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

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to invite you to join us for the month of September over on Let's Read the Gospels Podcast. I cannot believe we are starting our ninth month of reading the Gospels together.

In September we are going to read the NIV, but we're going through the Gospels chronologically. So whether you've been listening with us already or if this is your first month, this is such a fun one to jump in on. I think you're gonna love listening and reading through this version and this order. It is so fascinating to read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the ways the story happened versus by book. It is awesome.

So we start tomorrow. So y'all head on over to Let's Read the Gospels and subscribe. Wherever you're listening to this, subscribe to Let's Read the Gospels so you don't miss a thing. And let's start our days in scripture together for the next month. Just agree to 30 days. Just do September. I think you're really gonna love it. It might just be the steady grounding that you need in God's word each day in the midst of a busy month.

And don't forget, we have a guidebook that goes along with the podcast, if you want that, and a reading guide because you know, we jump around a lot in September. Those are both available at anniefdowns.com/gospels.

Intro: So speaking of the Gospels, today on the show, I get to talk with Esau McCaulley. Esau is an award-winning author, a contributing opinion writer for the New York Times, and an associate professor of New Testament at Wheaton. So, you know we talked about all things Gospels with him, or at least we got a good taste of what He knows.

His latest book, *How Far to the Promised Land: One Black Family's Story of Hope and Survival in the American South* comes out on September 12th. It is an eye-opening and a profoundly honest story of Esau and his family's experience growing up in the South. I really enjoyed the book and was really honored to get to do this conversation. And we love having gospel people on the show. So we got double down on this episode.

So here's my conversation with my friend Esau McCaulley.

[00:02:22] <Music>

- Annie:** Esau McCaulley, welcome to That Sounds Fun.
- Esau:** Oh, thank you so much for having me.
- Annie:** I mean, what a massive honor. I tell people seminary professors and prayer people are my Kardashians. Like they're my Kardashians. It's who I care the most about. It's who I get the most dumbstruck around. So...
- Esau:** Oh my goodness. You shouldn't be dumbstruck around me. I'm just-
- Annie:** I'm gonna do my best.
- Esau:** Where are you from, Annie?
- Annie:** Atlanta. Marietta.
- Esau:** I live in the Midwest now, and anytime I get on a podcast with a genuine Southern accent, it warms my soul. So like you feel excited, you know?
- Annie:** Yes. I mean-
- Esau:** But I'm like, when I return to the South, at least virtually, I feel happy.
- Annie:** Yeah, there you go. I mean, because I figure Huntsville and Marietta are probably about the same height.
- Esau:** Yeah, yeah. There we go. Just running it straight across.
- Annie:** That's right. We're equal amounts of Southern you and I.
- Esau:** There we go. There we go. It matches.
- Annie:** It's really funny because people will respond—they'll probably do it today—people will respond and say, When you're on with someone else from the South, you sound different.
- Esau:** They might get the real Southern Esau McCaulley during this podcast. We'll see how it goes.
- Annie:** You talk about, in your new book, *How Far to the Promised Land*, you talk about your mom switching when she would have a vernacular with you and with your

family and a different one if she was talking to someone outside the home, particularly White people, right?

Esau: Yes, yes. I call it the professional tone she adopted when she talks to White people. It's funny. It's like the business conversation. That's how my mom used to do it. And the silly thing, the interesting thing about it is my sibling, not my siblings, my children say I sound a lot more Southern when I'm talking to my family. Apparently my accent manifests itself. Like I return back to the 1990s when I used to have a much bigger draw. My wife was in the military, so we lived in Japan. Then in my PhD I did it in Scotland. So just being around, losing it. I think I lost some of my Southern accent.

Annie: I need you to know I used to live in Scotland as well. Do you know that about me?

Esau: What part?

Annie: I lived in Edinburgh.

Esau: Edinburgh is my favorite city. I feel like we're not gonna have a podcast, we're just gonna hang out like Southerners because we've already figured out where we're from and we connected via region. Sorry.

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

Esau: We're already off the rails

Annie: Okay. But did you get to sit under Tom Wright? Was he one of your professors?

Esau: Oh, he was my doctoral supervisor.

Annie: Dude. Was that just the coolest? He's unbelievable.

Esau: I'm sorry. I went to St. Andrew's to study. In the UK, you don't take classes, you just study under professors. So yes, he's my... they call him doctor father.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Esau: And so yes, he's supervised my PhD.

Annie: How long were y'all living in St. Andrew's?

Esau: We lived in St. Andrew's for three years, and it was great. Edinburgh was actually my favorite city. It's just a beautiful city and I love it.

Annie: Take the train?

Esau: Oh, the train from Edinburgh to St. Andrew's-

Annie: It's beautiful.

Esau: ...it's just amazing. I even saw the British Open on the Old Course at St. Andrew's where I was there. It's amazing.

Annie: Wow. Okay, this is a deep pull, but my favorite rock in the world is when you leave the Old Course and you go down a little bit. So if you're at the Old Course and you go down, there are those big rocks you can stand on. There's one right there that I feel like me and the Lord... I feel like that's my rock with the Lord.

Esau: So I used to walk past that every day.

Annie: Oh, it's the best.

Esau: It's the best.

Annie: What do you miss about living in the UK?

Esau: Actually, one of my favorite things would be to take the train from St. Andrew's to Edinburg. Just the train rides and the beautiful topography and the history. Believe it or not, my office was overlooking the ruins of St. Andrew's Cathedral. So out of my window you could see the ruins of the cathedral. Which sounds great. But I'll make you so you're not too jealous. I'll give you the negative side of that. Because that was also where the tourists would combine.

Annie: I was about to say tourists. It's got to be

Esau: But it wasn't the tourists. The tourists weren't the problem. There was a bagpipe guy who played basically two songs the entire time. It was Amazing Grace and I think the Scottish National anthem or whatever it was, because those were the big money makers. If you are walking by the cathedral, you say, "Oh, this is beautiful. It's amazing grace." And who could get tired of Amazing Grace? Let me tell you, if you hear it eight hours a day-

Annie: That's right.

Esau: It was mostly during the summer. Once it got cold, he stopped doing it. But every summer, all... I mean, I get it. Grace is amazing.

Annie: Yeah, yeah, I'm with you. How much do I have to pay you to stop? How much are you gonna make today?

Esau: Can we get count down of every blessing? Can we just expand the hymns? But it was such a secular country, the Amazing Grace they were guaranteed to know it. And whatever the other hymn was, the Scots are gonna yell at me. They'll say, "It was the Scottish. Whatever it was, that was the other hit that he played over and over again.

Annie: There's that same guy... Not the same guy but the same guy stands on the Royal Mile. And you know he is right there behind that statue every time.

Esau: Hitting it every time.

Annie: Yeah, that's exactly. Oh, I love that we both got to live there. You know, for me, tell me if this was a similar experience, for me, I felt like my neighbors in the UK were not very different than my neighbors growing up in the South. It's like one family line.

Esau: And I would tell you, like, if you want to talk about... how do I say this well? Like tough old people like you have in the south. There'd be like 85-year-old women walking in the rain to church on a rocker. Not a rocker. A walker. And don't try, which I would do, to pull over and say, Do you want to ride? They are like, Why are you in a car? You lazy American. I'm walking in my walker in the rain laughing at the water just hitting me in the face because what do I care?

In that same kind of like rugged, we've lived here and we're not going anywhere kind of energy. Like the old ladies in my church growing up had a kinship. I'll tell only one Scotland story since you have me going, then I'll stop. There was this older man, I'll never forget. In our church, they would have daily Eucharist. It was an Anglican church, an Episcopalian church in Scotland. And they would have daily Eucharist.

And this guy came to me and he said to me... he's like, I don't know, a hundred. He is just super old. And he goes, "Well, I have cancer all over my body and so it's just too much work for them to fix it." And he says it with this much concern. And he goes, "I'm gonna die in a few months. But what I'm really concerned about is that you make sure the daily communion continues in the church and that someone goes to help my wife who's like 90 and who's on a walker to make sure she gets to the congregation on time."

Annie: Wow.

Esau: So he's ready to die and go to be with Jesus and his main concern is to make sure that someone helps his wife to still get to church. Like not every Sunday now.

Annie: Every day.

Esau: Every day.

Annie: Geez.

Esau: And I was like, "That's devotion." I remember I used to try to preach to those people. And what do you say in a sermon to someone who's a hundred years old that he hasn't already heard? He knows it.

Annie: That's right.

Esau: I just feel like I'm wasting his time.

Annie: You're like, I'm going to talk, but don't listen. Don't Listen.

Esau: God loves you. God loves you.

Annie: Can I ask you what year you were born? Because I think we're the same age.

Esau: 1979.

Annie: '80.

Esau: Oh, look at this.

Annie: Exactly.

Esau: We're the same age.

Annie: I know. I'll tell you why that blew my mind is, as I was reading your book, I thought, how much older must he be than me that this is what happened to him at school and that this is what happened to him at college and that this is what happened to him in elementary when you called the wrong phone number and the man said the N word to you? I thought, "Gosh, how much older must Esau be than me?" And then you say, "In 1992 when I was 13," and I was like, "Oh, oh, I was 13 in 1992." Your story is me and my neighbors.

Esau: One of the things that, um, you can do as a writer, because people... I don't know, people make fun of me or it's my own insecurity. I am shockingly bad at staying in a genre. So reading while Black is a work of kind of biblical theology. Then I did a children's book, *Josey Johnson's Hair and the Holy Spirit*. Then I did a book about Lent, which is the work of Piper theology.

Annie: That whole series, the whole lent advent that you're a part of is beautiful.

Esau: And then there's *How Far to the Promised Land*, which is a memoir and a biography. This relates to the question that you're asking me about. It's because I think that sometimes a biblical argument is important and to understand the theological undergirding of things that we do is important. Because it's not just emotions and feelings. It needs to be biblical data.

But sometimes those biblical truths can be detached from the lived experiences of people. And we can kind of attribute these things to like, this is a generally true thing and that doesn't apply to my life. So when I talk about racism, I can just show here is in the Bible where it says racism is bad. Or I can say, here's how this experience impacted me in 1992 when I was 13 years old. I think both of those things are important. And depending on the truth I want to get across, I use different genres. So I wish that God would inspire me to stay in one lane, so I can-

Annie: No, I'm praying the opposite thing. I don't want you to stay in one lane. I want you to meet us and... You are on every shelf on a bookstore. And that is where we need Esau McCaulley's writing is every shelf of a bookstore.

Esau: I was thinking if someone likes something that I wrote and they want to find the next book, they do gotta walk.

Annie: That's exactly right. It's not gonna be next to it. It's gonna be in the next section. I want to tell you how much I enjoyed reading *How Far to the Promised Land*. I'm really moved by it. And then finding out that we'd have been in the same class at school was eye-opening to me.

Esau: Well, thank you. That's right. It's our insecure bunch. We feel like when and writing stuff, we're always on the verge of catastrophe. And the people are gonna read it and they're gonna hate it. So if nobody else likes it, you liked it. Annie liked it.

Annie: One friend that liked it a lot.

Esau: I got one friend.

Annie: That's right.

Esau: I'll build from there and get, you know, one reader at a time.

Annie: That's it. In the intro of it, you talk about being the truth-teller in your system when you are asked to do your father's eulogy, and your sister says, "He's the one who'll tell the truth." I have had an experience like that where someone said, "You're the truth-teller in this system." And it's a weighty thing. Did it feel weighty to you then? Does it feel weighty to you now? I mean, you wrote your family history in this book.

Esau: Yes. I wrote a family history.

Annie: That's it. That's a good point.

Esau: If you ask them, they might tell it differently.

Annie: That's interesting.

Esau: Well, I think I interviewed everybody in my family. So I talked to my mom... In the acknowledgments at the end of the book, I say how I went about doing the book. There was a sense of weight. For the person who... they couldn't have read it yet. So me and you know what I'm talking about. So the book is framed around my father passes away in 2017, and my family asked me to do the eulogy. But my father was in and out of our lives when I was a child, so I didn't know him very well.

So part of preparing the eulogy... If anyone's ever been in pastoral ministry, whenever you're gonna do the eulogy, you sit down with the family and you kind of say, "Tell me about this person. What did I know? What do I need to know to eulogize this person well? It's kind of like the work of pastoral ministry.

But it's much different when you're doing that for your own father. Because now you're not just looking into his past, you're looking into your past. So that process of researching his life kind of extended out into becoming a family history that became *How Far to the Promised Land*.

Annie: Oh, interesting. I didn't realize that the eulogy is what birthed the book.

Esau: Yes. Actually, the last chapter in the book is the actual eulogy that I gave.

Annie: Yes. It was beautiful. Oh my gosh, it's beautiful.

Esau: I mean, they made me cut it down. So there are parts of it that aren't in the book. Maybe I'll make... I don't know how I'll do it. But maybe I'll post a full eulogy somewhere.

Annie: Why did they ask you to cut it down?

Esau: I mean, it's just editing. It was long. I mean, it was a Black Baptist eulogy. You could preach that thing. It'd have been like two more chapters. But what I was gonna say though is that when you're doing the eulogy, and this is important as a pastor, and maybe I'll say it this way, I felt like it was really important as a pastor anytime I gave a eulogy is not to lie.

And I feel like sometimes at funerals people can give false... Like they can lie about what it was like to be with. So I try to give, as a pastor, when I was pastoring, as honest as eulogy as I could. You don't condemn people. It's not like saying like he was... but you have to talk about the hard and the good or it's a lie.

Annie: I mean, how many times have we been at funerals where someone said... they never said a negative thing about a person. I'm like, Uh, listen...

Esau: That's not true.

Annie: You want me to open my text messages I got?

Esau: I'm not a fan of false nostalgia. So that came into the responsibility I had to tell my father's story. But the other thing that you want to do if you're a clergyperson is to tie that life into the wider purposes of God. It's not just an assessment of a life. It's to say, what was God up to? Even if He was incomplete in this person's life, what could we learn from their life?

So you have to kind of tell the life story. You have to make sense of it for the congregation and for the family. And the family knows whether or not you told the truth as they listened to it.

Annie: That's right.

Esau: So I felt that responsibility to tell the truth about my father, but then it became about my family. But here's the part where it becomes like, why would you all kick about the McCaulley family? What it was, it became my family was such... it was such a quintessential Southern and American experience, if you know anything about race in the South. So it wasn't just a story about my family, it became a story about America.

The responsibility that I felt, the real responsibility that I felt was that people who grew up in my neighborhood don't often get a chance to tell our story. I had a moment where if I wrote the book well, I could make the world pay attention to the things that we went through.

So it was like, we don't get this opportunity very often. This is my one chance to say something true and beautiful and hopefully transformative. So I can say with genuine honesty that I've never given more to a book. Did this book cost me something to write?

Annie: I'm sure.

Esau: It cost me a lot to write. I felt like I owed my father, my family in the South something. Sorry, I'm gonna stop rambling, but I'm gonna say one more thing.

Annie: No, you're not rambling. I'm loving this. Remember, I'm a huge fan of this book. So the more you talk about it, I feel like I'm getting behind the scenes of a book that I love.

Esau: So the important part about this too, and this is like... I mean, I wish that I could just reach out and grab the whole world and make them hear this part of what I want to say, is that so often people want to compartmentalize who we are as people. So as an African American, I could write a race book, right, a book about race in America, or I could write a book about growing up poor in America, like a poverty book. Or I could write a book about God and how I found God, like kind of *surprised by joy* kind of book.

But me, all of those things were happening at the same time. I was experiencing being Black in America and the injustices that sometimes accrued to Black life in America. I was experiencing real poverty. But in the midst of those things, I was trying to find out whether God was there and whether or not He cared.

Annie: Wow.

Esau: So it is both a commentary on race in America and a spiritual biography. You know, everyone has these books that they read. They read *Surprised by Joy*. They read Thomas Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain*. They read Augustine's *Confessions*. I'm not saying that I'm Augustine or all of those things, but I'm saying I'm not. I'm saying that, like, why can't a black boy from Alabama tell a distinctively Black but universal story about finding God?

And I was passionate in the writing of that book to keep all of those things. So if you come looking for just a race book, you're gonna be disappointed because Jesus keeps showing up, doing stuff, performing miracles, and whatnot.

But if you want just a book that says, I once was lost but now I'm found, you're gonna have to figure out or at least wrestle with some of the religious questions that African Americans have come from racial trauma. And I wanted to include all of that in the book. Okay, rant over.

Annie: No, listen, you just go. I'll be here if you need me, but I would prefer that you just to do what you want.

[00:20:12] <Music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation to share about one of our amazing partners, [Earth Breeze](#). Have you ever wondered why laundry detergent comes in such massive plastic jugs? They're so annoying. Plus 91% of them end up in landfills and oceans, harming our planet and marine life. I was very sad to learn the dirty truth about recycling.

Fortunately, I found a solution and you're going to love it too, Earth Breeze. Imagine for a moment something that looks like a dryer sheet, but it isn't. It's a liquidless laundry detergent sheet that dissolves a hundred percent in any wash cycle, hot or cold, no measuring, no mess, no heavy lifting. The packaging is lightweight and biodegradable. I save so much space. I can fit 720 loads of sheets where I used to just fit one 60-load detergent jug. Y'all.

You can sign up for the subscription, have it delivered right to your door, and you have full control to adjust, pause, or cancel at any time. I am happy to never walk down the plastic-filled laundry aisle again. Most importantly though, these sheets get your clothes so clean. Earth breeze is tough on stains, fights odors, and my clothes come out clean every time. I have been in love with these sheets, you guys.

Every purchase, Earth Breeze also donates 10 loads of detergent to a charity of your choice, with over 50 million loads having already been donated. That is so cool. Trust me, there is no reason not to switch, you guys.

Right now my friends can subscribe to Earth Breeze and save 40%. So go to earthbreeze.com/thatsoundsfun to get started. That's earthbreeze.com/thatsoundsfun for 40% off. earthbreeze.com/thatsoundsfun. That link and all the links you could ever hope for are conveniently there in the show notes below for you. Or you can find them when we send out Friday's AFD Week in Review emails. So just be sure you are signed up for that. And you can check all those out.

Sponsor: And one more amazing partner I get to tell you about, [Thrive Causemetics](#). Okay, whether you've heard about Thrive Causemetics from me or from a friend or social media, you probably know by now that anyone who uses their products loves them. And that's definitely true for me. Hand to heaven, I forgot to put mascara on this morning and turned around and went home just to put on their Liquid Lash extension mascara. And that is amazing.

But have you tried their Brilliant Eye Brightener? It is a highlighter stick made to brighten and open your eyes, giving you an instant eye lift. Okay. So you just apply it to the inner corner of your eyes to look like you've had plenty of restful sleep, even if maybe last night wasn't the best.

And here's what's cool too. You can use it as an eyeshadow for a perfect daytime glow or use the metallic shades for an easy smokey eye. We love makeup. They can do multiple tricks. Their Brilliant Eye Brightener has 10,000 five-star reviews for a reason.

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

You have to try Thrive Causemetics to see for yourself. Right now, you can get an exclusive 20% off your first order. You guys, get you some makeup. Go to thrivecausemetics.com/tsf. That's thrivecausemetics.com/tsf, like that sounds fun, for 20% off your first order.

Okay, now back to our conversation with Esau McCaulley.

[00:23:42] <Music>

Annie: That is really profound as you're saying that. Because when you wrote about why God didn't intervene in slavery in America and how that is... can you teach me more about that? That's a real spiritual pull spot of tension for our Black friends.

Esau: So when we think about Protestantism, like we're all Protestants, and when we think about the motivating question of kind of Evangelicalism and Protestantism in general, we think of justification. So like this, we're saved by faith apart from what we do. That's what led to the Reformation. It's why we're all Protestants, right?

So there's a sense in which, because this is a founding part of what the Protestant tradition is, we keep returning to it over and over and over again and having the faith way to break arguments. We're still arguing the Catholics 500 years later. We just can't let it go. We gotta duck on the Catholics, at least we think we are. Whether or not we're accurate, we'll put that to the side in the way we talk about Catholicism today.

But what I try to explain to people is that if you can say the first issue that created Protestantism is justification, well then what is at the center of the Black church that we come to again and again and again in America? Like what is our initial kind of impetus or organizing principle?

Well, it was this reality. The Christianity that was preached to us was preached to us initially by people who said that God wanted us to be enslaved and to be passive and that God's will for us were to accept our place in life. And we had to decide whether or not, when we first became Christian, whether or not Christianity spoke only to our souls or to our souls and our physical status as well. And wrestling with how do I become Christian in the land of my oppressors who also claim to be Christian is a big issue.

So in the black community, you have kind of like the Christians who are like, it was God who helped us survive slavery. It was God. And you will see this. You can read the abolitionist literature. They will say it wasn't Abraham Lincoln who freed the slaves. It was Jesus who did it. And there's a claim that's central in the Black community, the Black church is, God was the one who answered our prayers. But there's another side within the Black community that say if God was good, He would've done so earlier.

Annie: Wow.

Esau: Or if Christianity was true, why did the people who claim to be Christian enslaved you? And then after they enslaved you, why did they then create Jim Crow laws that separated you? And when you did try to integrate, why did they stick water hoses and dogs upon you?

So that question of the problem of evil done by Christians is animating principle of Black spirituality. It's not the only thing, right?

Annie: Sure.

Esau: We believe that Jesus died for our sins, that He rose from the third day. And according to the scriptures, we believe the Bible is the word of God. Like that part

is there. But what is kind of more central to the Black Christian tradition that it might be in other traditions is this real question of the odyssey.

So that idea is something I spoke about in the book in the context of talking about a difficult situation that I was going through as a child. I talk about, you know, some of the abuses and things that happened to me as a child. And I know when some people read it, they kind of have the same response. But if God was good, He wouldn't allow abuse to happen. And what I was trying to say is that question of making sense of evil and a lack of an immediate salvation is something that we Black Christians knew about well.

Annie: Wow. Throughout the book and that part when you're... even when you're talking about your childhood, you are writing in present tense?

Esau: Hmm.

Annie: Will you tell me why you did that? So when you talk about that, that makes so much sense that that is a present tense thing. But the whole way through you're in present tense.

Esau: Why did I do that? It felt right. I think that I wanted to tell the story as it unfolds. So I don't want to give away too many tricks and trades because you don't want to ruin it. But I'll say this part. The story is told as I understood it at the time-

Annie: As it was happening. Wow.

Esau: So part one, which is called the Making of a Villain deals with my childhood as I understood it when it occurred. And then part two, which actually deals with my father's history is kind of how I began to understand my father as an adult. Which makes him a more sympathetic figure. So, sorry, this is gonna be super... I'll be nerdy for a second.

Annie: I'm having a great time.

Esau: I'm gonna let you in. Okay. So when I preach the eulogy, and like I said, the book is structured around the eulogy. When I preached this actual eulogy in 2017, there were three parts of the eulogy: the villain, the victim, the victor. This is Black churches, you gotta do, you know, phonetic. So villain, victim, victor.

Annie: Got it.

Esau: So I thought of him as a child as a villain. And then once I began to understand about his past, I began to see him as a victim in part of his circumstances. And then

at the end of his life, there's a victory of sorts. So the book is actually structured, believe it or not, around the three parts of the eulogy.

Annie: It is. Wow.

Esau: So the first part where he comes across really, really poorly is how I understood it. So it's in the present tense because I'm telling the story not in the voice of an eight, nine-year-old kid, but from the perspective of an eight and nine-year-old kid. But then... People have to read the book twice. This is so narrative, but

Annie: Well, I'm, for sure, about to read this book twice.

Esau: So in the middle when you hear his family story—and we can't tell them what occurs—that makes the entire part one read differently. And then you begin to understand part three. So it's in present tense because it's a cute book. Cute book is the wrong word. Sometimes as writers, you want to do cute stuff.

Annie: Easter egg.

Esau: It's an Easter egg book. So that's the reason it's structured that way.

Annie: That is so cool.

Esau: And I said it without giving away stuff. There's a lot of things that happen in the book that are important to me. And I think it's important to anyone who has a difficult childhood.

Annie: I did not have a difficult childhood and I found myself reading it and thinking my friends who grew up like this need to read this and my friends who grew up like me need to read this. Because I sat next to you in school. Right?

Esau: There is this line in the book where I said that I came to school the next day and I cracked jokes in the back of class because I was too hyped up on adrenaline to focus. And that day the teacher probably got onto me for being disruptive in class. And the teacher couldn't know. There's this picture uh,... I wish that if they do a different edition, maybe I'll go back and put the pictures in. But after I finish writing the book and once they buy it, they'll understand what I mean.

There's this picture of me on a tricycle and I have kind of like the early 80s outfit. I just looked so happy in the picture. My mom sent it to me. And I said, if someone has seen that kid on a tricycle, they would've thought that's just the most carefree kid in the world. But what was actually going on was radically different.

It is revealed to me... I've been holding onto it. I wanted to post it on Instagram and say, "This is the kid that you read about in chapter one." Just to give us an understanding of what the life actually is like for kids who sometimes have a whole world of things going on around them and we can't know. And it's probably why I try to be as patient and forgiving with people as I possibly can. Because I don't know what they're going through.

Annie: Right. I mean, I would love if you did like a page on your website, or if you did an Instagram where you showed us pictures of Sophia. I mean, I want to see everybody.

Esau: There's a picture of the house that my... there's a house that's central to the book called The Big House. It's Sophia's house. Sophia is my great-grandmother. My sister during the writing of the book went back and the land is overgrown. It's been basically effectively abandoned. And she had to like climb over stuff. She kind of goes up there.

My sister, she's a wonderful person. She has no sense of danger. The house looks like it's gonna collapse on itself and there's like holes in the floor.

Esau: Oh my gosh. And she goes inside of this house... The house was built like a hundred years ago and been abandoned for 50 years. And she goes into this house and she gets a pot that was like... I think maybe Sophia's pot. She found it because after everyone dies, just gotta leave the property.

Annie: Wow.

Esau: And she goes into the house. I'm like, how did you not get rabies in there? She goes in the house and actually rescues some items. In my wilder dreams, I kind of went and looked it up, who owns the property, and I've been trying to get in touch with the people to see if they would sell it because it's just abandoned land. Sometimes you just want to end this story by going back and purchasing the land that your family lost.

Annie: I would love to somehow see all those pictures. If you ever decide to share all those on socials once the book is out-

Esau: Yeah, I know.

Annie: ...you can kind of give us-

Esau: Maybe the book is out.

Annie: Ah.

Esau: I can send them to you.

Annie: I would love to put faces and see all of that. In the book, when you talk about poverty, I found this... If you wrote about this, I missed it. So I hope I'm asking a question that doesn't spoil anything. When you write about poverty and eating cereal that is grocery store brand Frosted Flakes-

[crosstalk 00:34:20]

Annie: ...cereal that dissolves and then you go to college that day. You eat the cereal and then you pack up and go to college. Was there a rescue for you in being able to eat at college?

Esau: It's funny because there's this joke in football. I was a football player. So when you go to college and you play football and you go during... This is Tennessee in the summer so it's hot. And we had these things called tour days.

Annie: Oh, yeah.

Esau: I don't if you're a southerner, so you practice in the morning, afternoon, and it's a hundred degrees outside. And you just lose a ton of weight because you're just sweating all of the time. They said I was one of the few people who gained weight during tour days, because you could just go to the cafeteria and eat as much as you want. I was like, "Oh, this is amazing."

So anyone who's ever been to the University of the South where I went to college, it was also known as Suwanee is the model after, in its architecture, kind of British universities. It wanted to be kind of an Oxford in the south, the Oxford or Cambridge. Until you go from like inner city Huntsville, Alabama to basically a southern Oxford or Cambridge with like sandstone and these buildings and like this, everything's brand new and pristine. The cafeteria is amazing. And then you go from an all-Black neighborhood to an all-White school. So there was a tremendous culture shock from my childhood up through when I entered into college.

Annie: I used to teach elementary school in some low-income areas in Georgia. And I was thinking about them going to college and when they... I mean, you said this was true of your story too, of that going to school meant you got breakfast and lunch.

Esau: But it's also like, I guess the hard part for people who don't grow up like that. It's not like you go to college and it feels like, "Oh, I made it. Because these things are so normal to people, you have this sense of, do I belong here?"

Annie: Wow.

Esau: So the comfort is almost disorienting because people see it as normal. There's a part in the book that I will recount where I talked about the first time I was hanging out with people before spring break. And they started talking about, where are we gonna go for spring break? And they said, we're gonna go to our family's vacation home and we're gonna go to this cabin, we're gonna go to France. I had never been anywhere. I'm from Huntsville. The furthest we ever went was Atlanta. That was like our big trip was Six Flags over Georgia.

Annie: Oh, listen, did you ever go to Whitewater too?

Esau: No. We went to, believe it or not, I don't think this exists anymore, Opryland when it was in actual theme park. It's not a theme park anymore.

Annie: It is not a theme park. That's where I live. I live in Nashville and Opryland does not exist anymore as theme.

Esau: We went to Opryland. Opryland was a theme park. That was our go-to trip. We did that like two or three times once we had enough money to make it all the way to Atlanta. But when I'm here, they're like, "Oh, we're gonna go to France, we're gonna go to here." And I was just like, "I'm just gonna go home."

And the other thing I talked about is when you don't have a lot of money, your clothes become really important. So whatever you have growing up is iron and storage. You kind of make sure that you're clean, you're put together. It was like you had to look like you had something even if you didn't.

And one of the strange things that I learned about money is that when you have a lot of money, you could actually not care about how you look. So they'd come in and they'd have like, Oh, this is my... I don't know. It'd be like a \$400 shirt that looked old. The purpose of it was to look worn or they'd actually say, we're gonna go to Goodwill. And they'd have like a Goodwill outfit on but then they'd go their Land Rover-

Annie: Got choice.

Esau: By choice. And then they go get into the Land Rover. I was like, "Well, hold on. How are you a Goodwill and a Land Rover? It's just like the rules and the rhythms

are so different that it is hard to understand how you're supposed to function in that space.

Annie: Wow.

Esau: So I talk about that in the book. And the University of the South is a particularly complicated place because it was founded by the parts of the Confederacy to show that you could have a leading academic institution in the Confederacy. There was a house on campus that burned down. It was called the Rebels Rest.

Annie: Oh gosh.

Esau: Because that's where the actual rebels went. So when I would go into fraternity houses and I talked, they were like actual Confederate. Like that's a huge Confederate flag. And that's one of the things I talk about in the book. A huge Confederate flag. Imagine for a second, I'm sorry, go from an all-Black neighborhood to you're now in this place where the building's named at the Confederate Soldiers. There's the Rebels rest, there's the flag. And it's just a lot different. And there's so much money. So much money.

They got me to go, and I don't want to talk too much about college. They got me to go because they recruited. I'll never forget it. Because I think it was like \$50,000 a year with room and board and tuition. And he said, "If you come here, when you graduate, your brain will be worth almost a quarter of a million dollars."

Annie: A quarter of a million dollars. I read that.

Esau: And I was like, "Wow." But then when I got there, I realized there's people who can pay a quarter of a million dollars to go to college.

Annie: That's right. You're like, "Wait, y'all are all paying for your brains."

Esau: Y'all paying for this?

Annie: That's right.

Esau: And they're paying for-

Annie: And they're not taking it serious.

Esau: They're like, "Oh, it'll be fine. Mom will take care of me." I say, "No, no, no. I need to go here, get these grades, and get a job. Because if not, I go back into poverty." They were like, "Oh, I'll just work for mom or dad." They kind of fluff off the first

three or four years, three years. They say, "Oh, I'll get serious when I'm a senior, then I get an internship and then life will be fine." I'd never been around opulence in my life. Yeah. And it was just all disorienting.

[00:40:28] <Music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to share about another amazing partner, [Reliefband](#). Nausea is the worst feeling ever, if you ask me. So whether you're prone to motion sickness, fighting morning sickness, get nauseous from a migraine, or are going through chemo, Reliefband is the number one FDA-cleared anti-nausea wristband that has been clinically proven to quickly relieve and effectively prevent nausea and vomiting.

And you can even use your HSA and FSA dollars to get a Reliefband. Let's go. And Reliefband really works. If you need everyday nausea relief or just an occasional cure from nausea because you keep looking at your phone while you're in the back of an Uber or you're headed on a cruise, their patented technology makes feeling sick a thing you don't have to deal with.

You can skip the nausea pills that make you groggy and exhausted because Reliefband is legitimately a band you wear on your wrist to give you relief from nausea so your trip isn't ruined and neither is your day. Plus, you get to change the intensity depending on how you're feeling to make it stronger or weaker. I think that is brilliant.

So if you want the band that actually works at relieving your nausea, check out Reliefband. Right now, my friends are getting an exclusive offer, just for our friends here at That Sounds Fun. If you go to [reliefband.com](#) and use the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN, you'll get 20% off plus free shipping. So head to reliefband.com and use the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN and you get 20% off plus free shipping.

Sponsor: And one last incredible partner to tell you about. Oh man, I'm so happy to tell you about this, [Hatch](#). Y'all know, listen, if you are looking for the best alarm clock out there, the Hatch Restore 2 is where it's at. You may remember Eddie and I talking about Hatch on Annie and Eddie Keep Talking. And I am so excited that they're partnering with us at That Sounds Fun.

Their Restore 2 is not only so gentle at waking you up with a Sunrise alarm, but it has multiple options to help you fall asleep and stay asleep. It has white noise, brown noise, pink noise. Who knew noise came in colors. And other nature sounds to help you sleep soundly without waking up. You can even set it to your own routine so it's ready to go each night. And you can customize your experience with

a free app. Plus it is beautifully designed. So it's a great addition to your bedside table.

One way I try to keep good social media and scrolling boundaries at night is by using the Hatch Restore 2 as my primary alarm clock so I can keep my phone away from my bed. If I leave scrolling out of my bedtime and first thing in the morning routine, I am quite the healthier Annie.

Good rest allows you to be the best version of yourself. Which is why the Hatch Restored 2 was engineered to help you form healthy sleeping habits for life. Your Hatch teaches your body when it is time to sleep and when it's time to rise with light and sound cues. I have mine perfectly timed. It makes me so happy. It coaches you through meditations and mindfulness exercises that transform the time before and after sleep into restful rituals.

So great sleep cannot be forced. I know. But it can be learned. And the Hatch Restore 2 is here to help us. Right now Hatch is offering our friends \$20 off your purchase of a Hatch Restore 2 and free shipping. Just go to hatch.co/thatsoundsfun. Sleep deeply, wake gently with the Restore 2. Go to hatch.co/thatsoundsfun and get \$20 off and free shipping. That's hatch.co/thatsoundsfun.

And now back to finish up our conversation with Esau.

[00:43:56] <Music>

Annie: In the book, you talk about that in your community growing up, you either became a preacher or a foot or an athlete or a drug dealer. Those are three choices. So you knew going to school, you had option. Did you think when you were going into school, Okay, so I've gotta go after this athlete role or I gotta be a preacher, or my other option is going back and being with my cousins?

Esau: When you talk about that, and this is kind of like, they called it plausibility structures. So I didn't consciously think, I don't want to be a preacher, therefore I'll do athletics. It's like, what could you see when you're in school? So who did you see successful? I didn't live near a doctor. I didn't live near a lawyer. Well, I didn't know them. They never told me that's what they did.

So when I imagined success, how could I see it? Well, the only people who I knew who really had a bunch of college degrees were just my teachers in high school.

Annie: Right, right.

Esau: So those were the ones. So when I imagined my future, I never thought, oh, I'm going to go and get an academic scholarship and go and be a doctor because I didn't know anybody who had done that. I know tons of people who are really good at athletics who then went to college. So it's about what you could imagine.

One of the interesting things about... I have four kids now and none of them currently think they're gonna get an athletic scholarship. It's not that they're bad athletes. That's just not what they think. They think, "I'll get good grades and I'll go to college like mom and dad did." But my family hadn't... we're the first generation, me and my sisters and brothers or first generation of people to go.

So when you think about what is imaginable... and this is one of the things that I try to talk about in the book. The biggest predictor still of whether or not you get a college education is the education of your parents.

Annie: Wow.

Esau: Well, my granddad went to segregated schools.

Annie: Right. And Sophia never learned to read.

Esau: Yeah, never learned to read. So my mother, she was raised by someone for whom college was not imaginable. And she started off at segregated schools. Mm-Hmm. And this is the... I'm gonna ramble on for a second. But this is important. So when you read about stuff in history books, we kind of neatly divide history. In other words, we kind of say Brown Bridge Board of Education happened in the integrated schools, and then racism kind of went away. But my mom is, in the 70s, going to an integrated school and she's saying that some of the teachers don't really want to teach the Black students. Or when she's trying to join the honest societies, they won't let her in.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Esau: So it's not like integration happens and equality just breaks out. So you're now coming to me, the first generation in my family that was raised by someone though... Actually, this is true. I'll say this sentence. I'm the first generation in my family that went to integrated schools from beginning to end. My mom didn't, my granddad didn't. So my children are the first ones in our family, my son who's 15 years old, my youngest daughter is—she just had a birthday—she's seven. I got it right. She's seven. It's the first generation in our family who were raised by parents who had equal access to education. Me.

So when you say like, why didn't you try sports? It's because it was what was imaginable. And the people for whom sports wasn't viable, they tended towards other ways to kind of make it. But for me, sports is what I thought of as what I could do. But it wasn't like a crazy take given the context out of which we came.

Annie: Not at all. I was really interested in... I mean, when you get injured, people can read about this, you get a football injury in high school that looks like it's gonna end. And then you're writing to me in first person, I mean, in present tense, and I'm like, page-turner. I'm like, his leg is dangling. His leg is dangling. Somebody help.

Esau: Oh man.

Annie: This will be the last question because I just want people to... about this because I just want people to read the book. Will you talk a little bit about choosing the name Esau for yourself?

Esau: Oh, no, that's the one part that I'll not give away until you read it.

Annie: Okay. Fair.

Esau: That's the one secret I want to hold onto.

Annie: Fair.

Esau: Here's the funny thing. And everybody, this is the question I have been asked my entire life. Why do you have the name Esau? It's a weird name. Annie, I'm gonna ask you a question. You've gone to a lot of churches in your lifetime, right?

Annie: Never met one. Never met an Esau.

Esau: Never met one. Never met one. You've spoken at conferences, you've seen pastors-

Annie: Jacobs for days. Jacobs for days.

Esau: Jacobs for days.

Annie: No Esau.

Esau: You could pile Jacobs to the sky.

Annie: That's right.

- Esau:** Now it is the case that Esau is more common in South American and Spanish-speaking countries. But we'll leave that to the side. But English-speaking countries, almost never heard of. There is a story about how I got my name that was really com... It's a long and convoluted story. And I used to tell people all of the time, if we become friends, then I'll tell you the Esau story.
- Annie:** Wow.
- Esau:** And I always knew that one day I was gonna write it in a book. But I'm glad that I waited until I wrote it when I did. Because in some ways it ties up the whole-
- Annie:** It does.
- Esau:** It ties up the whole book. This is the other part. Today, that's a recording. Won't be live whenever they hear it. And I just finished doing the audiobook. And the last chapter that I read right before I did this podcast was father, the son visited and the eulogy. So I just read it.
- Annie:** Wow.
- Esau:** And finally making peace with my father, and I shared the name, is kind of like, it's what the book is about. It's about reconciling our past to our present and finding something redemptive in it. So I think it's literally the best chapter of anything I've ever written.
- Annie:** It is gorgeous.
- Esau:** So hopefully people will like it. But I'll say I give the definitive defense of Esau as a character.
- Annie:** You do. You do.
- Esau:** I'm gonna swing the tide of history.
- Annie:** So does that mean everybody who gets to page 197, you call a friend now? Because only friends-
- Esau:** Yes. Only friends. This is the other part. And I talk to my wife about this. Because the other chapter that only friends normally get is the chapter Fools Fall in Love. It's the story of how me and my wife met. And so now I don't know what we're gonna talk about when we meet people now. We already know everything.

Annie: That's right. You'll just get to listen more. You'll be like, Y'all read that chapter now you tell me.

Esau: You read that chapter. You tell me what you thought about it.

Annie: Well, I'm so thrilled that this book exists. I think people are really gonna love it, Esau. Can we talk for just a minute about the Gospels?

Esau: Listen, the answer to the... I think literally they would revoke my PhD if I ever said no to that question. No, we can't talk about the Gospels or Jesus. You may not remember this, but I'm a New Testament professor. So I'm like, if you just find me on the streets and say, "Esau, can we talk about the Gospels?" I'll say yes.

Annie: You're in. You're in.

Esau: I'm in. I'm done. I'm ready.

Annie: Okay. We talked about before you coming back and just doing a whole conversation. But because so many of our friends are listening to Let's Read the Gospels, will you rank the four gospels for me?

Esau: So we do this every semester when I teach at Wheaton.

Annie: Do you?

Esau: So I always have my students do... and the students get really nervous because I'm like, I'm not saying that the fourth one is not inspired by God. So the students are kind of nervous, like, "Oh, I love them all the same. And I say, "That's not true." I shouldn't say this part. I say, "And your parents don't love you all the same either. They have a favorite. They just don't tell you." They're all traumatized.

But anyways, I say to them like, everyone has a book that they're drawn to. And it means something to them and it doesn't mean to disrespect the other ones. So with the caveat that we love all four of the gospels, the definitive best gospel ever written was Luke. Luke was so deep in his gospel bag that it can't be disputed.

Why do I love Luke? It has such an Old Testament saturation with the allusions to scriptures. And it's kind of like... I call it... Matthew does a really good job of quoting the Old Testament. Luke kind of evokes the Old Testament. You kind of feel like it's an Old Testament story. I tell them it's God playing the hits. In Luke, God does the kind of things that God always does.

You know, miraculous birth, been there. Unable to have bir... He kind of does his... he plays the hits. So Luke is number one. There's a strong emphasis on women. Can I tell you the cool part? I'll tell you one cool part about women in Luke, in Luke-Acts. It's like the best, in my opinion, kind of prequel.

So anyone who's ever read Luke, you're gonna make me go over it. But if anybody reads Luke, anyone who's read Luke notice that at the beginning of the story, they have Simeon who takes baby Jesus and he puts Him up and he makes this proclamation. And then Luke says, there's another woman there who's named Anna. And she begins to prophesy about Jesus. And you kind of go, "That's an interesting little story." And you kind of put it to the side. And then you fast forward all the way to the beginning of part two when Pentecost comes and they say-

Annie: What are you about to do?

Esau: They were all in the upper room, the 12 and the women. They make a point of saying the women are there. And then the Holy Spirit comes down upon everyone in the room and they all go out and preach the gospel. So you have a book ending in Luke, and at the beginning of Acts, beginning of Jesus' life, a man and a woman both proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah.

Annie: Oh my God.

Esau: At Pentecost, the women and the men are both preaching the gospel. And in case you miss the point, they ask Peter, "What's going on, Peter?" He says, "As it says in the scriptures, in the last days, I'll pour my spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy." Luke shows you that the church finds itself when men and women are together proclaiming the good news of who Jesus is. So Luke does that kind of stuff. So you can't argue with Luke. He's the boss in his own category.

Annie: Agreed.

Esau: Which is why my son is named Luke.

Annie: Oh, okay.

Esau: There we go. Now the second gospel, close second is John. I'll be quicker on John. John is... he's such a theological genius because he manages to say things that are deeply biblical in the sense that there's links to Old Testament, the bread of life, the water, the light of the world. They're all Old Testament images, but they're all deeply human. Like we know what it means to say that God is bread, God is water, God is light and God is the word.

And those things are also common concepts in the Greco-Roman world. So he uses one image, but he use the images that are dope, deeply biblical, deeply human, and that resonate with the culture. He's the paradigmatic example of cultural engagement. Mark. We are gonna put Mark third today.

Annie: Okay.

Esau: We're gonna reorder. We're putting Mark the third because... and I tell students... because like what the Gospels do is they give you a toolkit. And Mark crafts a narrative with a kind of crescendo. The first half is who is this character? And it's like it rises to this place of confession. And we finally figure out who je... Mark does such a good job that everyone thinks this is the plot of the Gospels because this is the plot. Who is he? And then he is like, It's Jesus. He's the Messiah.

And the moment you think that you understand him, you don't. The son of man must suffer many things and could be crucified. And then the second half there. So we thought that we understood who he was, but we really didn't. But the thing that we wanted wasn't what we needed. What we needed is what we saw at the end of the story.

Annie: Wow.

Esau: And I want to say this one thing about the resurrection story. Now I believe Matthew and to say Matthew's fourth, and, but I'm gonna say this about the marking story. The marking story where the women come to the empty tomb and the original ending of Mark says they fled because they were terrified. And everybody kind of freaks out about that.

And I said, well, first of all, we know that the women eventually tell people because Mark is recounting their narrative. So they eventually pull themselves together and they go proclaim the good news. What I love about that ending of Mark is there's something about the resurrection, and we're still used to it, that we don't understand it. But there's something deeply unsettling about the resurrection.

Annie: Yeah, right?

Esau: And what I mean by that, it's one thing to live in a world where people die and they stay dead. And we kind of understand disappointment. But a world in which the power of God is actually unveiled, it's terrifying. You ever been in church? Maybe you don't remember, I don't know if you converted as an adult or not or if you remember it.

Annie: No. Kid.

Esau: Okay, kid. Even when you're a kid, you remember when you're sitting in the congregation and you're listening to the sermon and you start to go, "Oh, no, this might be true. The first thing that you feel when you hear the gospel is not joy. It is terror." It's like, Oh no, if it is true, everything has to change. Which is the reason why when you say—I'm talking about church—"Come on down," most people don't want to get out of the seat because they know the implications of what it means.

So that fear that the women have when they hear about the resurrection is that fear. I tell people, everybody wants to believe in God, but they don't want God in their business. Right? You want to just believe that God exists and have it as this comfortable idea that floats in the back of your head. But Mark ends at that moment of terror when you go, Oh, no, God is real. He has power over death. My entire world has been flipped upside down." So Mark wins on just the glory of his climax and his narrative construction.

Matthew, you're great, but I've already runaway past That Sounds Fun. And you gotta invite me back. So you can't ask me to talk about four gospels in 10 minutes as a New Testament professor.

Annie: I know. I know.

Esau: Matthew, you're great. You do a good job. I'm happy that you exist, way to start off the canon of the New Testament, but you don't get any more love-

Annie: No prep today.

Esau: ...in this podcast.

Annie: Well, listen, here's what I want you to know is that when I consider seminaries getting to sit under your teaching is one of the reasons Wheaton's in the running.

Esau: Oh, you know, don't have me recruiting now.

Annie: And I'm telling you.

Esau: I'll do the whole pitch. Because there are tons of great professors here who love the scriptures and who love pulling in the students. So we hope that some of y'all make your way to Wheaton at some point. We'd love to have you.

Annie: I have my pros and cons list and you are one of the reasons Wheaton stays so high on my options is getting to learn from you.

Esau: Send me an email. I want to see what we can negotiate.

Annie: Yeah, there we go. Well, listen, we will have you back to go real hard on the Gospels because-

Esau: Okay. Yes.

Annie: ...we love talking about it. But thank you so much for everything you taught us about *How Far to the Promised Land*. I cannot wait for people to get to read this, Esau. It's just-

Esau: Oh, thank you.

Annie: ...so important. It's so important. It's such an important and accessible read. So many of the important reads are not accessible for me.

Esau: Oh, thank you.

Annie: But you made it accessible.

Esau: That was something I really wanted to do. I wanted to tell a story and not bury people under Bible passages, which I could do if you ask me to.

Annie: Okay. Well, let me tell you, the last question we always ask is because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you?

Esau: Oh man, what sounds fun to me right now? What sounds fun to me right now would be taking my dog on a walk. Like after a long day of riding and researching, we have a King Charles Cavalier called Scotty and me and my wife like to take him around the block. It's a great way to kind of catch up. Me and my wife used to take the dog on the walk in the afternoon and just catch up and connect on our day, see what she's been up to, what I've been up to, and kind of take a deep breath. So I'm looking forward to that.

And maybe reading a book. And maybe having the book that I've written launched and have a little bit... A little bit of free time would sound fun too.

Annie: Oh man, I cannot wait to listen to the audiobook too. If it's you reading it-

Esau: I read it. Oh, yes. Like chapter 12 and chapter 10, I was in my feelings when I read those two.

Annie: Oh, I believe it. I believe it. Thank you for making time for this and for coming on the show. I really appreciate it.

Esau: Thanks for having me.

Annie: Oh, so great.

[01:01:21] <Music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, isn't he awesome? He is so brilliant. I cannot wait to have him back to do a deeper dive on the gospels. Like how lucky are we to have friends that talk about the Gospels like this? Make sure you also grab a copy of his new book, *How Far to the Promised Land*. I really enjoyed reading it. I mean, it's a beautiful memoir that I think y'all are gonna really be inspired by and learn a lot from.

And be sure to follow him on social media and thank him so much for being on the show. Y'all are always so generous to our guests. Thank you for that.

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. And don't forget you can find the That Sounds Fun podcast for extra goodies after every show on Instagram @thatsoundsfunpodcast.

All right, I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me, y'all, listen, when I was out for a week, I really got into *All Creatures Great and Small* on PBS and I've got two episodes left. So what sounds fun to me is finishing Season 3 of *All Creatures Great and Small*. If y'all have watched this, we have to talk about it. Okay.

Y'all have a great day. We'll actually see you back here tomorrow. You know I love a bonus Friday episode with our friend Cody Carnes. Yes, you are gonna love it. Okay, we'll see y'all tomorrow.