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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.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Athletic Greens](#). Okay, listen, this time of year is getting busy, and keeping up with the supplements and vitamins you want to take in a day can be one more thing on your long list of tasks. But AG1 by Athletic Greens truly makes it super simple. You can incorporate all the nutrients you need into your day with just one scoop. It is the healthiest thing you can do in under a minute.

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Intro: Today on the show, I get to talk with my friend Dr. Russell Moore. Gracious, I respect this man so much. You may remember him from Episode 249 or know his work as the editor-in-chief at Christianity Today.

Dr. Moore's latest book *Losing Our Religion: An Altar Call for Evangelical America* released August 1st. It is an important challenge to the church to actually live out the Gospel instead of letting cynicism and division tear us apart and define what the world sees in Christianity.

In this book, he calls us to conversion over culture wars, to truth over tribalism, to the gospel over politics, to integrity over influence. And we talk about a lot of that today. I am just so honored that he would take time to be with us. I'm always appreciative of Dr. Moore's wise voice of reason, and his ability to speak truth in confusing moments in our culture. I think you're really going to learn a lot from him today.

So here is my conversation with Dr. Russell Moore.

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Annie: Dr. Moore, welcome back to That Sounds Fun.

Dr. Moore: Oh, it's great to be here. Thanks, Annie.

Annie: I'm so glad you're here. It is such an honor to sit in a room with you.

Dr. Moore: I know. It's great to be in person-

Annie: Thank you.

Dr. Moore: ...and to see your place and everything.

Annie: Yeah, thank you. Okay, I want to start... Let's honor Tim Keller for a minute. I mean, what does he know that we don't know? Everything.

Dr. Moore: Everything. Yeah, yeah.

Annie: Oh, I just imagine what a joy it was when he got there.

Dr. Moore: Yeah, yeah. You know, he said to several people right at the very end, "I'm ready to be with Jesus." I think that's clearly the case. This is somebody who had such a sense of... people think about his intellect but there was such a sense of gratitude. I mean, I remember I felt like an idiot one day because he called... I was going through some stuff and he called to check on me and I talked, we talked for over an hour. And at the end of it, I found out he was going through chemotherapy then.

Annie: Wow.

Dr. Moore: And I was like, Here, I've talked about my little trivial nonsense for this long. And his response I will never forget, because he said, "You know, I'm in my 70s, I've got a wife I love, I've got great children who are all following the Lord, fantastic grandchildren. What do I have to complain about?" That really struck me because I'm not at the place of my own spiritual maturity where that would be my response to that kind of thing.

Annie: When you posted about him passing away, you talked about this secret group of y'all and like a book club or something, right?

Dr. Moore: We have two secret groups that Tim was a part of that secret. One is a book club that we... It's really the books are an excuse to hang out and encourage each other. And the other is a group that meets every Thursday, that includes non-Christians, Christians, everything. So Tim would be in that group with another friend of ours who's a complete atheist-

Annie: Wow.

Dr. Moore: ...and who would often... he would often say, "I feel like I'm colorblind. Like there's a color you all can see of the spirit that I just can't see." But I watched the way Tim so patiently loved him and really was direct in terms of talking to him. And after he died, of all of the tributes, that was the one that struck me the most is this atheist talked about his character and said, "I loved him." And he did. He really did.

Annie: If people have not read Tim Keller yet, do you have the like, this is the one or these are the two, like, here's how you can get to know Tim or glean the most from him?

Dr. Moore: Well, I think his Reason for God is a really, really good and helpful one, especially for people who are trying to think through, does this make sense? That's really good. And also to listen to the sermons. There's just something about the way he was able to communicate.

I think about all the time he talked about one time he was preaching and there was a woman there who hadn't... Maybe this was her first time in church. And she yelled out, "Well, what about whatever?"

Annie: Good on her.

Dr. Moore: Yeah. And he said, "I had a decision to make because if I stopped and answered the question, we would never have preaching again. It would be Q&A time." He said, "And I also knew, though, that I couldn't ignore her." So I said, "What did you do?" And he said, "Well, I waited a little bit and I answered her question, just as though I had always planned to answer it."

Annie: Like it was in the sermon.

Dr. Moore: "Some of you might be asking..."

Annie: "Some of you may wonder."

Dr. Moore: Which I thought just fully encapsulates who he is. And then after he talked to her, she was great. She's thought, you know, How do you do this? And he told her how.

Annie: What happens now? When Tim Keller passes away, for starters, I don't know that I've seen people across our faith celebrate someone. There may have been and I just didn't see it. I didn't see any like, he was a good man, comma, here's the article after the comma. I just didn't see those.

Dr. Moore: Well, part of that is Tim. Part of it is the sadness of our time. Because we've seen so many people who haven't finished well, and not just because of scandal. But a lot of times when someone's coming to the end of a ministry, there's a kind of fear of mortality and it can bring out the worst in somebody. I mean, that's why we see so many church transitions that go really badly.

Annie: Right.

Dr. Moore: And that never happened with him.

Annie: Right.

Dr. Moore: I wish, I hope, I pray we have the day where this is routine. That we would have so many people that we say, Look at the character integrity of that ministry.

Annie: For those of us hopefully in the middle, you and I are in the middle, I hope we're at like maybe halftime. I'm not even quite ready to be at halftime. For those of us in the middle, what did you learn from being up close to him about finishing well? Like what can we go ahead and do? John Mark Comer always says, You're not deciding who you're going to be at 80 when you're 80, you're deciding right now. So what did you learn about finishing well from him now that we can start doing?

Dr. Moore: Well, he intentionally... he stepped away from Redeemer and concentrated on the church Planning Network, Redeemer City to City. And he did that intentionally. Because he said, "I don't want the church to be in a situation where I'm holding on till the end and then there's an abrupt kind of transition. I really do want to empower the church to go forward." And he did. So he was always thinking about this. And that's a hard thing to think about I'm sure. When you get to that point, a lot of people want to ignore that and just keep going. But he really carefully reflected on it.

And the other thing is Tim was an encourager in ways that people don't even know. He would call people and check on them and pour his life into them in ways that people just don't... Maybe they think of Tim as preacher scholar, but they don't really think of him as the pastor outside of Redeemer. But he really was for a lot of people.

He knew the sorts of challenges people would face. Like when Tish Harrison Warren started writing a piece for The New York Times every week, he said, "We need to watch and encourage her because she's gonna get a lot of blowback from people. So we need to not leave her hanging out there by herself if she does." I mean, that's really forward-thinking of how to care for somebody.

Annie: Which I will publicly say you did that for me.

Dr. Moore: Oh, thanks.

Annie: When I was in a bad spot, you called and said, "You're right?" "I'm not. I'm not all right." You said, "You're gonna be all right."

Dr. Moore: "You're gonna be all right."

Annie: And I was like, "I'm not sure I'm gonna be all right, but okay. If you say so, Dr. Moore, I believe you." Okay, let's jump into your new book, *Losing Our Religion: An Altar Call for Evangelical America*. I told you before we started, it feels like there's a little bit of a theme from the Holy Spirit across some books, across yours, David Platt's, KB, these leaders of faith saying to us, America, you're off, you're off, and we got to correct this.

Dr. Moore: Yeah

Annie: How long ago did you know you needed to write this book? Did you know in 2016? Did it start back then?

Dr. Moore: I think in 2016, I knew I was going to have to write something like this but I didn't think it would be the way that it is. I thought, really, I was going to have to say, "Here's how we got off track, and now that we're all back together and kind of let's not do it again."

Annie: Not that that's happening.

Dr. Moore: I didn't dream that the craziness would intensify. And that's what's happened. And craziness it's not just in one area but everywhere. I mean, literally 30 seconds before I sat down here with you, I got a text from a friend in a different denomination. Well, I guess I'm in a non-denominational church. So I guess everybody's in a different denomination. But he texted me and said, "I'm really coming under fire." And it was for the most ridiculous thing, but where people were wanting to narrow to such a degree and to come after him. It's just everywhere.

COVID. We're still not over COVID in terms of the wreckage that it has left in people's lives. So I didn't know that. I didn't see all of that coming. And of course, by that point, 2016, I had not experienced a lot of things that I experienced and I also had not seen the church sexual abuse crisis to the degree that I later did. I think maybe I thought I was going to write something in 2016 but it wouldn't have been this book.

Annie: When I was reading it, I just kept thinking, is this the kind of book that you... You did so much research. There's so much stats and quotes and like... you can't ignore this, y'all. These are stats. I mean, the stat about 2070, how we will have less Christians in America than ever before by 2070 if we don't write this, you know. When you're sitting down to do this, how much are you going, "I just gotta tell what I've just lived through and experienced because people need to know that there's a breaking down here that we can intercept if we try?" Why the stats? Why do you have to bring in the science?

Dr. Moore: Because I'm trying to make the point this isn't just anecdotal. I mean, there are a lot of people who would say, "I know there's something wrong and I can feel that in terms of what's going on, but I don't know what it is." That's one part of it.

The second part of it is because I think there's a tendency for us to think, well, something will happen, and just get us back to where we were before. That's just not the case.

Annie: You do such a beautiful job. The thing that made me cry reading your book was talking about the nostalgia of church. Because I think that might be one thing that's holding me back and maybe our peers is I go like, "I loved youth group. I loved..."

Dr. Moore: I do too.

Annie: In the book, when you start giving us like, here's what to do, the thing that broke my heart is you said, Make peace with homelessness because church is not what it used to be. Because that is how I grew up. I used to joke if the doors were open and the Coke machine was taking a quarter, I was there.

Dr. Moore: Me too. Me too.

Annie: I was there and it just... That isn't church anymore.

Dr. Moore: And that particular challenge, I was not just preaching to the choir, I was preaching to the preacher, because that's my fatal flaw as well.

Annie: It's so sad.

Dr. Moore: And it's one of those things... A good friend of mine, he and my wife both said to me, "Your problem is not bitterness and resentment. Your problem is nostalgia and you go through and kind of edit out all of the bad things and just long for the good things."

And even the week this book was published, this week, I heard myself saying to my wife, because we were watching a show that was set in the 90s, and I said, Weren't the 90s is great. "Oh, would that be great to be back in the 90s?" This is the very thing that I was writing about.

Annie: What is that? When people talk about Christian culture, is my nostalgia about Christian culture?

Dr. Moore: I don't think so. I think instead, it's a nostalgia for the time in your life, in your life particularly when there was a newness just because of your stage of life and a newness to experiencing Christ and Christian community. I think that's a lot of it. Now, there is a lot of Christian culture that we kind of...

I mean, I think about all the time Vacation Bible School, the way that my church did it, lining up at the front door with the flag, pledging allegiance to the Bible and all of that. I loved that world and desperately would like that world back. And part of it is because it was a stable, cohesive kind of a place. Part of it is that I was a kid learning how to be a disciple of Jesus.

Annie: I just never thought it would be any different. I just thought the church was always going to be like, we had Wednesday night supper. And a lot of our friends listening probably still do have Wednesday night supper, you know? I imagine there are places that that is still... that they're going, What are y'all talking about?

Dr. Moore: You know, there was a song, I didn't really get it at the time. But this has been... who knows how many years ago. But Amy Grant had a song called 1974, and it was about her young adult life and youth group and everything. And it was, as the years go by, make it ever new as the years go by how I need to see that still me. And there came a point where that song really started to make more sense.

Annie: I think this conversation, this part of it, is why what's happened in the public space, what's happened in politics has been particularly painful for so many of us is because it has been, "Wait, I thought we'd always be. And none of us knew what was going on behind the scenes. When I was in youth group in the 90s, I didn't know people were being sexually abused in the youth group in the 90s.

Dr. Moore: Right.

Annie: So there's that too, that there were certainly things going on, there are people listening who are in pain in that time that I didn't know about. But when we look at what's happened with politics, and you write about this really beautifully in *Losing Our Religion*, when you look at what's happened with the time together of politics and faith, was that happening in the 90s, was that happening in 1974 and it just wasn't on social media?

Dr. Moore: It was happening, but it was happening in a different way. We have moved into a place where for a long time, there was a sense of, okay, what we're really about is gospel, evangelism, missions. And then there's some implications out here. And there was always a politicized group of people that were there. But there came a point where that sense of meaning and purpose sort of fell away in American culture broadly and this became paramount. And not just paramount.

What we really see going on right now, as I think about when I was a kid, these Bible prophecy conferences that people would have, and you could draw a huge crowd by saying, "Hey, I can tell you why we are right at the point of the rapture." This is the terminal generation. And it would give people this sense of I'm right here at the moment, you know, this is scary and yet it's exciting. That happens now, but it's been totally secularized. It's not about the rapture, it's about whoever the people are that you are afraid of are going to come get you.

Annie: Are going to take over.

Dr. Moore: And this is it. This is the final moment.

Annie: And the interesting thing is it feels like Christians feel that about each other.

Dr. Moore: About each other, yeah,

Annie: Maybe what I experienced 20 years ago, 30 years ago was a fear of the church being overtaken by non-church. And now it is the church being overtaken by another type of people who don't believe what I believe, people who are diametrically opposed and are definitely not Christians, but they say they aren't.

Dr. Moore: Well, and you have a lot of people who grew up and have been part of churches or movements who suddenly find themselves exiles, and who will say, "I didn't change." So there we had accidentally exiles. Sort of the fear that comes through there is I don't even know who you are anymore.

That always is disorienting and scary no matter what group you're in. But it's especially the case in a Christian setting, in a church setting because there's a part

of you, even if you know better in your mind, there's a part of you for whom that feels like Jesus saying, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." It really does. You have to work through that. So that makes it especially hard.

Annie: And it's hard.

Dr. Moore: It's hard.

Annie: It's hard.

[00:20:12] <music>

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Now back to our conversation with Dr. Moore.

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Annie: You say in the book—I can't wait for people to see the picture on Instagram because I have so many tabs in here—The question is not whether we will deconstruct but what we will deconstruct. And I think what you're saying is the work of Annie has been "can you deconstruct that the experience of church from your youth group years, from your childhood years does not have to look like the experience of church now. Can you deconstruct that that is God? That was not God. That was what we knew to do then. And it's different now.

Dr. Moore: Yeah. I don't like the word deconstruct, because it can mean so many things.

Annie: Right. Right.

Dr. Moore: But I think at this level, all of us have to say constantly, Okay, what was it that I've been holding on to that is of Christ? And what is it that I've been holding on to that isn't? Because if you don't do that, what happens is once you see something that

turns out to be false or even worse, evil, then you think, Okay, well, that was Jesus. It was the whole package and you have nowhere to go.

Annie: In the book when you're giving us like, here's who we can be, you talk about the difference between I want to find it being a Bible reader and a Bible quoter. And that's it. As we separate ourselves from our Christian culture, the only way to know what is Jesus is to be a Bible reader not a Bible quoter.

Dr. Moore: Yeah. And I think there are a lot of people who are intimidated by the Bible because they assume you have to have memorized all of these things.

Annie: And understand it.

Dr. Moore: Bible Memory is great. Yeah, and understand it. You have to know, here's what this means, and here are these applications, and here are the way that I can... The way that Bible works, you just have to be in it. And what happens is it shapes the way that you... sort of your intuitions. You start to see things that you say, "Oh, wait, I recognize that. That's what's happening to me, or that's what's going on around me." And so that's why, you know, a lot of people, they start reading the Bible through and they get to Leviticus, and they get just weirded out, and they say, "This has nothing to do with me at all," and so they just stop.

Annie: Right.

Dr. Moore: When in reality, it's okay to say as you're reading the Bible, I don't know what this means or what it has to do with me. That's actually I think a good way to pray through the Bible is to say, "God, I don't understand Leviticus. But there's something you need to shape in the with Leviticus." And keep pressing.

Annie: Unfortunately, the word, though, that keeps bubbling up for me is "forging", which is awful because it means it involves fire. Right?

Dr. Moore: Right. Right.

Annie: I understand. But that is what I sense with the Lord. As I was reading your book, as I'm kind of walking my life, and as we're starting to hear... I mean, the daily this morning was about the next election, and how Biden and Trump are doing already, which is insane to me. As we are forging our lives to be holy and to allow God to forge us into who we want to be, how do we stick with the Bible when there are so many options? I mean, you talk about the weird time where there's no common set of facts because everybody don't believe the Bible is all true anymore. What do we do?

Dr. Moore: You know, I think-

Annie: That's a big question. Sorry, Dr. Moore.

Dr. Moore: I think we're at a time where the bar is even lower than holiness as the first step is humanity. Because we're at a time where we tend to lose sight of ourselves or of other people as common human beings made in the image of God, even before we get to the daily crucifying of the flesh, coming to life in the Spirit. I mean, that is gone for many of us.

Everything then starts to become about political identity. Everything does, when in reality there are people who completely disagree with each other politically but at the human level, they're able to connect with one another. And then certainly, of course, by the time you move into holiness, people who share a common spirit to be able to do that. But right now, even just the humanities are.

Annie: Yeah. We've just forgotten to the baseline: they are made in the image of God.

Dr. Moore: Yeah. And part of that is, I think... Wendell Berry said one time that in a really small rural farming community like the one that he lived in, that you had to have prepaid forgiveness because everybody needed each other.

Annie: Wow.

Dr. Moore: You didn't have an internet circle of people to go and talk to. You needed people who differed with you greatly. And that part of it is lost. We really don't see the fact that we need each other.

Annie: No. I've been listening to a conversation around value-based purchasing. And I hear that to some degree. If you want to support a small business, that's okay. But the thing that happens to you and me, as authors and as public people is people want to value-based purchase us.

Dr. Moore: Yes. That's right.

Annie: So they want to understand everything. They want to know what they disagree with. So there is no, we need each other, even if we disagree. It is "I need to know that Dr. Moore, and I agree on everything, or I will not support anything."

Dr. Moore: Yes. The problem is, that would be one thing if it were just with kind of public people. But that's the way that we're choosing our friends and choosing which family members we speak to now.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Dr. Moore: Someone told me not long ago about realizing that there was a family text thread that they'd always had. And there came a point where she realized, Oh, wait, there are two family text threads, and I'm only on one of them.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Dr. Moore: I mean, that's so common right now. And it's because we think if we're not completely aligned, then we're enemies. And then everything has to become a battle about that. I was teaching at a very secular university a year or so ago, and there was an atheist, lesbian young woman who came to see me. And I thought she wanted to argue or something. What she wanted was she said, "My parents have become evangelical Christians. They are great, but they're new Christians living in North Carolina. Can you kind of coach me on how to relate well to them? And are there certain minefields I ought to avoid so that I don't unintentionally offend them?"

Annie: Wow.

Dr. Moore: And I just stepped back and said, If that attitude were present everywhere, what a different country we would have. Because she was seeing her parents not as a set of issues to argue with. She was seeing her parents as her parents, even though she disagreed with them. Sometimes you look at that in people who aren't Christians, and you think, Wow,

Annie: We should be-

Dr. Moore: We should be like that.

Annie: That looks like Jesus. I mean, you mentioned it, that they were evangelicals. Now, I find myself when I'm defining myself I say I'm Protestant. Even though I love Catholics, I'm very Catholic-curious, I love what they're doing, I don't define myself as evangelical because it feels like it has so many knots tied in it. But if I say I'm Protestant, that's just identifying that I'm a believer that is not Catholic. Will you define them for me so I know what I'm...?

Dr. Moore: Yeah, I'm not ready to give up the word "evangelical" because it is such a beautiful word and really does encapsulate that there's a particular emphasis of personal new birth.

Annie: Tell me that. Tell me what's the difference between evangelical and Protestant when I'm defining myself.

Dr. Moore: All evangelical or most of the evangelical are Protestant. But it's a unique stream within Protestantism that's reminding everybody else, you come before God person by person, not group by group, the Bible is the truth, it speaks to us truthfully. Those sorts of emphases that are necessary.

So what I can't do, though, is to say, I'm an evangelical Christian. Period. What you have to do at this point is to come in and say, Okay, what do you understand when you hear the word of evangelical Christian? And then explain. You know, you do the same thing with Christian.

Annie: Right.

Dr. Moore: Somebody says to you on a plane, "I'm a Christian," a lot of times what they mean by that is my parents Christian me and I just moved on with my life and haven't thought about Jesus since.

Annie: You should see the dating apps, Dr. Moore.

Dr. Moore: I want to make it clear I have not been on the dating app.

Annie: Yes. Yes. That's why I'm having to explain it to you. Dear everyone.

Dr. Moore: Listen, if my wife listens to this podcast.

Annie: No. I can show you but you don't know personally by any stretch. When we're thinking about this, Evangelical Christianity... I mean, this is what you're saying. This is an altar call for evangelical Christianity. Like that is the set stream of Christianity that is struggling the most? I'm asking a true or false question, I guess.

Dr. Moore: Well, struggling in a different way. I mean, every stream of Christianity in America just about, except for some wings of Pentecostalism are facing decline, they're facing conflict, they're facing these sorts of things. I mean, the surveys will show white evangelical, once you disaggregate that from the rest of evangelical Christianity, has a unique set of crises right now.

And what I'm afraid of is cynicism in really either direction. Either what somebody can do is to say, "Okay, but I'm just exhausted by this. I'm just leaving." Or somebody can say and the second one I think is even more dangerous is to say, "Okay, well, that's the game to play." So the way that I do this is to do it like that. And then you have more and more and more of it. And that's not sustainable.

Annie: As I was reading through the book, it feels like the invitation is, take your faith back to you and Jesus the evangelical way. Get back into Scripture, get back into prayer, get back into Christian community, and let decisions flow from there where maybe what is costing us as we're starting in our political beliefs and reversing back to well then that's the church I'll go to.

Dr. Moore: Yeah. And I think find surprising, be open to surprising community. I mean, the number one thing that... and there's not even a close number two. Number one thing people say to me in places is, "I thought I was crazy."

Annie: Wow.

Dr. Moore: Well, there's a lot of that where people say, I feel like I'm crazy. And there are a lot of those people who think that and they think they're all by themselves. But one of the things that... I mean, the Bible just shows this over and over again, that there's something really disruptive. And then there's a new community being put together that's awkward. Peter doesn't want to go to Cornelius.

Annie: Right.

Dr. Moore: These things are just really awkward. I mean, a lot of the New Testament is about, here's how you Jews and Gentiles who found yourself together in the same church need to get along because it's not easy. We all think about the divisions that are happening right now. But there's also a lot of new connections that are happening, new communities that are forming too.

Annie: What do you hope happens after people read this? In a world where you just got to write the ending of the story, what does it look like?

Dr. Moore: I hope that it causes a group of people who sense that something's wrong, maybe they're exhausted by that, not to be afraid. I mean, I'm struck by how often Jesus is saying, "Don't be afraid." And it's easy to be fearful in this time.

I think we need to regain a sense of confidence in the Gospel that we've lost. The outside world can see that. Because when they see this frantic sort of rage about everything, my Starbucks barista didn't say Merry Christmas, and I'm outraged, what people see in that are a group of people who are scared.

Annie: Yeah, you call it a self-canceled culture, where we are quieting ourselves out of fear of what's going to happen if I say the thing, I believe.

Dr. Moore: Yeah, that's right.

Annie: So we read *Losing Our Religion*, and then we are able to say, Okay, I can say who I am, what I believe and not be destroyed by the community. That's the hope?

Dr. Moore: Not be destroyed by the community and be able to actually engage with your neighbors who disagree with you. I mean, I think that's one thing that's really lost. One of the reasons it's lost is the very thing that Jesus is getting in trouble for all through the Gospels. Wait, you're not supposed to be talking to them, whoever "them" is. You shouldn't engage with them. That's a lack of confidence in the power of the gospel, and a lack of confidence in your own convictions. That has to be really shored up before we can love our neighbor and before we can share the Gospel.

Annie: I mean, for you, you are so good at modeling this, and also, President Trump says terrible things about you on Twitter. Like literally a president of the United States knows your name. That has got to be the weirdest thing ever.

Dr. Moore: You know, people will often say because the time that he said I was a nasty man with no heart and a terrible representative of evangelicalism and all they represented, I still remember it-

Annie: I do too.

Dr. Moore: ...people have said, "Did that devastate you?" And I said, "No, I actually have it framed on the wall." I mean, there's a lot worse that's been said and done.

Annie: Since. Yeah. I mean, that's my question. As I was reading this, and you know, we've all watched what's happened in SBC and watched the sexual abuse stuff come forward, and you leading the way in so many ways, with others, I'm sure, but of saying, We have to get this right and we have to know what's true. And yet, we're still called to love.

Dr. Moore: Right.

Annie: How in the world! You didn't name people in this book. You could have?

Dr. Moore: Yeah.

Annie: Why?

Dr. Moore: Because I'm not interested in those particular people and what they did. I'm interested in people understanding and knowing, Okay, here are the patterns that can show up. So in my own life, I will often say to myself, "Okay, I'm kind of

starting to mentally go in a direction. And I know where that leads because that's been done to me.

Annie: Wow.

Dr. Moore: So that's really what I'm interested in. I think if, in this book, what I had done is to go in and say so and so did this, and so and so did that, and so and so did the other, it would seem as though those people were the problem. I think the problem is a lot deeper than that. And I think a lot of the people are good people who-

Annie: That's the problem.

Dr. Moore: Good people with genuinely good motives. And there are times I was in a quote-unquote, heresy trial one time and I was thinking through it, this is somebody I really like, and I would probably have the same reaction he has if I had the point of view that he had.

Annie: That's the thing, right, is that we're invited... I'm thinking so much because of especially this podcast I just listened to about the election coming. And the guy even saying, We've never talked about the presidential election 18 months before whatever starts, but here we are. And I think, man, the people who disagree with me, the people who have done unkind things, the people who sat in the heresy trial with you, they love God. They think they are doing... We could listen to two podcasts from two Christians who so deeply disagree with each other today, we could do that today, we could find those today, and they both think Jesus is telling them what to do, Dr. Moore.

Dr. Moore: That's right. I think the important thing about that is not to know that that's going on with them. You can't do anything really about them. But to know in your own heart and life that is easy to happen. I mean, Jesus says, and I'm not comparing these two things at all, Jesus says, They will, talking about persecution of the early church, they will think that they're doing service to God. They will say they are. They will think they are. There's no equivalent of persecution of the early church to anything that's going on right now, at least in the United States. But it is true that there are all kinds of ways that we can think that we're doing service to God.

Annie: So how do we be sure we are? Help me.

Dr. Moore: Well, I think one of the ways is to be really embedded in Scripture. And the other way is to know your own vulnerabilities. You've got to show that up, because you've got to know, Am I the person who's more given over to timidity and kind of just go along with whatever? If so, I need to really fuel the flame, as Paul would say, toward conviction. Or am I the kind of person that's given more over to

quarrelsomeness and fighting? Well, then I'm not the person that I am. I'm not the person to engage on that. It's not good for me and it's not good for my soul.

I mean, I always tell people, it's kind of like... I think it is great when churches have groups of people who are doing outreach in bars and nightclubs. That's fantastic. The recovering alcoholics shouldn't be doing that.

Annie: Right.

Dr. Moore: Not because it's not a good thing to do, because it wouldn't be a good thing for them, all kinds of other things they can do. So knowing yourself enough to know, this is my typical kind of pattern, is helpful.

Annie: When I hear and read scriptures like that, I'm always like, "Oh, please, Jesus, don't let me be doing that. Don't let me be the one who's deceiving myself." Then I will think, Well, this is exactly what God would have me do. I need to be really loud about this thing. And then it is-

Dr. Moore: Well, you make mistakes and you recover from those mistakes. I mean, we talked about Tim Keller. I was on a panel with Tim one time when someone asked us, "What are your blind spots?" Tim looked at me and looked at the questioner and said, "If we knew what our blind spots were, they wouldn't be blind spots."

Annie: Right.

Dr. Moore: I think it's true. A lot of it is knowing there's a lot that I don't know about my own motivations and my context, so I'm going to be open to shifting gears.

Annie: Yeah. And open to other people telling me.

Dr. Moore: Open to other people, yeah.

Annie: People in my life, not people on the internet. Open to my mentor, my counselor, my small group, those people telling me. I wonder if that's how we keep our faith is if we get very self-aware and getting community that says, "Hey, every time you tweet, it's to fight with someone. What are you doing?"

Dr. Moore: And I mean, that works both ways. Paul talks about you're one body, you're many members, there are different gifts that are given to people. There are also different sets of vulnerabilities that people come with. So just as you need to know, okay, how can I serve within the church? And other people need to be encouraging you in that direction.

The same thing is true in terms of vulnerabilities. So one of the things that we can do with one another is to say, Okay, I'm not going to put that person into a place that's going to be harmful to him or her.

Annie: Wow.

Dr. Moore: I have a friend who now, because one of the most terrifying thing in the world to me is to get a text that says, "Praying for you."

Annie: Dr. Moore, I know.

Dr. Moore: It is terrible because then you're like, "What is going on? What are you doing?" So I have a friend who knows that and so what he'll do is to say, "There's nothing going on. I just happen to be thinking about you not for any reason other than Spirit just to say I'm praying for you."

Annie: In the day of social media, you need to warn us if you are... I have a friend here in town that did not know the internet was yelling at him until someone from Texas texted and said, "Hey, I'm sorry for everything that's going on." And he was like, "I don't have any idea what you're talking about." He was canoeing that day or something.

Dr. Moore: I usually don't either because I don't look at random... I care about what people I respect and people I love think. I don't care about what random people in the internet think. And if you do, you'll drive yourself crazy.

Annie: Well, that's it. One of the things after I had a run in last summer, where you checked on me, and Beth Moore checked on everybody was very kind and said, "Praying for you," my counselor walked me through this really helpful practice where when I see a stream of comments that are unhappy with me for whatever reason, in my mind, I color code them. Even though they're all in one color, I color-code them. They stay black, just like we see, if it's someone that I don't know at all, I have never seen them, they just enjoy the work we do, or they don't and they're here because they don't.

If it is someone that I've had interaction with, it works its way up the color chart. So they're like green, because I've known them on the internet and we've connected a few times, I recognize their face. And then it gets to the yous of the world, the people who are like in my life, we don't see each other a ton, but they're yellow or orange. Like, if you're saying something to me, I should pay attention. And then the very top is like my parents and my friends and the people who have my phone number that use it normally. Because if I'm seeing all red and yellows, then I need to really... Those are people who can call my blind spots.

Dr. Moore: That's right.

Annie: I mean, it helps when people are telling you how great you are. Because you also can't believe all the colors when they're telling you how great you are.

Dr. Moore: That's right.

Annie: It's not just when you're in trouble.

Dr. Moore: I just read an interview, I can't even remember who it was, a comedian who said, everybody who comes up and talks to me thinks I'm the greatest person in the world and everybody on Twitter hates me. He said, so one of two things is true. It's either that I'm two completely different people or those aren't really the reliable... they just...

Annie: I mean, you say that in his book, too, because truly the majority of people are in the middle.

Dr. Moore: The majority of the people are not. But see, this is what happens, Annie. It doesn't just happen on social media, it happens in churches, and in small groups and other places, is that when you have a group of people who are coming in, who really just want to fight, they want to fight and they're choosing the issues later—let's have the fight and then let's figure out what to fight about. When that starts happening normies tend to get quiet because they think, you know, that's gonna be really embarrassing to those people. So let's just get quiet and let it go away.

Annie: And then let's see what happens, yeah.

Dr. Moore: And then it doesn't and then those people start to withdraw. So they start to then disengage.

Annie: That's what I do. I mean, I'm sure you have a group text like this. But there's a group text with friends of mine who are public. And when something happens and they get yelled at, often, they will say, "Don't do anything. Just text me. Don't do anything publicly because you will get sucked into this, too. So thank you for loving me, but don't do anything publicly." And I've said that. I've said to people, "Thank you for checking, just stay quiet and let me just... I'll take this one." Because the mob turns so quickly.

Dr. Moore: It does.

Annie: It is wild.

Dr. Moore: I mean, this is the case. Just in American life generally. There are a lot of people who find significance in attacking. So if they can...

Annie: And having a viral tweet about it.

Dr. Moore: Yeah. And a lot of times, I'll say to people who are really kind of worked up about this, "If you respond to this person, actually you might as well write a check."

Annie: You said similar thing to me.

Dr. Moore: Yeah. Because you're fueling it. And people start to think then, Okay, well, that's the way that I get the attention of somebody is to do that. That can happen with a small group leader, pastor, or anybody else.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. That does not have to be public. Well, it is public because it's out of your house, but it does not have to be on social media. It can be trying to get attention of the people at the pool beside you or the other moms at the PTA meeting.

[00:49:58] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to share about another amazing partner, [Prose](#). Okay, I know you've heard me sing the praises of Prose. They're truly custom-made to order haircare but switching to a customer team from Prose was one of the best things I've ever done for my hair. In fact, I just finished my shampoo and conditioner last night and I need my new bottle.

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And now let's go back and finish up this really great conversation with Dr. Moore.

[00:51:50] <music>

Annie: Okay, my last question before we ask you the fun one, when you're thinking about the election that's coming, talk to us about postures we should start taking now, postures in prayer, postures in community, barring a miracle. It is going to be really divisive again, right?

Dr. Moore: I'm afraid it won't be, but not for good reasons. I'm afraid that we have kind of normalized so much craziness and meanness that we don't even notice things that previously would have been absolutely shocking to us.

Annie: I think we'll just disengage.

Dr. Moore: I don't know.

Annie: Wow.

Dr. Moore: I think that people have kind of sorted as well. One of the reasons why the 2016 election, for instance, particularly was so divisive is because people are saying, I can't believe that you're whatever. I think that has kind of sorted not necessarily for good reasons, a lot of times for bad reasons. So I don't think it's going to be the same thing.

What I do worry about is I worry about violence in this country. I mean, you can only use the sort of rhetoric that we've seen for so long. We've already seen violence happen and that worries me a lot. That's going to have to take a lot of people who have moral clarity and who really do love their country to step into that and to say, No, no, that's not going to be the people we're going to be.

Annie: Our friends listening know this, but I have these sticky notes on my wall in my house and it's what I pray for. Because if I don't put it in front of my face, it's not gonna happen. So it's hanging up, the real big ones. And you're discipling me in

this to be like, I just want to start praying against violence. I mean, I hadn't thought to pray that. That's actual spiritual demonic thing that we can pray against.

Dr. Moore: And we also, to have the posture in saying, I don't know what we're headed into. I think about a lot of the time New Year's Eve 2019 planning my year. There is none of that that we could have seen coming at all. So to have a sense of I really can't roadmap all this out because I don't know what's coming. I just know the kind of person I need to be in that moment. That's what I can work on.

Annie: Wow, that's really helpful. Thank you for writing this. I cannot wait for people to read this. This is the one that I'm like, Okay, small groups go in together, talk about it. Okay, churches go in together, you know, neighborhoods. If you're in a book club, this is a good one. Switch from your novels and pick up *Losing Our Religion* so y'all can talk about it. We rotate in our book club who gets to pick and no one else has a vote. It's very dictatorship every month. So I will be suggesting *Losing Our Religion*, strongly suggesting it when is my turn.

Okay, you know, the last question we always ask, Dr. Moore. Because the show is called *That Sounds Fun*, tell me what y'all are doing for fun in the Moore house right now.

Dr. Moore: We have rabbits-

Annie: Do you?

Dr. Moore: ...that we are watching but-

Annie: In your house or outside in the yard?

Dr. Moore: They're on the porch.

Annie: Okay.

Dr. Moore: Somebody gave them to us for a little while to keep and it has been the best thing. You know, we've kind of let them out on the porch at night. And it's just a calming thing.

Annie: How many?

Dr. Moore: Three. There's a mom and two babies. And today, just today, Maria and my wife had gone out and she, the mother rabbit, had somehow gotten out.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Dr. Moore: So she got her and she got scratched up.

Annie: Oh, no.

Dr. Moore: So she had told me that but really early this morning. She was still on her mind, I'd forgotten about it. And so I said, "I'm leaving. I'm going to go be with Annie Downs." I was getting all my stuff together and Maria said, "Do you think she has rabies?" And I said, "Annie?" She said, "No, the rabbit."

Annie: You're like, what do you know about Annie that I can't see?" Oh my gosh. Okay, rabbits. I mean, it doesn't take much to bring joy, does it?

Dr. Moore: It doesn't.

Annie: It's a couple of rabbits on the back porch remind us that the world is gonna be all right in the long run. Well, thank you for doing this. Thanks for making time to come over here.

Dr. Moore: Oh, thank you.

Annie: I'm so grateful.

[00:56:19] <music>

Outro: Oh, y'all, isn't he just brilliant? I know. It is amazing when we get to have guests on that are so smart and so kind that are so humble and so knowledgeable. Your host is not all the things but Dr. Moore is all of those things and I am just... Gosh, I'm so grateful. So grab a copy of Dr. Moore's book, *Losing Our Religion*. Follow him on social media, thank him for being on the show today.

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 is how you can find me. 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. I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me, I know I've said it a lot. But listen, it is still true. I want to go for a walk at Radnor Lake. That is what I want to do. So I'm going to make that happen. I hope really soon.

Y'all have a great weekend. Get some rest. We'll see you back here on Monday. Listen, this conversation on Monday with Sissy Goff is for every parent out there

and every aunt, every uncle, everybody who is speaking into the lives of kids. We're going to talk about how to deal with the worry that is in us as leaders, as parents, as the adults in the room that may be affecting the anxiety in the kids around us. So come hang with me and our friends to Sissy Goff on Monday. We'll see y'all then.