

[00:00:00] <music>

**Annie:** Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you today.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors. This episode is sponsored by [BetterHelp](#). It is so interesting these past couple of episodes have hit on stories of grief. Today's does as well. I don't know that I have cried three episodes in a row ever. And yet here we are. And it's like this unintentional series. But God planned that. And I have no doubt that that's exactly what we need to hear and talk about right now.

Walking through grief and trauma and divorce is never something anyone plans for. But therapy is such an important tool when we find ourselves in that place. My counselor has been so helpful in getting me to process everything I'm feeling and helping me to take steps forward.

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**Intro:** Today on the show I get to talk with my dear friend Brandi Wilson. Brandi has been a friend of mine for a long time—over a decade. Today we're talking about her story of divorce after her husband of 20 years who was also my pastor left our church and their family and how she's found her way to healing and wholeness since then. It has been an incredible story to watch Brandi live. I'm so glad she's written about it now.

So many of you have talked to me about your divorce stories, particularly after our Summer Lovin' series, and where to even go and what to do after that. Y'all have had so many questions. Brandi is graciously sharing her story with us today.

I think she is just one example of how life can be rebuilt and you can find hope again when things fall apart. Like I said, these stories of grief keep coming up right now with these episodes. And I think it is so interesting. It wasn't planned. It's not how I necessarily would spend multiple episodes in a row. But I know in every single one of these stories, Granger's and Steffany's, and now Brandi's, you can tangibly hear the joy and redemption that comes out of the pain. God does give us hope again.

Brandi has a new book out called Better Than Okay. And it is stunning. And I think you are really going to enjoy it. This conversation is beautiful and deeply important to me.

So here is my conversation with my friend and one of my heroes, Brandi Wilson.

[00:03:15] <music>

**Annie:** Welcome to That Sounds Fun. We already got crying just in our prayer together. Hi, Brandi.

**Brandi:** Hi, Annie.

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

**Brandi:** I'm so happy to be sitting across from you. It's fun.

**Annie:** I know. I mean, for our friends, listening, we've been friends for 14... 13 years? A long time.

**Brandi:** A long time. When did you move to Nashville?

**Annie:** '08.

**Brandi:** 08.

**Annie:** And I started at Cross Point at '10.

**Brandi:** Oh, yeah. So 13, 14 years.

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

**Brandi:** That's nuts.

**Annie:** I know. That is wild.

**Brandi:** Lots of life.

**Annie:** That's a lot of life. Yeah. That's a lot coming from Cross Point to Onsite to this table. Oh, man, when I got to Onsite and you were there the same week I was there, I was like, "The Lord loves me. Brandi is here."

**Brandi:** Great. Yeah. You never know when you walk up who is going to be there. So it's nice to have a familiar face.

**Annie:** Have you been more than once?

**Brandi:** I have been-

**Annie:** Every time you walk up, I'm like, "How many times have you walked up, Brandi?"

**Brandi:** I've been up there for a couple of events since then. But no, I've come back. I love Onsite. It was great.

**Annie:** Oh, man, it was great. It was so good. Okay, so let's lay some foundation here for people.

**Brandi:** Okay.

**Annie:** Friendship is the foundation. You and your ex-husband were my pastors for years and still makes me...

**Brandi:** Yeah.

**Annie:** How about that? Sorry.

**Brandi:** Yeah. You watched us walk through a lot. That impacted a lot of people.

**Annie:** And I love your boys. The first people I ever sat at Vanderbilt baseball games were your three boys.

**Brandi:** Who are now 22, 19, and 17.

**Annie:** Where's Gage going to college? Do you want to say that publicly?

**Brandi:** He's going to Rhodes.

**Annie:** Is he playing football?

**Brandi:** Yes.

**Annie:** Oh my gosh, that's amazing. Where is Rhodes?

**Brandi:** In Memphis.

**Annie:** Okay. So you can still drive to everybody to watch them play football?

**Brandi:** Yeah, except they play on the same day and they're three hours apart.

**Annie:** Oh, yeah. What are you gonna do about that?

**Brandi:** I haven't. I'm gonna take it week by week.

**Annie:** Yeah, yeah. You're like, "I'll decide Friday night after Brewer's game-

**Brandi:** After Brewer's game on Friday night-

**Annie:** ...where I'll go on Saturday.

**Brandi:** ...I'm just going to gas up the car.

**Annie:** Right. And you know, in June, we did a whole series on dating. One of the advantages to having you on right after that series is we didn't have a lot of conversation about divorce during the single series. And so thank you for coming on at the start of August-

**Brandi:** Of course.

**Annie:** ...so that we can really talk about... So many of our friends listening reached out to us after that single series and said, I'm divorced. What does it mean for me about sex? What does it mean for me about dating? What does it mean for me about apps? What does it mean for me about loneliness or serving in my church? So you get to speak for all of them, Brandi?

**Brandi:** I'm the divorced representative.

**Annie:** All the divorced Christian, here is your woman.

**Brandi:** You said, "What does it mean for me about sex?" and I'm like, are we going there? I did not prep for that question, Annie.

**Annie:** Not in the second minute. Don't worry. Don't worry. I don't know that we will at all. Okay, will you give an overview of your story for our friends who don't know your book is out, which it is... I mean. I am so proud of you-

**Brandi:** Thank you.

**Annie:** ...as your friend. Long before you wrote a book, the way you live is just amazing. The way you've survived and made a beautiful life that you never dreamed of is beautiful. And then you wrote Better Than Okay, which is such a good book. You're such a good writer. Oh my gosh.

**Brandi:** Thank you. Thank you.

**Annie:** You're such a good writer, Brandi.

**Brandi:** I so enjoyed the process of it.

**Annie:** So back us up, high-level give us the Brandi Wilson story.

**Brandi:** Brandi Wilson's story. So I married my college sweetheart. Right out of college, we planted a church in Kentucky. Planted. Started a church in Kentucky, stayed there for five years. In 2001 moved to Nashville, had my first son, and in 2002-

**Annie:** Why did you come to Nashville?

**Brandi:** My ex-husband is originally from here. So he had family here. Both his parents are here. I grew up with an aunt in Nashville. So I used to go to Opryland all the time. So Nashville felt like a natural fit. We were starting a family. We wanted to have family close to, you know, grandchildren. So yeah, we ended up moving to Nashville. Nashville is like the land of opportunity. So lots of dreamers here.

So in 2002, we did start Cross Point Church, which is where our paths crossed. And Crosspoint was amazing. It still is amazing. I am so proud of Cross Point and still cheer it on and love to see how it's continuing to grow and be successful. We served there for 14 years as the founders. He was the lead pastor and-

**Annie:** And you disciplined and led the female staff and the wives of staff so beautifully, Brandi.

**Brandi:** Thank you.

**Annie:** You set a standard that is just so honorable.

**Brandi:** Thanks. I loved being able to lean in and live on staff. I was kind of like the head cheerleader for Cross Point, which is a role that is very natural to me. So, yeah, 14 years, I love to being in that role. I loved serving. I loved seeing... You know, as a pastor's wife, you have a front-row seat to life change and we saw tons of it at Cross Point. And it's still occurring.

**Annie:** Yeah, I'm one of them. I mean, my life changed because of Cross Point because of the leadership.

**Brandi:** Yes. At the same time, it was one of the fastest-growing churches in America. So there's lots of attention and people who are aware. So we served there for 14 years. And in September of 2016, pretty quickly it unfolded where my ex-husband stood on stage and resigned and he walked away from the church and the ministry that was created there and from our marriage of 20 years, and also from the family unit that we had. And life as I knew it just fell apart. The bottom fell out.

**Annie:** How long before that morning did you know that morning was gonna happen?

**Brandi:** I am so glad you asked that question. The day before.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Brandi:** Yeah, the day before.

**Annie:** So I said me too, which is not... That math ain't great.

**Brandi:** The resignation had happened to the staff and elders on a Thursday night. People were in meetings all day Friday. We had been told it would be the following Sunday, but word kind of got out and the dominoes started to fall. And on Saturday afternoon, we found out.

We were actually at a family friend's farm about an hour outside of Nashville and I just stayed there with the boys, took their cell phones because they didn't know what was happening and the entire church and most of Nashville found out before my kids heard.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Brandi:** Because you know, it hit the news. It was on the local news stations. It was in the Tennessean. It was everywhere. So yeah, I found out the day before that that was happening. I was not present for it. I was not allowed to be present for it. I asked, tried to come but that wasn't allowed. I was in Lyles, Tennessee with some dear

friends who were like family, who really just loved me and shepherded me and my kids walking through a divorce.

**Annie:** Talk about that first week. Because so many of our friends listening or watching... It's about to be someone's first week. Or it's about to be someone's best friend's first week or sister's first week or husband's family's first week. What do people need the first week?

**Brandi:** Oh, gosh, that first week is brutal. And I will tell you, you know, my life publicly fell apart overnight.

**Annie:** Yes, publicly.

**Brandi:** It had been falling apart behind the scenes for a long time. I still did not expect it to unfold that way. So I want to say when you're walking through a divorce, your life is publicly falling apart at some level.

**Annie:** Because kids' parents at school know or-

**Brandi:** Kids' parents at school know. People at church know. They're talking about it on Facebook. Maybe it's just your neighborhood. But you feel like your life has fallen apart and everyone can see it happen.

**Annie:** Everyone is just watching.

**Brandi:** So for me, I went from being surrounded by thousands of people every weekend to just talking to three people and my therapist. And I shrunk life down. I kept taking my kids to school that week. They were a freshman in high school. I had, let's see, a fifth grader, seventh grader, a freshman in high school. I was taking them to school.

And then I would pull into the garage and put my garage door down and I'd go upstairs to the second floor so that if anyone came to my door they wouldn't think I was at home. And I honestly just wept and lots of time spent in bed, lots of time spent talking to my friend. My best friend Lori who lives in Vegas, she would call me every day and check on me. But it was brutal. I was lost. I was heartbroken.

At that point, as you know, my story kind of unfolded, what was happening behind the scenes. I didn't know all of it. So it was kind of unfolding layer by layer and actually took months and months and months for everything to be revealed to me.

But I was praying for truth and discernment and wisdom. And honestly, I was willing to do anything to put my marriage back together at that point.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Brandi:** At that point, I said, "If I have to go to counseling every day for five years, I'm willing to do that." I had met him when I was 19, we were married at 22. We'd been married for 20 years. I'd grown up with him. It was all I knew."

**Annie:** And now divorced when you're 42.

**Brandi:** Yes. 42. 42 I was starting all over.

**Annie:** I read that because I just turned 43. And I thought, "This is exactly when Brandi had to start a whole new life."

**Brandi:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Had to? Got to? Which one is it?

**Brandi:** I now would say got to. I think, you know, at times God removes stuff from our life because He's protecting us. And at this point, I look back and as those layers of truth were revealed I've realized that God was protecting me and giving me a fresh start. And the best part of your life falling apart is you get to put the pieces of your life back together the way you choose.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Brandi:** And that was probably 42 was the first time I've gotten to do that. Because I was part of the unit. And I'm an Enneagram two. I know that's very important for your audience. But that means I'm a fabulous support person. So I love to cheer on the people I love, I love to encourage them, I love to show up for them. I love to be the person who helps make their dreams come true.

And the downside is I often neglect my own needs. And because of that, I'd spent a lot of time neglecting my own needs, wants, even knowing who I was. I have three children, three sons who I'm very close to, and love being a mom. So between being a wife and a mom, that was really what I enjoyed. And the mom piece stayed, the wife part was gone.

It was a lot of "I don't know what life is going to look like and I have more questions than answers, and I have to take this one day at a time because I don't know that I'm going to make it."

**Annie:** One of my favorite stories, if that's a way we can phrase this, of being in your life watching you live this since 2016 was buying your new house. And I feel like this



fits right in with this part of the conversation of like, we bought a house but then I got to buy a house.

**Brandi:** Yes.

**Annie:** Will you talk about that, about finding the right house for you and the boys?

**Brandi:** Yeah. I actually love this story so much, Annie. I think one of the things I did as a parent is I just decided we're going to talk about all of these decisions. I, as the adult-

**Annie:** Even the fifth grader, you were talking to...?

**Brandi:** Even the fifth grader. Yes. Even with the fifth grader. I was trying to just have open communication about everything. When you live a life where there's been so much deceit and manipulation and lying, well, that is not going to happen in our new family unit. So yeah, I just felt like communication about everything.

We had lived in the house we were in for about 12 years. I knew I did not want to continue there. I wanted a fresh start. So I knew pretty quickly I was gonna sell that house. But that's the only house my kids had known. And man, it was really emotionally hard.

I remember—gosh, this is the sweetest story. The sweetest/saddest—the neighbor across the street, Christopher and Brewer were like thick as thieves. And one of the things they had done is behind our house... our house backed up to one of the major parks here in Nashville. So it was protected. So there's a lot of just open space behind our fence. And there's a gate at the very back of our acre.

And they'd go out that gate and they would go into the woods and they pull out treasures and they created a fort behind our house. The Harpeth rivers back there, they had pulled out like old lawn chairs and old buckets and they had taken big logs and built a fort that they can actually sit under.

**Annie:** Oh my gosh.

**Brandi:** It was precious. They use the spray paint in the neighbor's garage and made a sign that said "the fort".

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

**Brandi:** Thank you to Daystar Counseling Ministries Brewer's therapists walked him through symbolically being able to move the fort from behind our house to behind Christopher's house.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Brandi:** And they enlisted my middle son, Gage, to help because he enjoyed the fort too. The weekend before we moved, I watched three little boys load up the wagon with all of their treasures, and pull it across the street three times. And they all did it with tears. I knew it was gonna be really hard. But I also believed that God was going to do new things in our life.

So one of the conversations I had really early on with the boys was we can... I don't know exactly what we're going to be able to afford in Williamson County. I live in Franklin. It's amazing. It's a great place to raise kids. It's also expensive. Housing market is crazy. Stuff sells really fast. But I didn't know what I was gonna be able to afford.

So one night at dinner, I was like, "Okay, we get to have a discussion. And let's vote, and let's talk about pros and cons, and this is a family decision. We can probably afford either a three bedroom with a bonus room, so somebody's gonna have to share or we can afford a four bedroom with no bonus room."

So everybody voted. And of course, it was two to one, Annie, you know. And just talked about the pros and the cons of each. I just really started diligently praying for a house. It was in my journal. I would just say "God, you know where we're gonna live. God give us a house."

And then in March of 2017, the morning after my mediation... Mediation is where you kind of divide your entire life up. It's not fun. It's not a great day, Annie.

**Annie:** Do you sit across ta...? Is everybody there?

**Brandi:** It's not like it is on TV or mine was not, where you sit across from the table with your attorney to your right-

**Annie:** That's what I picture.

**Brandi:** ...and sliding notes back and forth. There's no sliding of notes. But you're in separate rooms with your attorney and then the mediator who's also an attorney goes back and forth. So that day was really long. It was probably 10, 11 hours. It's exhausting.

I woke up that morning to some really ugly communication. I get the kids off to school, and then I just wept and I could not pull it together. And I remember, I pray a lot in the shower, which I don't know if that's, you know, sacrilegious or not. But okay, good. But I was in the shower that morning praying and my prayer was super simple. I just kept saying over and over, "God, I need 2,400 square feet. I need 2,400 square feet." I'd never said that number out loud. I don't know why I said 2,400 square feet. I legitimately... The fact that I was praying for 2,400 square feet, it was Holy Spirit. It had to be.

So finally pull myself together, get dressed. I'm running a few errands that morning. I am walking into a yoga class because I needed to definitely do some cleansing.

**Annie:** That's what I actually where I saw you first after...

**Brandi:** It was. I remember that.

**Annie:** It was the first time I saw you.

**Brandi:** I remember that. Yeah, I'd forgotten. So I'm walking into a yoga class, my phone's in my hand and I get an alert. And it was from a number because I did have that person's contact in my phone. Because guess what? I didn't know them.

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Brandi:** And I opened the alert and it said, "Hey, Brandi. My name is Paulie. I know we don't know each other but I heard you're looking for a house in my neighborhood. I was just on a walk, I don't know much about this home but this family has been transferred to Florida. If you want to see it, I could probably make the connection for you. Like I said, I don't know much about it, except it's 2,400 square feet.

At that moment, I just felt so wrapped in the arms of God like, "Hey, Brandi, I hear you. I hear you and I know what you need." And being an Enneagram two, for God to tell me He knows what I need when sometimes I don't know myself, man, that's a precious thing. So I knew, whether that was my house or not, He heard me.

I was in that house three days later. And then 10 days later I had a contract on it. And it never hit the market in Williamson County.

**Annie:** And it looks so much like you.

**Brandi:** Thank you.

**Annie:** It just is like a Brandi house.

**Brandi:** Thank you. My kids, when the book came in the mail they were like, "Your book cover matches our house." I'm like, "I know."

**Annie:** It does. For sure.

[00:21:13] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation to share about one of our amazing partners, [Thrive Market](#). Grocery shopping is not my favorite but it is one of the reasons that I love Thrive Market is because Thrive Market is my go-to for all my grocery and household essentials and I can get it all delivered right to my doorstep which is a huge time saver.

And as a Thrive Market member, I can also save money on every single order. On average, I save over 30% each time. And on top of that, Thrive Market has a deals page that changes daily. It gives me cashback on so many brands. And they have a price match guarantee. I'm such a fan.

They've got some of my favorite items and they have the clean cleaning supplies that I like so that I'm using products that work without introducing unnecessary chemicals into the situation.

Thrive Market saves me commute time which I love and waiting in line time which I love and shopping time because I love the filters on their website and their app, they have over 70, so you can curate your own shopping experience with the click of a button.

Plus, when you join Thrive Market, you're also helping a family in need through Thrive one-for-one membership matching program. You join, they give which I love. Join in on the savings with Thrive Market today and get 30% off your first order, plus a free \$60 gift. So go to [thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun](https://thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun) for 30% off your first order, plus a free \$60 gift. That's [thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun](https://thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun).

**Sponsor:** And one more amazing partner I get to tell you about, [Raycon](#). Now listen, I am living in my Raycons right now. I used them last night. Here's what I did. Would you like to hear? I'm just going to tell you. I did a little yoga class on my peloton but I was not listening to it. I was listening to John Eldridge's podcast in my Raycon.

So I'm getting spiritual development while my body is getting healthy. I love it. Whether I'm going on a walk or needing to listen to something while I do laundry

or you know, yoga, or I want some entertainment on a plane, I love my Raycon wireless earbuds.

You know I travel a lot and my Raycon are always coming with me. They are the best way to listen. Get this, y'all. They have a 32-hour battery life, including eight hours of playtime. Seriously, they last for so long. And you can listen to what you want when you want for a really long time.

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If you're using them at the gym or have them in while you're working, you can use their earbud tap function and toggle between three customizable sound profiles. So you can have noise isolation and awareness mode. It is really really helpful. Especially safety, friends, when we're outside walking. We want to also be able to hear the world around us.

Right now my friends can get 15% off their Raycon order at [buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun](https://buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun). That's buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun to save 15% on Raycons. Buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun.

Okay, now let's go back to our conversation with Brandi.

[00:24:30] <music>

**Annie:** Tell me about moving the boys into the new house. Did they feel like God showed up for them or was that too soon to feel that.

**Brandi:** You know, it is interesting when you're a pastor's kid going through what we went through. Because it definitely impacts your view of the church. And when you're at that age, your view of the church and your view of God are pretty closely related.

**Annie:** Yeah, of course.

**Brandi:** And they needed to be angry at somebody. So it's really hard to be mad at a parent. So they had, especially a couple of my kids had a lot of anger. So I don't know that they knew. I had told the full story of the house. I don't know if they remembered all the details of it until they read the book. Just because they're young and they're-

**Annie:** And all three of them have read Better Than Okay?

**Brandi:** Yes, my oldest has read it cover to cover.

**Annie:** Yeah, I bet. That does not surprise me at all.

**Brandi:** The other two have more skimmed it, most of it, but they've commented on things. So I know that they've read it and they're aware. And they knew I was writing it and they were there when I signed the contract, the book deal. Yeah, they've known all about it.

I feel very strongly about giving kids age-appropriate truth. And I didn't want them to feel like I'm gonna write some tell-all about what happened in their life. I wanted to write a book about what God chose to do in me when I chose to begin again. And then what I realized when I was pulling together the acknowledgments is like, I recorded our family story of starting over.

So I think there's a lot of beauty in the fact that there's... because of their age, and because they were kids, there's a lot of things they might not remember the details of, but they get to hear again and have recorded of what God did in our family.

**Annie:** I would imagine a fear in divorce, especially in Christian divorce, is what is this going to do between God and my kids?

**Brandi:** Yeah, yes.

**Annie:** How do you manage that fear in you? I mean, whatever is gonna happen between God and your kids-

**Brandi:** Oh, my God.

**Annie:** ...I don't know. But how do you manage that fear? Is it manageable?

**Brandi:** I know.

**Annie:** Is it ever manageable?

**Brandi:** I had a moment really early on, I was actually still living in my old house because I was so overwhelmed with the spiritual weight of how this had impacted my kids. Because I will say a therapist said to me very clearly, "Your kids have gone through two divorces: the divorce of the parents and the divorce from the church." Because they were all born and raised. It's the only church they knew. And we did community with those people. So that was who we did holidays with and cookouts with and Friday nights were spent with these people.

**Annie:** Fourth of July.

**Brandi:** Fourth of July.

**Annie:** That's where I was every 4th of July.

**Brandi:** Very ingrained. So I knew pretty quickly when they said they'd gone through two divorces it would take a lot of healing to get them through that. I felt so overwhelmed with carrying that spiritual weight. Like, how do I teach my kids about God? How do I continue to have relationship with God? Do I need to start drilling them with Scripture and talking about how God shows up? Do I need to do this by the way I live my life? What do I need to tell them? What do I not need to tell them? When do I take them to church again?

**Annie:** And where?

**Brandi:** And where?

**Annie:** Right.

**Brandi:** Do you want to take them back to Cross Point? Because they need closure. Or what does this all look like? I was reading actually in Joshua one morning for my quiet time where the Israelites are crossing the Jordan and the Jordan is at flood stage. And I'd read that Scripture so many times.

**Annie:** Sure.

**Brandi:** And honestly probably it was kind of skimming it, because I'd read it so many times just trying to get to the devotion part of what I was reading. And in reading at that time, I just really and truly felt the presence of God in the room with me. Because what I was trying to do, Annie, if you read the passage, is the Israelites have been going for 40 years, they get to the Jordan, it's at flood stage, all they need to do to get to the promised land is cross the Jordan. How are they going to do that? The Jordan is very deep, it's very wide.

So Joshua has the priests who are carrying the Ark of the Covenant come to the front. They're usually in the middle with Israelites around them. He has the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant to come to the edge of the Jordan. And he tells them to take their first step. And I think when I read this story and looked at my parenting, I felt like I was responsible for everything that was going to happen.

So in reading the story, the priest puts their foot into the Jordan River. And when that happens, the Jordan piles up in a heap, a heap of protection, and what was once

the riverbed is now dry, solid ground. And the Ark of the Covenant is carried to the center of the Jordan and the priests stand there, while all hundreds of thousands of the Israelites cross by them into the Promised Land.

So when I looked at this story, I was like, "Oh, my gosh, as a parent, I have to do it all. I have to carry the ark of the covenant. I have to have the faith to take the first step. I have to hold back the water of protection. I have to stand in the middle while they cross around me. I have to deliver my kids to the promises that God has for their life. And I am terrified I'm going to get it wrong." I had this moment where I felt like God said, "Brandi, none of that is your job."

**Annie:** Wow.

**Brandi:** "It is my job to carry the ark of the covenant. It's my job to take the first step with your kids. It's my job to hold back the waters of protection. It's my job to lead them across the river. It's my job to deliver your kids to the promises I have for their life. Your job is to stand on Me, the solid ground."

**Annie:** Wow.

**Brandi:** "Your job is to hold Me in their lives. Your job is to show them what it's like to have a relationship with Me." And I just knew very clearly that I might be a single mom, but I wasn't parenting alone. And I needed to know that. And I've gotten to a place, Annie, and it is when we're talking about our kids, it's a constant surrender, and like, maybe I should take it back and do it myself.

I think one thing that was very clear to me is that, you know, nothing is wasted. God can take all of our pain and good can come from that. And if I believe that God can take my pain and use it for His purpose, I have to also believe He's going to do that for my kids' lives as well.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Brandi:** That's what I have to go back to when I start getting stressed or I'm overwhelmed as a single parent. Because you're carrying the emotional weight, the financial weight, the physical weight, the spiritual weight of it on your own. Yeah. And I just have to go back, if God is going to use the pain in my life for purpose, I have to trust that He's gonna do the same things with my kids as well.

**Annie:** I remember being at a football game with you and watching all the dynamics. All the family was there. Your boys were playing. Two of your boys were playing. I remember thinking, "The family to the right of us..." I didn't know. You might have known. But I didn't know them. They were strangers. "The two of them are just



watching their son play football. Over here, we've got... Do we speak to each other? Do we look at each other? How do we support Brandi? Afterwards, who talks when?" I mean, you are carrying all of that every time.

**Brandi:** Yes.

**Annie:** And sitting with you that time I thought, I don't know how you carry all this when you're supposed to just be cheering for your boys playing football.

**Brandi:** Well, and that's where a support system is huge. Because I will say I have rarely sat at a football game by myself. People show up because they love my kids, they love me. That is huge to know that you're not forgotten. It's huge to know that people know that just their presence changes things for you because you don't feel alone.

Now, what I will tell you is I have set by myself a few times alone and I have walked myself through where life is. And every time I'm like, "I'd rather sit here alone and healthy than married and dysfunctional."

**Annie:** Yeah. Yeah. There's worse things than being alone and lonely.

**Brandi:** There's worse things than being alone.

**Annie:** People say that single people a lot. You probably hear that. Lonely and single is very different than lonely and married.

**Brandi:** Yeah, for sure.

**Annie:** You're exactly right. For our friends listening, you and I did talk a little bit ahead of time about what we would talk about, what we wouldn't talk about because it's funny because I've lived... you know, and I've got my own feelings around this, right?

**Brandi:** For sure.

**Annie:** My own version of hurt and experience of this. But your youngest son is best friends with Kevin Queen's son-

**Brandi:** Is that not... I mean, it's one of... I have goosebumps. You just said it.

**Annie:** ...who is now the pastor of CrossPoint Church.

**Brandi:** Yes.

**Annie:** So can you talk about your experience a little bit of like the church you built is now run by other people who are wonderful.

**Brandi:** Yes, wonderful.

**Annie:** But also there's feelings around that, I'm sure. And your sons are best friends. And the Queen's son is the center and your son is the quarterback.

**Brandi:** Yes. Yes. Yes.

**Annie:** Is that weird or great or terrible?

**Brandi:** Oh my gosh.

**Annie:** What is it like for you? I know how much the Queens love your son, of course.

**Brandi:** Yes. Well, the feeling is mutual. We love Durham.

[crosstalk 00:34:14]

**Annie:** I know. He's the best.

**Brandi:** He's such a great kid. I mean, that has unfolded in such a God-ordained way. But Kevin and Rea Queen moved here from Atlanta to take over Cross Point. I think Crosspoint had been without a pastor for like a year and a half. So interesting because I received a call from Elder and staff to let me know that it was being announced. Like very considerate and thoughtful that they were filling me in when they didn't have to just to make sure that my heart was ready to hear at all which was great.

At that point in my life, I still attended Cross Point on and off at the Franklin campus because it was about 10 minutes from my house. And that was all my community. I hadn't decided where to settle yet. And I remember I was going to church at Franklin one Sunday, I texted one of the staff girls that's dear to me to say, "Hey, I'm on my way, I can't wait to see you." And as I'm pulling in, she says, "Hey, just wanted you to know Kevin has walked in. We didn't know he was coming. If that's too much for you, you can leave." I'm like, "No, this should happen at some point." So I walked in-

**Annie:** You're like, "Here we go-

**Brandi:** Here we go.

**Annie:** "My car is already here."

**Brandi:** They introduced me to Kevin. And of course, he's very gracious and kind. He has such a gentle spirit that I just really appreciate. But one of the things I was able to tell him was how I'm really grateful that Cross Point has continued on because if Cross Point had died when my marriage died, that would have been difficult. Even more difficult. It was all hard enough. So I love that God protected the church.

**Annie:** That's really generous of you, Brandi.

**Brandi:** Oh, it's so true. I love that God has protected the church. I have so much respect for, you know, staff who stayed through that transition. I know it wasn't easy. People who have stayed. I've run into people all the time and I'll say like, "Oh, where do you go to church?" And they'll say, "Cross Point." I'm like, "Great. That's awesome." I'm happy to hear that.

But I did have an interaction with Kevin and Rea pretty early on that just kind of set the stage for how they thought that relationship could turn out between our kids. But the boys were in, I think, seventh grade. We were playing an away game. It was a scrimmage actually. We were playing in our way scrimmage and I had rolled in late. And you know, you've already alluded to it, but when I get to a field, I'm like, "Where is the ex-husband and the new wife?" And I go the opposite direction.

So I had located where I wasn't sitting. So I go to the left, the game had already started and I'm standing there, lots of parents are standing around and Brewer's on the field as quarterback and he's doing a drive. And he comes in and I realize that Kevin and Rea are right there. I just walk over a couple of feet and I'm like, "Hey, what number is Durham? I want to make sure I'm cheering for him." And he told me Durham's number, and I'm like, "Great." And I start to walk away.

And Kevin said, "Hey, do you know what position Durham plays?" And I'm like, "No, I don't. It's first scrimmage of the season. I barely know everyone." And he says, "Durham's on the O line." And for those of you who don't play football or don't follow three children to football, the O line is the offensive line, and they stand across from the defensive line. And the defensive line's job is to basically take the head off of my son, the quarterback.

**Annie:** Right.

**Brandi:** So basically, if you have that picture in your head, the O line protects my kid. So when Kevin said, "He's on the O line," I immediately knew what that meant. And he said something to the effect of "Brandi, do you know what that means?" And I

nodded. And he said, "My kid's job is to protect your kid. My kid's job is to stand in front of your kid." And that was it.

Like the fact that he was acknowledging, "Hey, I think it's great that our kids can be friends and I think it's great that at times this might feel awkward. It doesn't need to. Let's just both acknowledge the awkwardness." And I've had some really great discussions with them over the years.

There have been times that, you know, Kevin has called to say like, "Hey, this is going on. I want to give you a heads-up about it. But he's, you know, asked my opinion on a couple of small things. Not a ton. I'm not trying to oversell it. But even the kindness of-

**Annie:** That's two parents parenting children. That's very normal.

**Brandi:** Yes. So very kind, very kind just to have that interaction with them and to still be able to celebrate the fact that I got to be part of something really special for 14 years and I still see that as a gift to my life that has helped shape who I am that I got to be part of that for 14 years.

**Annie:** I think so many people listening have had a version of this story of now my kids is friends with that kid who my ex is dating or now these... You know. The three of y'all, you and Rea and Kevin have modeled so beautifully like, Hey, this can be good. This is a beautiful thing that our boys love each other and the boys who are old enough to know don't let this stop them from-

**Brandi:** Not at all.

**Annie:** ...just thinking each other is that... I mean they are just the best boys.

**Brandi:** Yes. Yes.

**Annie:** I mean, it is the sweetest thing.

[00:39:37] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one last time to share about another amazing partner, [Allie + Bess](#). Okay, y'all I have been loving my new pieces from Allie + Bess. Their famous stretch bracelets and beaded necklaces come in the most fun colors and make it super quick and easy to add some cute jewelry to any outfit.

But did you know, listen, ears open, did you know Allie + Bess have a game day collection? Speaking of football, y'all, college football is only a few weeks away.

They design bracelets and necklaces stacks for over 50 team color combinations. So you can represent the colors you love, whether it's your kids' school or like Brandi, high school and two colleges, whether it's your professional team you cheer for, whatever team you love.

I have the entire Athens collection because Go Dawgs Sic 'em. I am so excited to wear these pieces all season long. They're really cute stackable bracelets with red and black on them. And there's a necklace that, y'all, is just so cute.

And don't worry, their brand new tailgate stacks in the collection are even sweat and waterproof so you can tailgate in them all day long. The Allie + Bess team have been longtime listeners of the pod so they just wanted to do something super special for all of us, which I love. Friends helping friends.

Right now they're offering us 30% off your order with the code ANNIE30. A-N-N-I-E-3-0. You can shop all of their pieces as well and an exclusive collection just for us at [shopalliebess.com/tsf](https://shopalliebess.com/tsf). That's shop [shopalliebess.com/tsf](https://shopalliebess.com/tsf).

That link and pretty much every other link you could ever hope for are in the show notes. And we also send them every Friday to you in your email and the AFD Week in Review. So make sure you check that out.

**Sponsor:** And one last amazing partner it's all about, [Simple Modern](#). Y'all know the right kind of water bottles to keep around you during the workday or in the car matters. It matters. So have you checked out Simple Modern?

Okay, I bet you've seen their super popular 40-ounce trek tumbler with the handle. You know that one. That one. It's all over social media, which has been so perfect for the summer. They're actually one of the top drinkware providers to Target and Walmart and Amazon.

But did you know they also have backpacks and drinkware and lunch bags and so much more? And they even have fun designs and partners like Disney and Marvel. And add these super cute reusable zip-up snack bags and heavy unicorns on them. Y'all they are 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 or fighting human trafficking, education, ending homelessness, and helping underprivileged communities. I just love it.

So go to [simplemodern.com/thatsoundsfun](https://simplemodern.com/thatsoundsfun). And when you share your email, you'll get a unique discount code just for you. Or you can bundle and save for back to

school. This can be your go-to brand for the fam, you guys. That is [simplemodern.com/thatsoundsfun](http://simplemodern.com/thatsoundsfun). And now back to finish up this conversation with Brandi.

[00:42:38] <music>

**Annie:** You write about this some in the book, how when you moved out of your old house, Cross Point families came and helped you move. But then the next time you needed house stuff, it was families from your new church.

**Brandi:** Oh my gosh. I do think... You know, I quote... I love Emily P. Freeman.

**Annie:** Yes, of course.

**Brandi:** And she has a quote something along the lines of like, are you trying to resuscitate what's dead or breathe life into the new that God's trying to give you? Even for me, I still love the church. I understand what happened was not the church's fault. It was a person. So the clarity that God gave me in that is great. So I still champion the big C church, champion Cross Point, champion all the churches I visit.

**Annie:** Sure. Sure.

**Brandi:** But for me what the best fit is right now is a micro church which is a small church that meets in multiple homes and then they come together once a month. Started in my neighborhood during the pandemic. I love the pastor and his wife.

**Annie:** I love you write about them coming and asking and... Oh, I loved it.

**Brandi:** Oh, just adore them. So in December a couple years ago, we had a big storm. In Nashville, we're always having big storms. My home was built in the 70s. It's as old as I am. We both have wrinkles. But it has lots of big trees. So during the storm, which was really brutal, we can tell that things are falling, but there's no electricity and it's super dark and it's just flashes of lightning.

And we wake up the next morning and this massive tree has fallen in my backyard, it's fallen on my fence. Part of it has fallen and it's sitting on the stairs. There are three stairs leading to my back door. So my entire backyard is just massive tree destruction, and I don't really know what to do. I am pretty independent, but I don't own a chainsaw. I'm not Lisa Harper who has her own chainsaw. I'm like, "I don't know how to fix this."

And in that moment, I just remember processing like, "I am still in touch with a lot of Cross Point people. There's a small group there that started in my home like 20

years ago that is still going. I could call the men from Cross Point and they would show up for me and take care of this tree."

**Annie:** Even today.

**Brandi:** Yeah. Honestly Kevin. I could call Kevin and he would probably have people to help with this.

**Annie:** No question.

**Brandi:** Then I had this other thought. I am part of this micro church that I'm-

**Annie:** Does that just mean small?

**Brandi:** Just mean small.

**Annie:** Okay.

**Brandi:** We meet in homes.

**Annie:** I've never heard of micro.

**Brandi:** It's a model.

**Annie:** It's beautiful.

**Brandi:** We're in six homes and we meet every Sunday. It's usually six to seven families who meet on a Sunday-

**Annie:** Oh, cool.

**Brandi:** And we do our Bible study together and then we also have a meal together. So we get a lot of bonding. And then once a month, we come together at another location, and that's our macro service where there's like 150 of us total.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Brandi:** But it's a safe environment for me. I enjoy it a lot. My kids have actually enjoyed it a lot. But I'm like, "I'm part of this micro church called local church, I could also call local church and I bet they would be able to help me too." And I was standing at this crossroads. At this point, I probably had one foot in and one foot out of local church trying to decide like committing to a church again.

**Annie:** That's all scary.

**Brandi:** But I just kind of felt God saying that like, "Brandi, are you trying to resuscitate what's dead or are you trying to step into the new that I'm offering you?" I actually called the pastor and I was like, "I have a tree down." And he said, "So what do you need?" And I said, "I'm not really sure." And he said, "Do you need help?" Yeah, I was like, Um. And he said, "Brandi, I am more than willing to advocate for you but I need you to tell me that you need help."

**Annie:** Wow.

**Brandi:** And I said, "I think I need help. I don't know what to do." He said, "Great. We'll be there at two o'clock." And two o'clock that afternoon and they were like seven guys and a bunch of teenage boys who rolled in and all had their chainsaws. And my kids it was really truly one of the first times they've engaged at local church, because I've been going on my own to feel it out. And they all ended up cutting down the tree together, stacking the firewood.

And it just felt like, you know, the baton of my heart from Cross Point was being passed to local church of like, this is where you're going to move forward as part of a church family.

**Annie:** So this is a very low-level example. But when I moved from Atlanta, it took me three or four years to switch dentists because you only go twice a year. And I loved my dentist in Atlanta. And I remember crying when I called a Nashville dentist, because I thought, "Oh, I'm really moving. This is when I'm really moving. I've had an address here but this is different." Do you have other moments like that of like, Oh, this was really the crossover?

**Brandi:** Church-wise?

**Annie:** Yeah. Or just like life-wise.

**Brandi:** Yeah. Life-wise, probably one of the major identifiers that was like, Oh, I'd gotten in a rhythm. I was figuring it all out, you know, I'd moved, I was doing things and... I stayed in the same county, but it meant I'd kind of do things in a different part of town.

**Annie:** Yeah, very different part of it, yeah.

**Brandi:** So I remember going to the doctor, and it was my first time at this new doctor, and it was like an orthopedics and... orthopedist. Orthopedist? Who takes care of bones?



**Annie:** Yeah, that guy or woman. A doctor.

**Brandi:** Yes, that doctor. And I'm filling out all the paperwork and then, you know, there's like 14 pages the first time. And I get to a point where it says, "In case of emergency." And I was like, "I don't have that person anymore." And I had been so getting everything transferred to my name, moving bank account, setting up house, like doing all the things that have to be done when you're starting life over.

I hadn't realized I didn't have an "in case of emergency" person and my eyes filled up with tears. That was the only phone number I had memorized in the world of cell phones. So I'm like, "I don't have an "in case of emergency" person anymore. What does that mean? Who's going to show up if something's really wrong with me? Who's going to take me to the hospital if I'm sick in the middle of the night? Who's going to...?" And you have to recognize, like, Okay, I can figure this out, and also I don't have that person in my life anymore. And there's grief that comes with that that takes a long time to walk through.

**Annie:** How'd you find the person for the emergency contact?

**Brandi:** I ended up asking my girlfriend whose house I was at the night we found out he was resigning. She had been through a divorce and her marriage now is a blended family. They've been together for 25 years. And I just said, "Will you be my "in case of emergency" person? And she was like, "Yes. You don't even have to ask me."

So she's still in my phone. Her husband made me put... I didn't realize you put I-C-E, ICe, in front of their name in case. So next time I was at their house, he's like, "Have you added I-C-E in front of her name and I'm like, "I haven't." And he said, "Do it now." So they both made sure that it was covered, so I had that person.

**Annie:** I want to talk about Leading and Loving It and I want to talk about dating. Those two things.

**Brandi:** Yes.

**Annie:** How do you get up... You and Lori Wilhite run Leading and Loving It which is an incredible ministry to women in leadership. It's just amazing. I know a bunch of women who are coming this fall to y'all's conference. Do you know a bunch of Cross Point women are coming?

**Brandi:** Yes. Chelsea texted and told me she was coming and I was ecstatic. I'm so happy about it.

**Annie:** So you're leading as a pastor's wife and you're leading this ministry. Talk about the transition. Talk about even in ministry, your ministry and leading women what it's meant to have a new life.

**Brandi:** You know, it's been really great. During the course of the divorce when everything was falling apart, my friendship with Lori is more than just the fact that we were both pastors' wives. But at the same time, my volunteer work that I had done for, gosh, probably eight or nine years at that point where we had written a book together, I did all of that on the side as a volunteer, I knew that was going to change with the fact that I wasn't a pastor's wife anymore, because that's kind of the platform that it was built on.

And very early on, Lori directly looked at me and said, "A title and a role might be taken from you but no one can take God's call on your life except for Him."

**Annie:** Wow.

**Brandi:** "So you can still do ministry." We worked some things out at Leading and Loving It, where I could go on staff there as a full-time position, which is great, because it has insurance and benefits, which, you know, is very important when you're single. But what we had noticed as the ministry had been growing over those nine years, is that it wasn't just we might have started that as pastors' wives, but we had lots of women who were leading in churches or Christian nonprofits at some level, who were also showing up because a lot of the struggles are similar.

**Annie:** All the Leading and Loving It stuff speaks to me.

**Brandi:** So it ended up being really a great fit that we have this, you know, female ministry leader and pastor's wife, who's also leading her own ministry as well continuing to grow the organization. One of the things we are very intentional about diversity. On our stage at the conference, we're intentional about it, you know, in any kind of media. We have a very diverse audience, and we want to represent that.

One thing that surprised me, and you have probably heard this before, but at the last conference when we were... we as a team we have a volunteer team of about 15. We were breaking the conference down about two weeks later, and one of the girls from National Community Church had brought a team. And she said, "You know, all of my girls talked about how happy they were to have a single woman represented on stage."

**Annie:** I hear it all the time.

- Brandi:** And I had not even connected the dots that I bring a piece of diversity that other women want to see. And they so I appreciated the fact that there was somebody else single. Because everybody else on stage is married. So that has been a really cool piece of people looking at how are you a female leader and single? What does that look like for you that I'm really honored to get to represent?
- Annie:** It is interesting because I think there are actually very few amount of male single leaders at the top of organization.
- Brandi:** I totally agree.
- Annie:** You know, no one has models. Really, there's very, very few. It's a bell curve. I hear you person say, "Well, what about so and so?" I hear you. I hear you. But the percent of married male leaders is so much higher than single male leaders."
- Brandi:** Right.
- Annie:** So the percentage of women is even smaller because of the amount of leaders that are female. So yes, I think it is one of the gifts of Leading and Loving It is that y'all bring so many different voices to women of this is what it looks like to lead when some of your story looks like some of this story.
- Brandi:** Right.
- Annie:** What has dating been like? It's been seven years, right?
- Brandi:** Yes.
- Annie:** I want people to hear that too, that we aren't having this conversation in 2017.
- Brandi:** Right.
- Annie:** This is seven full years. Six Christmases, a bunch of summers, hundreds of football games. This is a long-
- Brandi:** A lot of life lived.
- Annie:** Life, yeah.
- Brandi:** A really beautiful and great life. I have created a life that I love living. And I would also at some point like to be in a permanent relationship again. I love being a wife. I love being a partner. I've done a lot of first dates, Annie.

**Annie:** Yes, I know. You have done it.

**Brandi:** I've done a few second dates. Actually, about four months ago I got out of a relationship that had been about 15 months with a really wonderful man. I still believe is wonderful. And the timing was off. That is life.

**Annie:** That's breakup still.

**Brandi:** Oh, breakups are brutal. I mean, I loved him. He's wonderful. He's a great person, and it wasn't the right time. I think it is really healthy for me to have a situation where there's a breakup and it's healthy and we still respect one another and speak kindly of one another. I think it's really good for my kids to see that. I will say one thing he did that was very kind as wrote letters to all of my kids after.

**Annie:** When you broke up?

**Brandi:** When we broke up.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Brandi:** And the letters had nothing to do with me. I'm like, "Surely he's gonna tell them how amazing I am." But the letters were about them and what he saw in them, and the great things he knew that they would do in their future, and that if he could ever be of assistance to them for anything that they had his number, and they always had the permission to reach out to him, which is a very high character thing to do.

**Annie:** It's brutal. It's beautiful, but it's brutal that you're like, "Oh, it's a good guy."

**Brandi:** I know. I know. But it was a really great relationship and it showed me that I can do healthy relationship. I did a lot of things really well in that. I don't know what dating looks like moving forward. I'm not quite ready for it yet.

**Annie:** One of the things our mutual friend Angie Smith taught me... Gosh, 2015. I'm thinking about which house I lived in when she said that. When the relationship ended, she said, "I want you to write down three things you did really well, and then I want you to write down three things you wish you had done better." And the "wish you had done better" list is so easy. "The reason this ended is because I..."

But the three things that you're like... like you even saying I was really good at relationships. It's such a growth place for so many people to say, like, "Here's where I can tell the work with my counselor or their work with my small group or my pastor, my mentor is paying off because I'm seeing growth in me."

**Brandi:** My pastor said to me, "You know your grief is beginning to heal when you can look at a situation and that person and be able to say, 'You hurt me, and you helped me.'"

**Annie:** Wow.

**Brandi:** Hurting mean through the breakup. The breakup was hurtful. And you also helped me realize I'm a really good partner and you helped me realize I have a lot to bring to the table. And I didn't have that confidence when my marriage ended. So I've come really far in being able to just show up for someone and make sure I'm staying true to myself.

**Annie:** The book goes so deep into so much of this and tells your story. So I want people to read it. But I'm curious, even in that of what you're saying of like, what next? Where do you see your life going?

**Brandi:** I am going to a lot of football games.

**Annie:** You're like, "I'll tell you where I'll be this fall."

**Brandi:** I do. I have started doing a lot of coaching. I have a couple certifications in coaching. I am, you know, walking a lot of people through divorce, a lot of women through divorce. Also, the part I'm really enjoying is helping them start over again. So kind of owning that identity, getting to know themselves again, realizing how special and unique they are, teaching them to dream for their own life, teaching them how to have healthy communication, how to, you know, move forward and craft a life they love living.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Brandi:** So I hope I get to do a lot more of that. I want to be able to continue to lean in the way that God wants me to use the life He's given me to help other people.

**Annie:** This is such a hard question because it's different in every city but have you found dating apps that you liked better than others?

**Brandi:** I haven't done one in a long time.

**Annie:** Yeah, it's great.

**Brandi:** So just because I was in that relationship for a while and I have not been ready to move forward with an app yet. So no, I really haven't. I used Hinge. I heard the League is good. I've considered trying that. I do think I'm to a point that I'm willing to pay where before I did stuff for free. I'm like, Okay, if I'm gonna pay this much

to go to the gym and this match to whatever, then I think I'm to the point where I'm willing to pay to maybe be able to have an easier access to someone I might be a better fit with.

**Annie:** And they really are serious about it too if they're paying. If you're doing it for free you have no idea if it's actually them. But if someone's paid yes to do something, then they are thinking about being in a healthy relationship, too. So I support that, too. People always want to know, what app should I do, what app should I do. And you're like, "Well, do you live in Kansas or LA?"

**Brandi:** I know. I know. Annie, you tell me. Now my question is, I'm curious, what app? Tell me.

**Annie:** They're so different in every city. It's what are you looking for?

**Brandi:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Right. So I mean, I don't know either. The League is great, I think. But The League is really expensive.

**Brandi:** I have looked it up. I will tell you this as I've looked it up. It's crazy expensive.

**Annie:** So you're like, I don't-

**Brandi:** I'm like, Maybe I just develop my own app. That can be my single mom side hustle.

**Annie:** Right. I mean, Bumble, Hinge. I mean, those seem to be the ones that people have luck with no matter where you live, but I'm also like, You and I cannot endorse any app because we don't know where you live and we don't know who your neighbors are and we don't know whether this app works in your community or not anyway. So challenging.

**Brandi:** Yeah, it just adds a different layer to dating in today's world.

**Annie:** That had to be an awful part of this getting back in.

**Brandi:** Oh, you have no clue how many dates I went on. And they would be asking questions and I would say, "Yeah." And as the story is unfolding, because sometimes they might not know your last name until you meet up, whatever, they're like, "Oh, my gosh, you're pastor so and so's ex-wife. I attended your Cross Point." And I'm like, "Check. I'm done." And that happened a lot. I am not exaggerating when I say that happened a lot. I would love to organically meet someone. And organically in 2023 is different than it was in 2000.

**Annie:** Yeah. What did we not talk about that you want to make sure we talk about?

**Brandi:** Gosh, I don't know. I feel like you've covered it.

**Annie:** You covered it. I just got to be here with you and testify to the life you have built.

**Brandi:** Oh, thank you. I've really enjoyed this interview a lot. You've asked questions that have allowed me to tell different aspects that I haven't told. So it actually has been just a reminder of how far my kids and I have come. I think I just want to probably encourage people who are going through it. I titled the book Better Than Okay because when I'm talking to women going through it, their first question is, will I be okay?

**Annie:** Guess what? That's people's question to me about being single: Will I be okay?

**Brandi:** Will I be okay? I got to the point where I'm like, "You're going to be better than okay." But their second question is always, will my kids be okay? I think one of my main questions became, can I redefine family without feeling like something's missing? And, man, you can do that, too. Single parents, keep at it. And the days are long, you're exhausted, you can recreate your family unit and make beautiful memories. Teach your kids how to walk through hard things together, teach them how to manage loss, and also teach them how to live a really beautiful and fulfilling life. So yeah, your kids are going to be better than okay and you can redefine family where nothing's missing.

**Annie:** I love you. Thank you for doing this.

**Brandi:** Oh, I love you too. Thank you.

**Annie:** The fun part is, this podcast episode is hosted by someone who loves you, and an office of people who love you and it's gonna be edited by someone who's loved you for a long time.

**Brandi:** Oh, my gosh.

**Annie:** That's so-

**Brandi:** Kind.

**Annie:** This one is special for us.

**Brandi:** Thank you.

**Annie:** Because... I mean, I honor you. You have pastored me for 10, 15 years, and even... every year. There has not been a year that your life didn't pass to me.

**Brandi:** Thank you. Thank you so much.

**Annie:** I really am thankful for that. So it has looked a lot of different ways, but it has been consistent. And so that's one of the reasons Leading and Loving It is beautiful is people get to be pastored by you, which has affected my life deeply.

**Brandi:** Thank you. It means the world to me.

**Annie:** Okay, Brandi, the last question we always ask. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

**Brandi:** Oh my gosh, today, in general, life?

**Annie:** Yeah, life. Whatever is fun for you.

**Brandi:** What sounds fun for me. I mean, why do I always go back to... It's football season and it's the best season of the year.

**Annie:** I'm so ready. I'm so ready.

**Brandi:** It's my favorite season.

**Annie:** When do they start?

**Brandi:** We have a scrimmage on Friday night.

**Annie:** Oh, yeah.

**Brandi:** So that's tomorrow.

**Annie:** That's tomorrow. It starts right now. So yeah, our first game is August 18th and I'm classy until kickoff. And I've got a t-shirt and I've got... My new football t-shirt says it's Friday in Franklin.

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

**Brandi:** And I'm like, "Yes it is." So football. I love it.

**Annie:** I love it. Are you ever worried about your boys getting hurt?



**Brandi:** Yeah.

**Annie:** I know. They haven't gotten hurt. Every game are you nervous?

**Brandi:** Yes, I'm a mess. Somebody said to me the other day they were at the house. I can't remember who it was. And they said, "I'm gonna come to a game. Are you enjoyable to be around?" And Gage said, my middle said, "No, she's not. She's either screaming her head off or she's asking a million questions or..." So yes. No. I get very nervous, especially at that quarterback position.

**Annie:** Are all three boys still playing this fall? Jett's a senior?

**Brandi:** Jett's a senior. He plays corner and [inaudible 01:04:38]. And then-

**Annie:** He is so fast.

**Brandi:** ...Gage is a safety at Rhodes.

**Annie:** That is so fun. Okay. I mean, is there all different colors? Are you wearing three different-

**Brandi:** Oh, listen to this. Jett and Gage play each other this year.

**Annie:** No.

**Brandi:** They're in the same division. It's in October.

**Annie:** You gotta get one of those special ones like the Kelsey mom did.

**Brandi:** I know. That's what I said too.

**Annie:** A special half jersey. I can't believe. And they will actually play against each other. Like literally a corner and-

**Brandi:** They both play defense.

**Annie:** That's right. You're right. Okay, good. So they will not actually face each other.

**Brandi:** Right. But they'll be at the same game. And I only have to go one place that week.

**Annie:** That's right. The downside is your sons play against each other. The upside is one travel stop.

**Brandi:** Yeah. Typically when people say, "What are you going to do on Saturdays?" I'm like, "They play each other in October." That's the one weekend that feels easy.

**Annie:** Well, I'm cheering for them too.

**Brandi:** Thank you so much.

**Annie:** I love those boys. Thanks for doing this.

**Brandi:** Thank you.

[01:05:29] <music>

**Outro:** Oh, y'all, isn't she just amazing? I know. I know. I know. So make sure you grab a copy of her book, *Better Than Okay*. This is a great book to put in the hands of your friends, to put in the hands of people who are walking through a hard season. You will be better than okay. Make sure you're following Brandi on social media. Thank her so much for being on the show.

Also, if you are a woman in ministry or a pastor's wife, you've got to check out the work she's doing at *Leading and Loving It*. They have a ton of resources. And remember Brandi does coaching as well. So if that would be helpful to you to have a conversation directly with Brandi, you can go to her website. We'll link it in the show notes. But it is *Lovebrandiwillson*, Brandi spelled with an I, [lovebrandiwillson.com](http://lovebrandiwillson.com).

And hey, if this conversation mattered to you, will you please tell us? We only know what you want to hear more of when you tell me on Instagram or when you review the show or when you share the show. That is what we pay attention to is what matters most to you based on what you say to us.

You also can shoot us an email at [tellmemore@anniefdowns.com](mailto:tellmemore@anniefdowns.com). So you can let us know if stories like Brandi's are resonating with you and you want to hear more. We truly listen to your feedback. Listen, I'm telling you, the entire month of October is because you said so. It's because you said so. So we want to bring you shows that matter to you. We're so grateful. Y'all listen and that you show up here and how kind you are to our guests. We just want to make sure we're building the shows that you want. So let us know. Let us know.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook. All the places you may need

me, that is how you can find me. 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, do something that sounds fun to you, do something fun. I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me is I am heading tomorrow morning on a plane to see a baby that is my godson. I cannot wait. I get to meet my godson tomorrow. So that is what sounds fun to me.

Y'all have a great weekend. I will too. We will see you back here on Monday with my dear friend and much-requested return guest, Hosanna Wong. Will see y'all on Monday.