at, they were just ones that I did. So I would say to a... keep it simple. Keep it short. Keep it regular.

Annie: Keep it simple. Keep it short. Keep it regular.

Jo: You know, I have my notions of like, me and the children having these five-hour devotions every day. That's never gonna happen. Because my kids are like, seriously, what are you trying to do to me? But these rhythms where we check in, they're used to the language of the checking in. Sometimes even at the table, it's like, what are your highs? What are your lows? Now that's very intentional on my part because I'm like, what are we thankful for? Where are we really at?

So even when we just go highs and lows, basically, what's the mountaintop in your life and what's the valley? It's all word, but it's just finding the language and finding the language that we can do with our friends, that we can do with our colleagues, we can do with our employees. What's the high? What's the low? That is just a regular check-in. But once it's got a common language, people can share it together as well.

Annie: Some of my friends, the Hodges, Kate, and David, they do wows and pows every night at dinner. And when you eat with them, you just do it with them. Like you're not-

Jo: You're in.

Annie: Yeah. Because I'm not one of their daughters. But when I sit at the table with them, they're like, Okay, "Annie, what are your wows and your pows from today?" And everyone cares. They all listen. Even the kids listen. They care even though I'm not there every night.

Jo: It's funny, isn't it, the patterns that you can bring in and you can develop. But they strengthen us. And I think those habits build us for the good times and the bad times.

Annie: Yeah. Yeah. That's right. And it just seems that, especially if you're starting a new faith journey with your family, or if it's you and your roommates, or if it's you by yourself, there's She Reads Truth, there's He Reads Truth, there's all these resources that'll give you just that keeping it simple and short and regular that is such a... Something Pastor Kevin always says is when you're trying to have a quiet time,

have a place and a plan. If you'll have a place you always go and a plan you always do, you'll go.

Jo: Yeah. There's something in it. There's something in it. It's worth it.

Annie: Where do you read in your house? Where do you spend time with the Lord?

Jo: Mine's in my office. I have a red chair that my husband got me on my 40th birthday, and that's my... I have a prayer call that I do with a friend early... We're both early-morning people. Again, we've done that-

Annie: Y'all call every morning?

Jo: We do three mornings a week. We do Monday, Wednesday, Friday, except when I'm traveling.

Annie: Wow.

Jo: We started it about six, seven years ago when there was a different crisis and we just never found a reason to stop. Again, it's half an hour. A lot of that time is just talking about where we're at and what's happening in our families. We've prayed for all kinds of things in that time. But I go to the chair. I go to that chair, and I sit there and that's my reading spot.

Sometimes when I'm out, if I'm walking, there are particular roots that I might walk and things like that as well. But they become the fuel... They're my engine room, you know?

Annie: Yes. That's it. I have a khaki-colored chair with black swirls on it. I bought it in... Oh, I don't know, Jo. I probably bought it in 2005, maybe.

Jo: Nice.

Annie: And the pattern is so old. I mean, you just look at the pattern, you're like, No one would buy that pattern. But I have so many moments connected to that chair. And I can recover it. Of course, I can. And I can use my money that way when I want to. But I know my swirly chair. And I've met God... He has met me as the real truth in that swirly chair for a lot of years. There's just something that in moments like this when the world has turned upside down, my swirly chair is an anchor that God has always been the same.

Jo: Totally. And it may be that for some of us right now, that our big next step is to find our swirly chair. Do you know what I mean? To find our walk, to find our pathway because it's an incredible part of your journey. It really is.

Annie: After I got quarantined a little bit earlier than everybody else, mine was ending when most people's was starting.

Jo: Oh my gosh.

Annie: I got to just keep going, Jo. Don't worry. I got to just keep going.

Jo: Oh my goodness.

Annie: But people said, what'd you learn? And I was like, Y'all, I've been out for four minutes. But the thing that did come very true to me very quickly was that Jesus has always been Jesus and the Bible has always been the Bible. I read Luke 2 one day and just fell to tears because I was like, I read that at Christmas, and it was as true at Christmas as it is right now. The world is just different today than it was at Christmas.

Jo: My gosh, yeah. It's amazing. It's amazing the things that... Again, anchor. The anchor is there.

Annie: Yeah, anchor. Yeah, that's right. Have you experienced that with your husband too? Like being trapped with family is so different than being trapped alone.

Jo: Yeah, yeah. We are very different personalities. Our family members are. I think there has been those... We've almost gone tag on the crisis. So who's feeling it today kind of thing. Who do you need to-

Annie: That makes so much sense.

Jo: Who do you tag in and tag out? Who's got the capacity today, who hasn't? And we've said, you know, what are the habits that you and I need to revisit? We take a walk in the day and stuff. And it's what do we need to thrash out, pray out, cry out, walk out?

Annie: Even when it's snowing, Jo? Y'all take walks even when it's snowing?

Jo: I do because of the dog.

Annie: You're so hardcore.

Jo: Yes, it's brutal. There was a time when it was like minus 16 and stuff where I'm like, yeah, no. But other times, yeah. It's been a really mild winter this year. Praise God. Praise God. Looking for blessings in the middle of this.

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

Jo: So I'm grateful.

Annie: Speaking of working out and getting on walks, can we talk about your love for your Peloton?

Jo: Oh my gosh, I love it so much, Annie.

Annie: You love it so much. This show is not brought to you by Peloton yet, but-

Jo: No. But I'm telling you-

Annie: Jo, you're making me think it's a great idea. You seem to thrive on the... And this is what I learned from Insta story, so you can totally correct me if I'm wrong. But you seem to totally thrive as that being a part of your exercise routine.

Jo: Yeah, I mean, I really do. Again, this is one of those things that I'm really grateful for now. We got it about a year or so ago, and we've been talking about it on and off just because the winters here are so brutal. You don't always want to drive outside or even ride to the gym.

Annie: Right. You don't even want to drive to the gym necessarily.

Jo: You don't want to drive to the gym. The irony is I can't really, I'm not even very good on riding a bike, a natural bike. But I thought, I need something intense. I need something intense—because I know myself—where I can just... it's good for my emotional health and mental health, just to have something which kind of puts it all out there.

I've gotta be honest, for a while when I bought it, I was like, This is really hard and it's gonna become a really good clothing horse. You know what I mean?

Annie: Yes, Yes, yes.

Jo: I Just kind of covered it. Again, at the start of the year before we knew that 2020 was 2020, do you know what I mean, I just thought it's time to get back into it. And it has just been this life-giving way of... I mean, some of it's just the fun and the silliness of it of listening to music that I haven't listened to for years. Some of it is

just a working up the sweat and just processing the pain and the frustration or the excitement of the day.

The weird thing is you've got the headphones and no one else can... they can't hear the music. They just hear me like, yes. And they're like, Mom, why have you just woken me up with your yes. But it's been a lifeline in other times as well.

And I think now with various restrictions that we've been going through in the quarantine season, as it were, it's just been a real gift to do. I just love it. I'm not anticipating... There is gonna be no before and after on my body, Annie. Do you know what I mean? There is no-

Annie: That's right.

Jo: That's not what I'm here for because I like my food. I'm not anticipating that, but it's just been very good for me.

Annie: I mean, talk a little bit about that, Jo, because I think we don't talk a lot about bodies and food and all that stuff here just because it's very hard to have a nuanced, healthy conversation for so many different bodies.

Jo: It's so true.

Annie: But what we do know is that movement is really good for us.

Jo: Yes. And it's movement is good for our minds and our well-being.

Annie: Yes. Yes. Will you talk a little bit about that? How has your spiritual life been impacted and how has your mental life been impacted by...? Because we don't have to talk about changing pants sizes or how you're eating different or da da. But I mean, when the only thing I was allowed to do for two weeks was walk outside for an hour a day, I walked outside for an hour a day.

Jo: Yeah, totally.

Annie: How does it affect your mental and spiritual life?

Jo: Totally. The first time it began to hit home for me was when I had my second daughter and I had postpartum depression in that time, and the doctor said to me, he goes, "Jo, I can prescribe stuff for you, but honestly, there are three things you need." He goes, "Take the prescription, exercise, see a therapist. That's your whole prescription." He goes, "I never want to give you antidepressants on its own. I want you to have it in conjunction." And other doctors have said similar things. He goes,

"I want it in conjunction with exercise and stuff." He goes, "It's just gonna be good for you. Trust me, it's gonna be good for you.

So I've come to see it as part of my mental well-being more really. Just as a way of refreshing my mind. And at first, it wasn't even about like... I wasn't necessarily praying during it. And at that time I was running, which is another thing I love to do. It's not so much about whether... I didn't run at school or anything. I literally took up running after I had my kids. But I think what it was just the... it was a way of praying and talking and giving the emotions to God and listening to podcasts and all. There's a physicality about it. In the same way you talk about there's a place in terms of prayer and stuff, I think... and I'm sure some of it was getting used to my ever-changing body, you know?

Annie: Sure.

Jo: And everything going south. Some of it was that. Again, over the years in times of crisis when I've needed to think something out or when there's been a conversation I need to have and I don't know if there's too much of me in it, do you know what I mean, there's too much emotion, I often go for a run. I often go and say, let's in this physical way and then see what you feel.

And there have been conversations that have not happened because of that run. There have been revelation that's come and a clarity because the fog has cleared in my mind. There has been a reckoning with my own body and saying, you know what, Jo, you're 46, so I don't know we need to be thinking about... I mean, I want to be well and I want to be healthy, but I don't know that I'm ever gonna be skinny again. Do you know what I mean? That was a previous era. And am I good with that? Can I love my body as it is?

Annie: That's brilliant.

Jo: Is it enough? And there have been ways-

Annie: Can we be kind to our body how it is today? And I say, I promise I'll be kind to you when you're different.

Jo: I mean, will you buy yourself new clothes when you've lost some? Or will you buy yourself stuff now because you need it? All of those things.

Jo: So there has been this ongoing journey of embracing. I think I've had to embrace, learn how to embrace my body at different phases of my life. But also I've realized that as I've worked out, it's helped me embrace my mind as well and engage.

Annie: I love going on walks, and when I get back, I always have words. Either there's someone I need to talk to. This happens a lot when I go hike at Radnor Lake here in Nashville, where I'll go and I'll listen to a sermon podcast or if I need something more loosey-goosey, I'll listen to a funny podcast, like the podcast or something like that that's just killer entertainment.

Jo: Yeah, I know.

Annie: And then I get back to my car and I go, you know what? I know what I needed to write next in that book or I know what I need to... this decision just came to me or this thing I was praying that I know what God wants me to do next. There's something about... And it's also because I can't look at my phone the whole time.

Jo: Yeah, totally. Totally. There is a question I love to ask. I threw it in the book but partly because I'll throw it almost into any talk now. And I asked the question, if your body could speak to you, what would it want to say?

Annie: Oh, that'll make me cry, you know, if you think too hard about that.

Jo: There have been times my body has said, You need sleep. You just need some sleep. Or could you call a doctor, please? Or would you just love me as I am? Or would you treat me better? And I would say to us, in times of pressure and uncertainty, it's a good question. Because sometimes we are busy taking care of everybody else.

And a number of us in this quarantine season and in, as we're working from home, have got responsibilities we did not anticipate having either for our employees or for our community and or whatever, that we may not be looking after ourselves as well as we should. And I don't mean therefore do a five k. I just mean ask your body what it needs. If your body could speak to you, what would it want to say to you? Because you have one body, and your life, your friendships, your leadership lives in that one body. So take care of it.

Annie: Man, your leadership lives in this one body.

Jo: Yeah, in this one body. There is someone... Forgive me that I can't remember who. It may be Hillary McBride, but someone I recently read had written, your body doesn't know how to lie.

Jo: I know.

Annie: So then you go like, Oh, if I'm tired, I should just believe myself. If I am hungry, I should just believe myself. If my legs are aching because I've been sitting too long,

I should just believe myself. And at some point, men and women, but more women I know, but men too, we stopped believing our bodies when our body was saying, look what I can do. I'm beautiful. I'm strong. And we started saying, "Well, I don't care what you say, I'm looking over there and that's telling me what my body's supposed to say.

Jo: Yeah. Or we punish our bodies to keep up and say, Look, I've got [inaudible 00:50:51] to go, I've got a career to build. I've got a calling to fulfill. Get over it. Get over it. Come on. Keep up with what my spiritual goals are. Keep up with what my insecurities frankly are. Keep up with these things. And we tell it to get in line. It will for a while. For a while. For a while.

Jo: For a while.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. For a while. At some point your body will start telling you back the truth louder than you wanted it to.

Jo: Yeah. And sometimes rather unceremoniously as well. Do you know what I mean?

Annie: That's right. I think one of the things I love about your leadership, Jo, and I do consider you a pastor voice, a leader voice in my life, is you model for us in your book, in *Ready to Rise*, in your other books and in your Insta stories and in your teaching, you are a full person and all your areas of life need attention. That doesn't mean you don't get to rest. It doesn't mean you don't get days off in front of Netflix. It just means you can't ignore your body and expect to be able to do everything God's called you to do for the next 50 years.

Jo: Totally.

Annie: But you also can't ignore your spirit and you can't ignore your emotions and you can't ignore your mind. We have to let everyone walk forward together.

Jo: Yes, we do. I think that's the reality of our leadership. Do you know what I mean? So many of us are leading in ways which may not have a title. We might not even feel comfortable calling ourselves a leader, but we have responsibilities. We have responsibilities-

Annie: Everyone's leading somewhere. Everybody's leading somewhere.

Jo: Somewhere or something. And we want to do it the best we can. And sometimes I've relegated the best we can to being brave enough or courageous enough or loud enough and having feeling like that was authority and all that kind of stuff and neglected these things, which actually determine our capacity way more than we

would care to admit. Our emotional well-being matters. It does. It matters because you're God's kid. It matters because you're a human being.

So you don't need to push your broken pieces of your story to the side because you have a job. What you need to do is because you have a job, because you care about your life, and because you are important, get the help you need to process those things.

[00:53:03] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to share about another amazing partner, [Simple Modern](#). Who's already started chopping for back-to-school supplies or getting everything you need to head off to college? As you get yourself ready for the fall, you've got to check out Simple Modern.

I bet you've seen their super popular 40-ounce Trek Tumbler with the handle on social media, which has been so perfect for the summer. They're actually one of the top drinkware providers to target Walmart and Amazon. But did you know they also have backpacks and drinkware and lunchboxes and so much more? And they even have fun designs and partners like Disney and Marvel. And y'all, I ordered their reusable zip-up snack bags that have unicorns on them. I'm dying. They're so cute. They're so cute.

Here's what I also love. Simple Modern gives 10% of their profits to nonprofits that are committed to causes like solving the water crisis, fighting human trafficking, education, ending homelessness, and helping underprivileged communities. I just love that.

So go to simplemodern.com/thatsoundsfun. And when you share your email, you'll get a unique discount code that's just for you and you can bundle and save for back to school. This can be your go-to brand for your family. That's simplemodern.com/thatsoundsfun.

Just making sure you know this as well. Every month on my website, we highlight a book of the month, offer a little something free for you to go with it. And this month we are talking about *Speak Love*, one of the books I have written for teen girls about how to use our words well, what to do when people are unkind with their words, and how we can build up. I mean, the scripture says our words have the power of life and death.

So this month we've made a little something for those teenagers in our lives. Our teen BFFs, if you will. I know heading back to school in the next month or two can

bring up a lot of emotions. And even without that, being a teenager is just hard. It is just hard. I remember.

So we made some scripture cards for your teen to print and cut out and hang on their mirror or tape in their notebook to give a little reminder of how to speak love to themselves and others as they go about their day. And hey, I think we all need those reminders. The Bible is for all of us, right?

So head to anniefdowns.com and you just drop your email into that popup that appears to download those speak love cards for you and for your teen. That's where you do it. It's so easy. And think about who in your life could use a copy of *Speak Love* as well. Maybe there's a little fun back-to-school gift someone needs that you could put together the free printed-out cards and a copy of the book. That's anniefdowns.com and look for that popup. And then *Speak Love* is available, autographed at shopanniefdowns.com. And it's also available wherever you love to buy books.

So now let's go back and finish up our TSF Hall of Fun conversation with Jo.

[00:55:50] <music>

Annie: So I'm hearing a mom who has three little kids, she's at the grocery store, she's trying not to touch anything, she's got three little kids, she's trying to keep everybody healthy going like, Jo, how do I even have time to work on my leadership or to step into the things I want to step into and to take care of my body and to have a quiet time. How do I do this? And you've done it.

Jo: Totally. First of all, I would say the time with young kids was the hardest. The hardest. But I would say there are a number of things that I did. One, I had to switch off all the things that told me I needed to do everything all at once because sometimes I felt the pressure of it. That was one piece that helped me.

Another was village. Village. Village. Village. You can't do it all by yourself. One of the key things I did and I did accidentally, was to build a couple of key relationships with people. And not necessarily in the same phase of life as you, not necessarily with the same marital status as you. My longtime best friend is a single woman. She speaks into my life like everybody else does. More so because she knows me better than almost anybody else does.

So I'm not saying, you need to find people just like you. That's not what I'm saying. But you do need a village of relationships. Because if you need a break, sometimes someone else has gotta hold that kid for you. Do you know what I mean?

Annie: That's one of my favorite spots is the witching hour, that five o'clock when I leave work I love going to my friend's houses with kids and being like, give me an out. I'll do it. Let me sit here. And the mom's tired and I'm lonely. I've been by myself all day. It's the dream pairing.

Jo: It is. I think one of the things that I remember when my kids were particularly young is I sometimes held back because I was so tired. I thought, I don't want to put this on anybody else. I don't want to ask for help. When I was single, I didn't want to ask for help because I didn't want to put... I didn't want to be a burden. I had all this fear of being a burden to somebody else. And because I was afraid of being a burden I didn't ask. I would encourage us rather than listening to the fear of being a burden, do the asking.

Annie: Yeah, that's good.

Jo: Do the asking. No matter who you are. If you're a leader responsible for 30,000 people, do the asking. Ask for help. You need a village. There's a theory. It was coined The Great Man Theory by a guy called Thomas Carlyle who believed that moments in history were made by key individuals.

On one level we look through history and we see big figures like a Nelson Mandela or Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King. And we see big figures. But actually when you look at their stories, you see communities around them, movements of people.

William Wilberforce didn't do one thing on his own. There was communities of people. There's always been a village of helping people accomplish goals. But we have often only reckoned with the one person doing that thing. So we look at it from the far-

Annie: Yeah, because we see one name.

Jo: We see one name.

Annie: We see one name win the Grammy or whatever and we don't listen to all the people they thank.

Jo: No, We don't.

Annie: ...in the awards.

Jo: We just want them to be quick. Actually, there's a reason why they're thanking those people because they would not have that award, they would not have that accomplishment without those people involved. And it's a huge part of the story.

You need people who are a huge part of your story, people who will ground you, who will root you, who will be in your house so you can have a shower. Do you know what I mean? Who will help you with numbers because you are struggling with your budget right now, and you don't know how to do it and you are too embarrassed to ask? But they're really good with it. That's what it means.

I think we need a village of people. And villages take time to build. But I want to encourage everybody. We weren't designed to live this life alone and in isolation.

Annie: You're hearing so many people say that right now because of Covid 19, even secular doctors and psychiatrists going like, Hey everybody, it's not supposed to be like this. You're not supposed to be alone. Whereas, I don't know, two months ago if anyone would've said that in a such a knowing way. And now they're going like, Hey, science says you aren't supposed to be alone.

Jo: Totally. I think people thought it was cute before. Do you know what I mean? It's like, oh, it's cute. You're not meant to be alone. But now, I mean, there's data showing that loneliness and chronic loneliness affects your physical well-being. Chronic loneliness affects your... it can intensify depressive symptoms. It can affect your sleep patterns. It can affect your impulses. I mean, these are huge things.

And now maybe because we're feeling it and we're seeing it at large in the world that this isolation and this distancing is happening, maybe now we realize we need people more. And I hope it invites us to a greater vulnerability with people now.

Annie: That's it. What I would love to do, Jo, because we're running low on time, I would love when we hop over on YouTube, can we talk about friendships between marrieds and singles?

Jo: Oh, yes, would love to.

Annie: I just think it's such an important thing that everyone wants to get and everyone's a little scared that they're gonna be the one who screws it up.

Jo: Yeah, totally.

Annie: We'll do that on YouTube. When my friends are listening today and they are gonna practice their new prayer spot or their new prayer walk or whatever tomorrow, what do you want us to pray for you?

Jo: My prayer... What is my prayer in this moment? My prayer is I do believe the landscape is changing. I want to see what the Father's doing. I think that is ultimately the thing. I do believe in the message of the book and all that kind of

stuff and I do believe I... but I feel it's gonna get into people's hands in a different way now. And I believe that the things that maybe that I'd written off as important and more important, the things that I hope would be bigger wouldn't be.

But I think my prayer is, Lord, it's over to you. It's over to you. Show us. I don't just pray it for me. Actually, I pray it for us as people who are speakers and all these other things and communicators, that we would navigate the landscape in courageous and daring ways.

Annie: Okay. Yes.

Jo: That's my prayer.

Annie: And we will ask the Lord to put the right book in the right hands, in the right iPad. I mean, thank God our technology allows for books to be read without you leaving your house.

Jo: Totally. Totally.

Annie: It is a surprising gift. How eBooks are... For Holy Week, I had a bunch of my friends with me read Charles Martin's book, *What If It's True?* And it's like, well, yeah, you can go to your bookstore or download it. Get it on Amazon or download it. So we'll just believe that God's gonna put your book in every right hand and the people who are ready to rise are gonna read it.

Jo: Yeah. There's a timing thing, isn't there, in terms of what it takes to get ready. And in God's economy and God's grace and His time, for some people that readiness will be September.

Annie: That's right.

Jo: Do you know what I mean? And for some people it will be-

Annie: I mean, how many times have people bought your books and put them on a shelf and said, "I didn't pick this up until today, but I bought it a year ago."

Jo: Exactly. Exactly.

Annie: I tell people all the time, buy books for your young adults in your life, for the men and women in your life and put it on their shelves and trust that God will highlight it on the right moment.

Jo: On the right time. On the right time.

- Annie:** Okay, is there anything we didn't talk about that you want to talk about?
- Jo:** You know, I will say there's one story from the book that I want to highlight. And it's one woman who discovers, during World War II, her calling. She was functionally illiterate. She was struggling through life, making her way, getting places and stuff. But during World War II in England, she, first of all, helped with the war effort and the auxiliary fire service. And then—again, a little English history—she started helping-
- Annie:** No, I like it
- Jo:** ...looking after evacuees who were evacuated out of London and began to help. And in many ways she was not skilled to do all the things. But she was available. Her life calling was uncovered in the midst of desperation when the world was turned upside down in tragedy and loss. And she kept on fostering for 20, 30, 40 years. She got an award at 94 for being England's most inspiring learner when she went back to school.
- Annie:** Oh my gosh.
- Jo:** She did her national exams in English, math, and computer science of all things.
- Annie:** Oh my gracious.
- Jo:** And I'm compelled by her story again and again because that to me tells a story of a woman whose life was, you know, in this time of great upheaval, a life that could have gone any direction. But even in the midst of upheaval, God worked His purposes out. I also tell the story because she was my foster mother.
- Annie:** Wow. Jo!
- Jo:** I'm reminded in moments like this. Do you know what I mean? It's her story that makes me confident. I don't know what all your people are facing and what they're struggling with, but I do know this—it's not over yet. It's not over yet.
- Annie:** Wow. My gosh. The book is full of those stories.
- Jo:** Yes.
- Annie:** I'm just ready. Jo, that's incredible. Thank you for writing and preaching and leading us so beautifully. I'm so thankful.

- Jo:** Oh, thank you. You're so kind. You're so kind. It's an honor to be with you.
- Annie:** Well, always. I feel the same. Okay, well, you know the last question we always ask. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what you do for fun.
- Jo:** Oh, you mean besides my peloton?
- Annie:** Yeah, yeah, that's right. Besides the bike.
- Jo:** Besides the bike. Actually, I think one of the things I'm loving right now is connecting with my kids' friends.
- Annie:** Really?
- Jo:** Yeah.
- Annie:** That's cool.
- Jo:** I do. I mean, before we were all socially quarantined and things, I used to do the carpool and I used to say this carpool is a space for the affirmation of other women, so you are gonna say kind things about your friend.
- Annie:** That's great.
- Jo:** But now they're all on house party and all these other things, and I pop to all the cool... I just lean over the kid's shoulder and stuff. And I am loving, I'm just loving hearing the life in their voices and their boredom and all the... It is just funny. It's funny because...
- Annie:** How old are your girls now?
- Jo:** They are 13 and nearly 15.
- Annie:** Oh, wow.
- Jo:** So freshman and seventh grader. It's just been so much. I love it just because they're so vibrant and they're so cynical about certain things and jaded and dramatic. It's just been funny. It's just been comedy value to pop in. It doesn't mean my kid records on a TikTok from time to time, which I'm a little bit stressed about.
- Annie:** I cannot with TikTok. I can't do it.
- Jo:** I can't.

Annie: I'm scared I'm gonna like it too much and be on it all the time.

Annie: I've dived in occasionally and I've needed to be drawn out. So yeah, it's a lot. I love it. I mean, my mom was a similar way. My friends' moms that liked talking to me and my friends were the ones that got to know the stuff, you know?

Annie: When you think the grownup likes you, you tell them things.

Jo: Yes. Turns out.

Annie: Turns out.

Jo: Turns out. So I'm learning and I'm like, Oh, did I want to know all of this? Well, we're here now.

Annie: That's right. That's right. You're like, now I know.

Jo: Now I know.

Annie: Oh, Jo, thanks for doing this. I'm so grateful for you.

Annie: Oh, thank you. Thank you. It's been wonderful.

[01:07:16] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, don't you love her? She is one of the best. I mean, she is one of the people I was dying to talk to during those hard weeks and months when we were at home all the time. If you have not read her book, *Ready to Rise*, make sure you grab a copy or really any of her books. I just could not honor and respect Jo Saxton more. I just think so highly of her. So make sure you're following her online. Tell her thanks for coming back on the show.

So we heard what sounds fun to Jo, now we get to hear what sounds fun to one of our friends who's listening just like you.

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

Kristen: Hi, my name is Kristen Jordan. I'm from Chicago, Illinois, and what sounds fun to me is spending an afternoon baking with my sister. I'm currently in grad school and she's currently student teaching, so we don't get quite as much quality time these days. So getting to spend a whole afternoon baking with her sounds delightful.

- Annie:** And for both of you, baking has got to be such a brain Sabbath-release thing.
- Kristen:** A hundred percent. Yes.
- Annie:** Okay. What's your thing? When you're going to parties or when you're making something for someone who's sick, do you have a thing you always bake people?
- Kristen:** Usually I tend towards cookies or bars.
- Annie:** Yes, girl. Yes, girl.
- Kristen:** But her and I have been talking about trying to make macaroons. We've never done it before.
- Annie:** Oh.
- Kristen:** So I think it would be a fun challenge.
- Annie:** I don't know if you know this about me, but I love Spring Baking Championship on That Sounds Fun Network. And they have been going hard on those. So you could watch. I need to tell you, I am really living that gluten-free life because it makes me feel like a tranquilized bear cup to have wheat in my body. So do you have any suggestions for me of how to have baked treats that are gluten-free?
- Kristen:** My sister is actually gluten-free, so we often bake gluten-free. So we just do the measure for measure gluten-free flour. And honestly, sometimes I can't even tell the difference.
- Annie:** Okay, great. That's what I needed you to say because I'm just like... when I think about like seven layer bars with the coconut and all that business, I can't live a life where those don't exist in my life.
- Kristen:** A hundred percent. Yes.
- Annie:** But also I cannot have... I just need... I cannot eat gluten in my life. It makes me feel terrible, Kristen.
- Kristen:** That's how it is for my sister. I understand.
- Annie:** Great. What a great baking life that you can bake with anything she bake with gluten-free things, but y'all share a kitchen when it comes to time.

Kristen: Exactly. It's so fun.

Annie: I bet the holidays are awesome in your family.

Kristen: We do have fun. Yes.

Annie: Yes, yes. I believe it. Great answer. Next time we're in the same place, I hope I get to taste a baked good of yours.

Kristen: That sounds lovely.

Annie: All right, if you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that's how you can find me. Except, you know, not this week. But next week I'll be back. Don't worry, I'll be back. And don't forget you can find the That Sounds Fun podcast on Instagram @thatsoundsfunpodcast.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same. Y'all have a great weekend. We'll see you back here on Monday with our final TSF Hall of Fun episode featuring our friend Lauren Akins.