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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 today.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors. This episode is sponsored by [Athletic Greens](#). As speaking events and travel have picked back up for me again, you know my AG1 by Athletic Greens is coming with me. I'm doing my best to keep those healthy rhythms even on the road. And it is the simplest way to incorporate all the nutrients you need into your day with just one scoop.

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Intro: Today on the show I get to talk with my friend Madi Prewett Trout. You may remember Madi from Episode 338 of the podcast. She's also known for being on *The Bachelor* back in 2020. But now she is a bestselling author and speaker tackling big topics around God and love and personal worth and relationships.

Her new book, *The Love Everybody Wants: What You're Looking For Is Already Yours*, releases on Tuesday. It is an empowering message about where we go to find love. We all know it's easy to try and find our words from likes on Instagram or messages on dating apps. But Madi sharing about her journey to finding God's love and how it changed her, the way she dated, and how it's impacting her marriage.

This book is so cool, y'all. We talked about this because she started writing it before she met her husband and she wrote through dating, engagement, and marriage. It is so cool. This is a really interesting, interesting book, especially after our Summer Lovin' series—I think you're gonna really love it—we continue to get to have conversations around dating and sex and what that looks like right now.

So here is my conversation with my friend Madi Prewett Troutt.

[00:02:51] <[Music]

Annie: Madi, welcome back to That Sounds Fun.

Madi: Oh my gosh. This is my first time in person.

Annie: I know. I'm so glad. I mean, the last time was fun-

Madi: It was fun.

Annie: ...in person is the dream.

Madi: It really is.

Annie: Okay, we just have to talk about you and Grant being at JP's church. How in the world?

Madi: In Waco, Texas.

Annie: How in the world did you end up in Waco? Will you just tell me that story because Grant wasn't in Waco, right?

Madi: No. We met in Dallas. Got set up by a mutual friend, met in Dallas. And I remember it like it was yesterday. He never thought he wanted to be a pastor of any sort. That was never in the plans.

Annie: What was in the plans?

Madi: I mean, he's passionate about ministry, but more so in the context of sports. He played sports in college, grew up playing sports his whole life. So that was not in the plans to move to Waco, Texas, and be a part of a local church.

Annie: How did you end up in Dallas?

Madi: I came off The Bachelor, planned on moving to LA and connected with Jeanine Amapola through mutual friends, and met her and was like, "I love her. We're supposed to room together," but I did not feel a piece about LA. I was like, "I'm not supposed to live in LA." And I stayed out there for two or three weeks. And I was like, "Nope, this is not where I'm supposed to be."

Annie: Ain't it.

Madi: And I felt so bad because I had already committed to her. and I was like, "I know we've looked at a lot of places together and I've made a commitment, but I don't feel peace about being in LA and I can't go against that."

So I told her, I was like, "The Lord's really pressing Dallas on my heart. I know no one there. I have no connections or relationships in Dallas but I just feel like I'm supposed to be there." And she, funny enough, was from Dallas, and so I was like, "Hey, just take time to pray about it." I was literally in my prayer closet every morning." I was like, "Lord, tell her right now that she's supposed to be back in Dallas." Because I just felt it but I knew the Lord needed to be the one to speak it to her.

I was in the middle of 21 days of prayer and fasting with my church at the time and she literally called me a week later and was like, "I feel like I'm supposed to move back to Dallas." And I was like, "Oh my gosh." So that's kind of how we ended up in Dallas together.

Annie: Let me ask you a question about that and then we're gonna keep going with your story. I literally was just talking to my mentor on Marco Polo, and I said, "I can't decide..."

Madi: Marco Polo.

Annie: I know. Old person stuff. I know. Is that old person?

Madi: No. I used to love it but it's been like five years.

Annie: Brutal. This is brutal, Madi.

Madi: But now you're making me want it again.

Annie: It's great.

Madi: If I could talk to you on Marco Polo, I would download it.

Annie: We can.

Madi: Okay.

Annie: The beautiful thing is I get to talk to my mentor every day in just like clips, you know. Anyway, Madi, I said to her, "I have to make this decision." And I said to her, "I trust my gut, I trust my intuition, I feel like I want to hear God on this." You said "I just didn't have a peace about LA." How did you know it was God? Do you trust your gut? Is it your gut intuition because you're in relationship with the Holy Spirit that you can trust your gut intuition or did you hear a no?

Madi: I didn't hear an audible voice but I did feel just like a wrestle within. Like I was in LA, it did not feel homey. I felt constantly on edge. I felt like I wasn't hearing from the Lord in the way that I usually do. And nothing had happened. You know, I was still having my quiet time every morning. But just something felt off. Like it's, you know, one of those things that you can't necessarily put into words. I guess it is, you know, that just inward gut feeling. I just felt off.

And when I went back home, my church was in the middle of 21 days of prayer and fasting. That's when I just felt like Dallas was laid on my heart out of nowhere. No one said anything to me. It just was like, I just felt Dallas. And I was like, "Okay, I'm going to keep praying about it." And by the end of the 21 days of prayer and fasting just had that peace to just take that leap of faith.

But peace is one of those interesting things because it's not like this feeling or even just this audible voice from God. But rather, like you said, this gut intuition. And when you're walking and stuff with the Holy Spirit every single day, you just know what's of God and what's not.

Annie: I am very good at trusting my gut. So I don't normally go, "I need to hear." But this one thing, I'm kind of like-

Madi: "I need to hear."

Annie: "I think I need to hear."

Madi: Oh, I've had those moments. I'm like, "I have peace but no, I'm gonna need you to speak so that we're clear."

Annie: That's what I was asking my mentor is I was saying, "Will you confirm with me? Is this a thing where I should just keep walking through the open doors or could you be with me and the idea that I might need to actually hear versus walking." John Eldredge always talks about like, before you go on vacation, ask God where?

Before you choose how you spend your summer, ask God. Like Jesus wants to tell you. So I'm like, "I might need to ask Him." Okay, so Dallas. Okay, keep going. Keep going. Thank you for mentoring me. I appreciate it. Not on Marco Polo.

Madi: No. Literally, the amount of times I've literally come to Jennie and I'll be like, "I think this is what God is speaking." She's like, "No."

Annie: Yeah, I know.

Madi: And I'm like, "Wait, okay. No, you're right. You're actually so right."

Annie: And you didn't know Jennie Allen before you moved to Dallas.

Madi: No. Which was just a whole nother God thing.

Annie: Wow.

Madi: I have been praying for a mentor like that woman for, I mean, my whole life. And as soon as we went on our first little coffee day, I was like, "You're in my life forever. I mean, you read me. You're not afraid to call me out. I didn't want just a bunch of "yes" people in my life. I needed some women in my life to be like, "No, there's some blind spots. Here's some things you need to work on." And she was not afraid.

I mean, I remember when I first met her, I was in a relationship with someone else. And she was the one that looked at me and was like, "You need to end that relationship. This isn't God's best for you."

Annie: I remember we were in California-

Madi: Yes, and we're talking about it. Oh my gosh.

Annie: Yes. It was just happening. Yes.

Madi: Oh my gosh. So she was like, "It's not God's best for either of you. You need to end it." And I went home, called, I was like, "We're gonna end this." So she's the real deal. But yeah, I moved to Dallas, Texas.

When Grant and I started dating, the plan was Dallas, Texas. I mean, I have my team in Dallas and my friends, family. Everyone is in Dallas. Well, his family. I remember I got engaged and he just randomly one day was journaling and felt, you know, Waco, Texas, work for JP. He prays about it for a couple of weeks. He was wise to do that before bringing it to me. He brings it to me, I start crying.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Madi: I'm like, "Waco, Texas?" I'm like, "I have to tell people I'm gonna live in Waco, Texas?" I was just crying and I was like, "Okay, well, we weren't picturing our lives working for a local church. We didn't think about that or that wasn't planned. Waco is small town. That wasn't planned."

So I was kind of freaking out. And he was like, "Hey, listen, if it's of God, He's gonna give you the peace too. I'm not going to be dragging your feet while you're kicking and screaming. God's gonna give you peace and He's gonna unite us in this decision. And I really appreciate that he said that because it did give me I think more freedom to really take it for God and be like, Okay, for real God, what do you think about this? And sure enough, God started giving me peace.

I was like, secretly looking up houses online, but without telling Grant. I'm like, No, we're not going to Waco. And I'd go back home and I'd look up houses and I'm like, "Well, I kind of like this house."

Annie: Is that just like the Lord though? Or Were you like, "From Grant's point of view, you are a no." Like you going to Waco is a no, you are looking at houses at home. Like we just have no idea what God is doing in people's hearts-

Madi: Softening hearts.

Annie: We just don't even know. We do not know what people are doing when they are not standing right in front of us.

Madi: Right. Exactly. I got-

Annie: Did you already know JP?

Madi: So here's the funny thing. JP and I actually talked about this I think on the podcast recently. My first encounter with JP was not the best.

Annie: Oh, great. Super.

Madi: I was at The Porch in Dallas. My very first... I think I had been in Dallas for two days.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Madi: And a part of my story that I don't know if we've ever got into, but just church or a lot of things in the past that have happened that... Anyways, I had a little bit of like I was nervous about going to church. And you know, just being around a bunch of people. It was a year after I'd come off the show. Just had felt, you know, judgment. I was just nervous.

So I go to The Porch, JP speaking, and he is talking on relationships, and he makes this reference about The Bachelor. And he's like, "You don't go on The Bachelor to find your spouse or whatever." I can't remember exactly how he said it. But I kid you not, everyone in the room turned and stared at me. His heart was not to in any way... He didn't know I was there.

Annie: He didn't even know you were there.

Madi: Yeah. His heart was not in any way to even talk about The Bachelor.

Annie: But also JP Dallas, The Porch, someone from The Bachelor is there.

Madi: Someone is gonna be there. But my face was red. I was like, "Oh my gosh, everyone's looking at me." Anyways, we ended up talking about it and he just owned it and apologized. And he was like, "I'm so sorry." He was the most... I loved, honestly, his approach because it showed me his humility. He was willing to get on his social media and tell what he did and apologized to me in a public way. And I was like, "No, it's so fine. It's really not that big of a deal."

But that was my very first encounter with him. And then redemption followed. And now, I mean, Grant... JP is one of my husband, Grant, mentors, and closest friends. It's been so fun.

Annie: Tell me about the first time y'all drove to Waco. Was it to interview for a job? Was it to look at a house? When was it actually like, Okay, if we're gonna do this, we need to see it.

Madi: We went to Waco, we had plans to get dinner with JP and Monica. And we wanted to look at some houses around but we also were like, "We don't know what we're doing." We were like, "We don't know where to look." We were looking in like... I mean, now living in Waco, we are like, where were we even looking? Like it was in the middle of nowhere.

It was like a house where there was no human population within like six miles. Which is fine. A lot of people love living that way. But for newly married, we were like, we probably need to be a little bit more closer to people in case there's a gas

leak in our house, which happened and literally our house almost caught on fire, which is so fun.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Madi: All the things you learn within the first, you know, little bit of owning a house. I'm like, neither of us have ever owned a house before. So we didn't know what we're doing. But yes, we met with JP and Monica, we went to Harris Creek for the first time together and just looked around in Waco.

Annie: The whole time are y'all checking in with each other? Because when I've moved to Nashville, it was constantly me checking in with God of like, "Why do I feel about...? Is this...? Oh, yeah, I'm feeling this. I'm feeling this." Are y'all doing that and checking in with each other of like, okay, are you liking this?

Madi: We're like processing with God. We're kind of individually going about it until we get back in the car and hit the road to head back to Dallas. That was when we really processed together.

And I'll never forget because he asked me. He was like, "So how are you feeling?" I think he was so nervous that I was gonna be like, No. And I looked at him and I was like, "We're supposed to move to Waco." And I was like, "Yeah, I'm like a nine out of ten there."

Annie: Oh, wow.

Madi: I went from like two to nine just being there and seeing... I mean, especially being at Harris Creek and just seeing just the Lord move in just a local body the way that he was doing. And just the people there were just so kind. And nothing was about, you know, who you are, what you're wearing, or materialism or status, or any of that. Everyone was so genuine and loves Jesus. And I was just like, "Man, this is where I want to be. This is where I want to be discipled. This is where I want to disciple others."

So we both just immediately felt it when we left the church. And there were a couple things that we had felt on our heart. Like even just the phrase "leave and cleave" that we wanted to get away from Dallas and kind of build our own community together because his family's there, a lot of our friends are there. He had his before Jesus moments there and so he was wow now in Dallas because I was like, "Let's go somewhere else."

So I was very excited about that. But we both had this "leave and cleave" phrase on our minds and multiple people came up to us and just said that while we were at the

church. Like, really felt the Lord speaking leave and cleave over you guys. Like, you know, get away from Dallas, start your new life, start fresh, build your community together. It was just crazy. It was like the Lord knew the little phrases we needed to hear too to just confirm what we were already feeling.

Annie: As y'all are helping lead at Harris Creek, I'd be really interested to hear your thoughts on this because Harris Creek is becoming a very cool church. I mean, it is cool. I mean, you know, JP and Monica are dear to me. I love Scott that's on staff there. I love y'all. I love Harris Creek. But it's getting a vibe.

Madi: Right.

Annie: There's kind of like a, hey, you want to go to Harris Creek stuff? As one of the leaders there, how are you keeping it from becoming the cool thing that fizzles out because it got to cool? How do y'all stay focused on Jesus when there's this opportunity to be very cool? How do you both?

Madi: Man, I think everything rises and falls on leadership. I think JP had done such a great job. Coffee break.

Annie: Coffee delivery. Lillian, thank you.

Madi: Yes. Thank you so much.

Annie: What a hero! Look at that tiny little two-seater coffee delivery.

Madi: I've actually never seen that before.

Annie: We've never had a live delivery on the pod, Madi.

Madi: Oh.

Annie: Here we go.

Madi: I feel so special.

Annie: I know. Cheers to us. Well done.

Madi: You're about to take that first sip without me?

Annie: I wouldn't have dared. I almost did.

Madi: I'm excited. I haven't tried this kind yet.

Annie: Oh, yeah. Tell everybody what you got. I just got my normal chai.

Madi: It's pretty good. No, I'm gonna butcher it. I don't totally remember. I had to text a friend and say, what's it called?

Annie: Right. Right. Right. I should look on my phone and tell you.

Madi: I think it's sweet... Wait, hold on. Sweet cream cold brew. Sweet cream vanilla cold brew, I think.

Annie: Yes, that's exactly right. Sweet cream vanilla cold brew. You nailed it.

Madi: Oh my goodness, good memory.

Annie: Great delivery. Thank you. Thank you, gentleman who delivered this to us. So it all rises and falls on leadership. Do you feel that pressure? Do y'all have to think about that? The outside looking in, I think about it for y'all.

Madi: Totally. I mean, I think we feel that in a lot of different dynamics of our life. I think being at Harris Creek, what has been so cool is truly learning from JP's leadership and just watching him serve in such humility. One of my favorite things about him is he gets up on stage every Sunday and he is like, "Hey, if there is any feedback you have, if I have offended you in any way, if there's any way we could be a better church and family to you and for you, please come and find me.

He stays up front. He comes to the front after every single service sits out there or stands there for like 30 minutes and just lets people... I mean, people come up and complain. People come up and I mean, want pictures with him. I mean, there's all kinds of different moments. But I just love that it's so... he's very humble and at the same time very unafraid to share the truth and speak the truth.

So I really respect that about him. I love that he takes that approach. He'll be the first to say like, "Hey, this is not a church about me or about the people that speak. He rotates speakers very often.

Annie: Yeah. You never will tell. He says it on his Friday Q and A where someone said, "I'm coming on July 15th. Who's teaching?"

Madi: And he's like, "Sorry, can't tell you.

Annie: "I can't tell you. That's not why we're here."

Madi: And it's been so cool. And he is very passionate about developing young communicators, which I think is really awesome. And that's one of the reasons that Grant felt called to be under JP's leadership. JP is one of the biggest people that has made a difference in Grant's life. He's a part of Grant's testimony and story.

Grant was so running from the Lord and went to a Porch service and sat in the very back and was not in relationship with Jesus at all. I don't even know how he ended up at The Porch. But he was in the very back, saw JP speaking, and was like, "I feel a connection to him. I feel like I'm supposed to be mentored by him."

Annie: Wow.

Madi: And literally wrote his college thesis paper on him of like, who do you want to be one day or who has inspired you the most?

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Madi: Something like that. And he wrote it on JP. Again, didn't know him, wasn't a Christian. So JP has made a huge difference in his life. So one of Grant's-

Annie: Meanwhile, you're a public Christian. I mean, I think this is just such a beautiful God story.

Madi: Absolutely.

Annie: ...Like you have no idea what God is doing.

Madi: No idea. No idea.

Annie: Because you're on television as a Christian and Grant-

Madi: Grant's literally getting saved as I'm on television and I'm like, "I'm saving myself for marriage. I love Jesus."

Annie: It's incredible.

Madi: It is really wild how the Lord... And all the years that even I was in, you know, in my college dorm room or I was even at post-graduating college and crying because every single one of my friends was getting married and I was newly single, I'd just come out of a four-year relationship-

Annie: I love this part of the book with your mom and you, yes, crying.

Madi: And she reminded me of just like, You are exactly where you're supposed to be. God is not withholding good from you. He is preparing you for something and you've gotta lean into that. And that totally shifted my perspective in that season. But I remember praying for my future husband and I was like, "Okay Lord, I want him now, but I know there's a reason that I don't have him right now, and if that even is your will for my life. And I started praying that. And it's crazy to me to go back to those moments because if God had given me... Grant was not saved then.

Annie: Right.

Madi: I'm praying for my future husband and I'm like, little do I know praying for his salvation. Because I'm like, he was not there. And God just is... His timing is perfect. His ways are higher than ours. And had I had it my way, I would've gotten married at 21 to someone else because that was the prayer that I was like, "God give me this. I want this so badly." But God was like, "This is not my will for you and you have to trust Me." And that was so hard.

I mean, you know, you date someone for four years and all of your friends around you are getting married, you feel like that's what you're supposed to do. When he told me to lay that down, that was one of the hardest things ever. But it's really wild looking back to what-

Annie: I mean, I've been on dates with someone years ago who had just gotten saved. And I remember thinking, "Well, if this is the guy I end up with..." Of course, the Lord had to wait because he was not even... I'm fasting and praying at my quiet times in college and he is not.

Madi: Totally.

Annie: He is not. I mean, I think a beautiful thing, if y'all decide to have kids, a beautiful thing for your kids is y'all bring two totally different life experiences to help them shape their lives.

Madi: Right.

Annie: And you're already doing that with the people you are mentoring and discipling at Harris Creek of like, Hey, you can come sit with us and we can tell you two totally different stories and help you sort who you want to be. Because we can give you the pros and cons of both. Because there are pros and cons of both.

Madi: No, absolutely. It's been amazing to even see Grant's dynamic with my family and with my sisters. Like both of my sisters... It's so funny. I was laughing with Grant the other day because I'm like, one of my sisters text him more than she texts me

and will tell him things before me. And I'm like, "Hello, you haven't even told me this."

Annie: Are they both still in Alabama, your sisters?

Madi: They're both still in Alabama. But it's interesting because they can relate to parts of his story that I can't relate to and vice versa. But there's just parts, you know, that they really connects to with him that I can't necessarily understand. Like you said, it's so cool when God can bring two different stories and weave it into one and make it... I don't know. Just like redemption, you know.

Annie: For both, right?

Madi: For both.

Annie: Because he's not... wasn't all bad. Our stories are not all good.

Madi: No. Totally.

Annie: I bring a lot of baggage to a relationship from working for God and being in relationship with Jesus for my whole life. I bring a lot of baggage that a man who simply loves Jesus because it's newer does not bring. So there are so many gifts in having a partner who has a different history than you. It is not like an angel and a demon partnering up. It's not like the good and the bad.

Madi: It's both.

Annie: They're both true.

Madi: They're both true. Because self-righteousness is just as bad.

Annie: The worst. Listen-

Madi: It's Just as bad. I was literally reading that story I think in Luke this morning of Mary and Martha and Martha doing all the things and she's getting mad and she's like, but Mary isn't helping me. And Jesus is like, You're concerned about many things, but few things are actually important and Mary has chosen the better. And I was like, man, that's so good because how often am I like, "Okay, I'm performing for you, God, so blessed me. Okay, I'm performing for you, God, so look at me. Okay, I'm performing for you, God, so look at me. Okay, I'm performing for you, God, so give me the favor?" And He's like, but you've forgotten to just sit at my feet. You've forgotten to just rest with me. And man, I get caught in.

Annie: We had a guest in here a couple weeks ago who talked about, because the story that you read says they came to Martha's home. So without her hard work, there is nowhere to gather. So it is the same of like, I need to... Listen, I am a Martha start to finish same.

Madi: Same.

Annie: So I'm like, tell me how great she is. Anybody. But I so honor the Mary. I need to be both. I don't want to be Mary. The Mary's that are listening are like, Martha's a jerk. Martha's too much. So I want to be both. I want to be the person who builds a place that Jesus can come to and gather and the person who once I built the place that's at His feet. Right?

Madi: So good.

Annie: I want to be both.

[00:24:05] <[Music]

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation to share about one of our amazing partners, [Thrive Market](#). Grocery shopping is not my favorite thing, but it's one of the reasons I love Thrive Market. Thrive Market is my go-to for all of my grocery and household essentials. And I can get all of it delivered right to my doorstep, which is a huge time saver. And as a Thrive Market member, I can also save money on every single order. On average, I save over 30% every time.

On top of that, Thrive has a deals page that changes daily and it gives me cash back on so many brands that I love and a price match guarantee. Y'all, I'm such a fan. They've got some of my favorite items and they have clean cleaning supplies that I like. So I'm using products that work without introducing unnecessary chemicals into the situation.

And listen, I'm already starting my Thrive Market list for New York. Like I'm already getting it going because I'm just gonna have it all shipped right to me. It's gonna make my life so much easier. Thrive Market saves me commute time, waiting in line time, shopping time. And because I love the filters on their website and app—they have over 70—I can also curate my own shopping experience with the click of a button.

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Join in on the savings with Thrive Market today. Get 30% off your first order, plus free \$60 gift. That's awesome. So go to thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun for 30% off your first order and a free \$60 gift. That's thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun.

And you guys, my new kids' book, *So Happy To Know You*, comes out on September 19th. So soon. So soon. I cannot wait for my MiniBFFs to get this book and to find all the friends and animals in it and little Annie maybe riding a zebra. But more importantly, I want them to realize after reading this book that being who God made them to be is exactly what this world needs.

The best thing about you is you go pre-order your copy now wherever you love to buy books. It's on Amazon. It's on Barnes and Noble. Your local bookstore has it or can get it for you as well. But go ahead and pre-order it today because we have two fun gifts for you when you buy it before September 19th. One, we'll ship you a personalized book plate to stick inside the book. And two, we have a free coloring sheet for you to download.

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Okay, now back to our conversation with Madi.

[00:26:59] <[Music]

Annie: You've got to tell the story from the book about how you started a book about loving God, being loved by God, you'll find the right person before you met Grant. So in this book, we walk from you haven't met Grant till reading your vows at the end. It is so cool, Madi. How'd you start a book about this without Grant in the picture?

Madi: I started writing this book single and bitter. I was writing this book truly, I mean, as therapy to myself and reminding myself of the promises of God and reminding myself of what truly matters. And I remember having this moment on my bed and... This was probably, I don't know, six, seven months before I met Grant. And all my friends, even my roommate's best friend at the time had just started dating someone and I was just feeling like I feel left behind, I feel like, you know, something's missing.

I was angry with the Lord. I was like, "You know the desires of my heart and yet you haven't given it to me. Yet you've given it freely and abundantly to everyone else. Like what, God? What's going on?" And I was-

Annie: And six or seven months feels easy to say. That is a long time to live.

Madi: Yeah. And I was wrestling with the Lord and man, I remember He just gave me a nice little heart check and he was like, "Madi, you're looking for the right thing in all the wrong places."

Annie: Wow.

Madi: And in that moment I was like, "You're right. You're right. It's not wrong to desire love. It's wrong to look for it in everything but you Lord."

Annie: Wow. Wow.

Madi: "And it's wrong to think that I'm going to be completed and satisfied in someone else when I'm already whole with You. I'm already completed with You. And that was just a heart check moment of, Lord, I repent and I confess for taking these desires and idolizing them and putting them above You.

So that was another little shift in my heart moment where God... I just felt convicted. And He gave me the verses Matthew 22:36-40, which was the inspiration behind this book. And it's the two greatest commandments. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and then also to love your neighbor as yourself.

And when I read those, it was like something stood out to me in a unique way that it hadn't before. I saw the importance of three loves, but I also saw the order to these three loves. So I talk about that a lot in my book of, Hey, Jesus is the foundation. And if we don't get that right, if we don't understand what Psalm 23:1 says, which is the Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. Like when I have the Lord, I have everything. Not I need the Lord plus this in order to be fulfilled or I need Jesus plus this job or friend or husband or spouse? No. Just bottom line, Jesus is everything.

Once we get to that place, then learning how to love ourselves the way that God loves us and view ourselves the way that God views us, being confident in how He's wired us and shaped us and created us and living from that place of being valuable, knowing that we belong to Him. And then from that place, learning how to love others.

And it's like once we get those first two relationships healthy and strong, the rest of the relationships almost take care of itself. Because we're not coming into relationships from this place of lack and hoping that other people can complete us or fulfill us. Rather we come into relationships from a place of abundance saying, I'm already filled, I'm already whole, I'm already complete. Anything you give me is just gonna be an addition to my life. It's just gonna be a compliment to my life, not a completion.

Annie: One of the things people should know is that you and I talked about this before and we've been friends a long time. So you and I are prepared to have the conversation of like, this feels like a very too good to be true, too easy to. Like, this is what they told us in youth group is like, love God and get satisfied with God, and then-

Madi: Absolutely.

Annie: ...you'll get the marriage that you want. But Madi, I love the Lord and I'm 43.

Madi: Totally.

Annie: So will you talk a little bit about the things that you want that you haven't gotten and how are you reconciling? Because you do such a beautiful... The gift of this book is we defeat the enemy by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony. We need a testimony of I waited on God and He showed up. Talk to me the testimony of you waiting on God and He hasn't showed up yet.

Madi: I mean, one, I just want to say it reminds me of 1 Corinthians 7, which I think I was reading in the middle of my season of singleness when God wasn't moving and showing up and I felt disappointed. And disappointment can look like, you know, maybe He never answers the prayer or He doesn't answer the prayer in which you wanted Him to or in the timeframe that you wanted Him to.

I remember that I was reading 1 Corinthians 7 and it was talking about how singleness is better. And I was literally saying, you know, when you're married, you are more concerned about pleasing your spouse. Your concerns are how do I treat and love and concern myself with my spouse and what he needs and what she needs, whatever.

So it's like, for me, when I was reading that, I was like, Oh, like that just straight up defeats the lie that it's better to be married. And you know, Paul's writing to that person of like, singleness is a gift. We hear that and we're like, boo. But Paul is literally saying singleness is a gift because you have undivided devotion to Jesus.

Annie: I feel that.

Madi: You are not torn, you are not seeking to please another person. Like your full attention and devotion is, how can I honor God with everything? And you get to experience things with the Lord. I don't want to say that you'll never experience a marriage because that's not true. I've only been married for 10 months, so I don't want to speak to that because I'm 10 months in. But I do think that there is such richness to be experienced in singleness. Marriage just does change things. I look back to singleness and I'm like, man, the way that I got to just be alone with the Lord-

Annie: I was gonna say, what do you miss? Do you miss some of the aloneness?

Madi: One of the craziest... and I've had to learn how to talk about this because I'm like, yes, marriage is such a gift and I am so grateful for the gift that Grant is. I think something that isn't talked about enough is when you get married and when you do dating and marriage God's way is like when you get married, there's also this, there's an excitement for marriage. There's a, oh my gosh, I'm celebrating that I'm married.

But then there's also this, like, in a way I am grieving a single life. Like I'm grieving this old way of living when it was just me and the Lord, when I could travel and do all the things that I wanted to do, how I want to do it, when I wanted to do it, and you're not worried about someone else. I mean, every day you wake up, you have the quiet time of your dreams however long you want, you're not cooking, cleaning. Literally, if you want to eat Doritos in bed by yourself till 2:00 a.m., you can. It is such a gift.

And I think that was something that not a lot of people... everyone just was like, marriage is the best, marriage is the best, marriage is the best, or marriage is really hard, marriage is really hard, marriage is really hard. And I'm like, I think the two can go exist. I do think this marriage is really great, but there is a recognition of like, it's different. Your life is now changing. And it's okay to grieve your single life and how life looked when you could just go on girls' trips for two weeks. So I definitely-

Annie: I remember maybe two years ago, it was like Christmas or something, and I remember the Lord saying, "If this is our last one, just me and you..." And I cried.

Madi: Wow.

Annie: And I thought, "oh my gosh, what do I want to do this year for this holiday season in case it's my last one with just me and God?" Because I am sure I will miss things. And you're still waiting for God to answer other prayers, I'm sure.

Madi: Yeah. I mean, I think there's definitely things always when it comes to, you know, job and friendships and family stuff and health and all kinds of different things. You know, there's been multiple times Grant and I have talked about different times of feeling extremely anxious and anxieties and internal things that we have to wrestle with and battle with that not everyone sees. And it's like God, why are you-

Annie: You write about anxiety in the book some.

Madi: Yeah. It's like, God, why aren't you taking this away? Why isn't this changing? I've been praying for it for years. Or like even watching people that I really, really care about carry things that they've been caring for 20 plus years, and they're like, "When is this ever gonna get better?" It's like, we don't always know the answer. We don't always understand. And we're not called to. We're not called to see the whole picture. We're just called to keep taking steps of faith and obedience.

Annie: That's beautiful.

Madi: ...with where we're at and just be faithful. I think for me, when I'm in the middle of an anxious moment or I'm frustrated with something and I'm like, "God, is this ever gonna change? Is this ever gonna get better? Are you ever gonna answer this prayer?" I just have to remind myself of that He's the same God and that who He has been, who He is, and who He will always be is never gonna change. And that He will finish what He started and that He will carry it to completion and that heaven is our home.

Annie: Yeah, That's good.

Madi: That there's going to be things on this side of eternity. There's gonna be things in earth that we're not gonna understand that are gonna be painful and hard, like heartbreak and rejection and unmet expectations and, you know, the loss or death of dreams or relationships or people. There's gonna be things that are so hard for us to be able to understand. And honestly trying to understand it just makes it harder.

Annie: Right.

Madi: So for me it's just like, I just gotta surrender the understanding, you know?

Annie: Wow.

Madi: And it's that verse that's like, lean not on your own understanding but in all your ways submit to Him. So it's like, man, I don't understand this Lord, but I do trust

You. And I know that even if I never... Hebrews 11 talks about all the heroes of the faith. And it's like, hey, they never received what was promised to them, you know?

Annie: It's terrible.

Madi: I'm like, well, gosh. I'm like, shoot, well don't let that be my story, Lord.

Annie: These are the heroes who never received the thing, never saw in their lifetime the thing they prayed for.

Madi: Isn't it crazy that we look at these people and we don't... we want to take that part of scripture out but we want to be like, give us faith like Abraham, give us faith like Moses, give us faith like Joshua, give us faith like whoever, David. But then we read that part in Hebrews 11 and then we're like, "Well, but can you just take this part out, Lord?"

Annie: But can I end well? Can I have this faith?

Madi: Can I still receive the promise and live a happily ever after life on earth and in heaven? Like, thank you, Jesus.

Annie: Madi, you're right. Yes.

Madi: And it's like, man, that's just not always the story, you know?

Annie: No.

Madi: There's gonna be times where maybe you receive some stuff on earth. Maybe you don't ever receive it on earth. Maybe your rewards are in heaven. But there's such joy to know that we're living for an everlasting hope and reward and not for one that's gonna quickly fade. Because things and people on this earth, they're not forever. Even relationships, you know. And how we steward them really matters. But at the end of the day, one day I'm gonna be face to face with the Lord and I have to give an account for my life. Not, Hey, how did Grant do?

Annie: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's not your husband do.

Madi: It's me and God. So what's so crazy to me is I wrote this book in singleness and then I continued writing it in dating while I was evaluating Grant and then finished it two months after we got married. So I was able, by the grace of God, to speak really from all these different perspectives.

Annie: It's amazing. It's such a cool part of the book, Madi.

- Madi:** It's so wild. But like, what was crazy to me is that I realized in marriage, whoa, these principles, they don't change.
- Annie:** Oh wow.
- Madi:** It's still like the love of God is the foundation. And if I don't get that right, our marriage is not what it's called to be.
- Annie:** Yeah. The minute I knock an idol off, I put another one up. So, as soon as I knock off the idol of who's the guy gonna be, I will put up the "it's him. It's him." So you're right. If we don't stay grounded in the Jesus part of this no matter what, parents, not parents, old, young, married, not married, it'll be a struggle the whole time. I'll do it too. I'll do it wrong over and over again.
- Madi:** Of course.
- Annie:** Okay. In June, we spent our whole month of June on dating. Summer Lovin'.
- Madi:** Summer Lovin'.
- Annie:** So can we dive into some of the dating things? I want us to do some nuts and bolts of dating. There's a couple of things I noticed in the book that I want you to kind of speak into. Mostly help me Mostly help me and our friends will get to listen in. A pick me girl and a not pick me girl. Will you give me some like how do I know... Will you define what that means? Because that's not a term I use a lot. And for better or for worse. And then will you kind of say, here's like a checklist of how you know if you're being a pick-me girl.
- Madi:** Yeah. Yeah. So I would say this is my version of it. Some people are probably gonna be like, that's not what a pick-me girl is. I'm like, hey, this is just my interpretation.
- Annie:** You're the one who I gave the mic to.
- Madi:** This is my interpretation of what it is. So one of the things that I did with this book is that each chapter title I referenced after like a pop culture song-
- Annie:** Yes, brilliant.
- Madi:** ...or a trending sound on social media. So I really wanted to take culture's views of love and really add biblical principles to it.

Annie: I loved it.

Madi: So one of them was this trending thing that has been going on, I feel like, for a couple years now, called the pick me girl. And I joke about it because I'm like, man, my first understanding of pick-me was when I was in elementary school. And they're all like, you know, in PE class when they divide you up and they pick two like captains.

Annie: Captains, yes.

Madi: And then you're sitting there and you're like, Dear God, please pick me.

Annie: Just don't let me be last. Just don't let me be last.

Madi: And they start going down the line and literally there's like two or three people left and you're like, Please, don't let me be last.

Annie: Right. Right.

Madi: That's my first understanding of a pick-me girl. But I think over the years, my definition of what I've seen as a pick-me girl in my own life and with other people is almost when you're so desperate for attention or you're so desperate to be loved by another person that you're willing to change who you are, you're willing to compromise your values, you're willing to go to really high extremes to be noticed, to be affirmed, to be picked. And you're desperate for that attention, you're desperate to be chosen.

So my challenge in this book is, you know, to take the approach of you're already picked, you're already chosen, you're already enough. And knowing that your value and your worth comes from a savior and not from a spouse, from a God that went to the cross and beyond to express and show His love for you and not to a person who's gonna continue to fail you time and time again.

And when we can have that understanding, it changes everything. Because then we're like, whether you pick me or reject me, I know who I am, I know my worth.

Annie: I could be sad about it. I can grieve it-

Madi: Totally.

Annie: ...but it didn't change my worth.

Madi: And I went on a reality dating show where everything was on, "Am I gonna get picked or not?"

Annie: Oh. It was literally there's one captain and he is picking.

Madi: Am I gonna get a rose? And I had to remind myself again and again as well as my other friends on the show again and again-

Annie: And also spoiler alert, you did get picked.

Madi: Kinda. Kinda.

Annie: You won the game in a terrible way.

Madi: Ish. I'm like, there's gray area.

Annie: Fair.

Madi: But I had to remind myself and my friends like, "Hey, if we don't get this rose, God has something better. And your worth and your value is not in this rose. Your worth and your value is in something that can't be given to you or taken from you by another person. Because it's from God.

And I would just continue reminding us again and again, like, Hey, I know that if you don't get a rose it's gonna feel like rejection. But what if it's just God's redirection to something better?

Annie: Wow.

Madi: And it's having that perspective of like, don't allow other people who maybe don't even know who they are determine who you are. We have to know who we are as believers. That we belong in Christ. That our identity, our worth, our value is in Him.

Now, of course with that, there's gonna be moments where we get rejected or hurt and it just cuts deep and it hurts. And I've had those moments where I was 16 years old and crying in a bathroom stall, questioning everything about myself because my first love cheated on me. And I immediately felt worthless. I felt unpickable. I felt, oh, he chose someone else therefore-

Annie: Also, how in the world does 16-year-olds cheat on each other? Get outta here.

Madi: Listen-

Annie: How dare he?

Madi: Listen, I don't know.

Annie: Just break up, my guy.

Madi: I know.

Annie: Geez.

Madi: It was a crazy moment. I felt like I was on a movie. Like a person from, you know, a grade above me came up at my lunch table.

Annie: Oh geez.

Madi: I mean, listen, get in this moment with me. We're at a lunch table, I have all of my friends around me and this person walks up and says, "Your boyfriend just cheated on you." And I immediately had to, of course, act like I didn't care. "Oh, his loss. That's on him." Immediately ran to the bathroom, cried for like 45 minutes. And then from there really had to work hard for the next four years to tear down the walls that I had started building around my heart. Because I was so afraid to let anyone else in.

So I understand on every level wanting to be picked and it being hard when you're not picked. But I also know the truth of God's word and that we are already picked by a loving Father. And it does start there. Like, we have to understand that before trying to get in a good relationship with anybody else. Because if we don't understand that first principle of us already being picked by God, then we're gonna try and find our worth and value in someone else.

Annie: And I think a thing my counselor and I have talked a lot about how I... I want to say how I got myself in a situationship, but, I mean, how I helped create-

Madi: Situationship. I learned about that word recently.

Annie: It's great. We're having a great time. But the pick me girl idea can exist in all of us in one area and now and others, or in one dating relationship and not in others.

Madi: Absolutely.

Annie: I think a lot of times when we think about things like this, some of our friends listening go, well, I'm married with kids. And you're like, well, you're kind of

desperate in this one friend group or you kind of compromise in this one group of friends you use language you don't use anywhere else because you want to be included. Me too.

Annie: I mean, I get myself in those pickles all the time. Where I go, like I'm healthy enough to not be a pick-me-girl as a lifestyle, but I can have it as an appetizer or something. There are times I go, This guy... Oh, I can tell I need to work on me because he's calling my pick-me girlness out of me. And that other guy didn't. And when I'm not with either of them, I'm not that way." So I think there's an encouragement there too that you write about of like, it may not be your whole life. And it may be. It may be the first time you've ever thought this and go like, Oh my gosh, I am that way with everyone I date.

[00:45:54] <[Music]

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to share about another amazing partner, [Prose](#). I know you've heard me sing the praises of Prose and their truly custom-made-to-order haircare. But switching to a custom routine from Prose was one of the best things I've done for my hair.

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[Lauren Daigle song playing]
I don't know who I'd be if I didn't know You
I'd probably fall off the edge
I don't know where I'd go if You ever let go
So keep me held in Your hands

Annie: Y'all, that song! Have you heard the whole thing yet? My gosh, it is so good. It is my girl Lauren Daigle's new song, *Thank God I Do*, which is featured on her latest self-titled 23-song album titled Lauren Daigle. The album features hit songs like this one and These Are the Days. I have the whole thing playing on repeat. So I need you to check it out wherever you consume music. Or you can visit laurendaigle.com to buy the entire album. This is her first album in five years, y'all. Following her last one *Look Up Child*, which included the hit song we all know *You Say*.

Lauren's currently out on the Lauren Daigle Kaleidoscope Tour. So make sure to check out dates and see if she's visiting a city near you by visiting laurendaigle.com. That's Laurendaigle.com to learn more. Y'all go listen to the album, go see her show, tell her how much you love her. You are going to really, really love this new music from our friend Lauren Daigle.

[Lauren Daigle song playing]
I don't know who I'd be if I didn't know You
I'd probably fall off the edge

Annie: And now let's jump back in to finish up our conversation with Madi

[00:49:11] <[Music]

Annie: So a couple days ago, on Instagram, you said after two or three dates you need to know his intention. Are you saying after two or three dates it needs to be like, this is going to marriage or it's not?

Madi: No, I don't think it has to be like, "Hey, I see you as my wife." I think honestly I would run away. I'm just kidding. I don't know if I'd run away, but I think I would be a little alarmed. I think more than anything, at least for us, for Grant and I, because again, all I can go off of is my own experiences and what I've seen really work for me and the people around me. But yeah, you know, from the very beginning we did say, "Hey, I'm not dating just to date. I'm not dating just for a

good time. I'm not dating just to say that I have a boyfriend. I am dating with the angle being marriage.

So my goal is to find someone that will make me more like Jesus, that will push me closer to Jesus, and that will help me make a difference for Jesus. And if you're not it, I'm gonna let you know probably pretty early on because I don't want to waste my time.

Annie: I don't want to waste either.

Madi: Yeah. Yeah.

Annie: If we're both going after that goal and it's not the same goal, I wish you well.

Madi: Totally.

Annie: I send you off with joy.

Madi: No, truly. Because I think that's where it can get hard is when we don't state those things early on. And then you can find yourself in this limbo three or four months in and you're like, So where are we? What's the goal?

Annie: Oh, and I can fall in love with anyone. I fall in love with anyone. I

Madi: I was a hopeless romantic. I'm like, Yes, it could so work. And people around me are like, "I don't see what you see." But that's why it's so important from the very beginning to like... I mean, the Bible says without vision the people perish. It's like, let's have vision for where we're going.

Annie: That's good.

Madi: Let's have vision for what the end goal is. Because if we're on two different pages, if my goal is for this to end in marriage and my goal is to not date for three years, but your goal is to, you know, finish law school and date for five years, and then maybe you'll be ready. If we're on two totally different pages, that's just breeding discontent and frustration and missed expectations and so much more chaos that you could save yourself from if you were to just upfront be like, "Hey, here's where I'm at. There's no pressure attached to that. I just want you to know, I want to be honest with you coming into this that, you know, my goal is to find a spouse and to settle down and to date God's way. Here's the boundaries.

We had a boundary talk early on. Here's the boundaries. I am obviously, yes, saving myself for marriage, but even all of this other gray area, like the Bible is clear, flee

from all sexual immorality. Let's pursue holiness together. I want to help make you more holy and I want you to help me be more holy. So having those conversations upfront really helped us.

Annie: I'm not gonna make you answer this with detail, but one of the biggest questions our friends listening ask me to ask when we're talking about dating is how far is too far? Everybody wants to know that. Of course. Me too. I mean, I've had to have hard conversations with mentors of how far is too far? How did you and Grant sort that out with your different histories, with your different stories? Again, don't feel like I'm asking for an expose, unless you want it. We'll talk about whatever you want.

Madi: I'm like, this time, no.

Annie: But how does that conversation go when you need to have it early because of who you are, where you're going and the Jesus part of it, if you will.

Madi: I mean, for us, we had the conversation early on, but it was something we had to continuously talk about.

Annie: Yeah, you talk about that. That even when you made mistakes, you had to talk about it.

Madi: Because I think when we even asked the question, how far is too far, we've probably gone too far or we're probably dancing with the crossing the line. So for me, when I was asking like, is this too far? Are we getting close to the line? It's like, I'm probably standing on the line, passing the line, dancing near the line.

Annie: Sometimes I feel like it's such an innocent question.

Madi: Sometimes it is. But I do think that for a lot of us, we try to justify.

Annie: We want to get as close to.

Madi: And we want to get as close to the line as we can. Not for all of us. I do think that there are some that it's genuinely like, "Hey, how can I put up the right boundaries so that I don't get close to it?" But I just think that our perspective should be instead of like, how far is too far, just like truly be like, how can I get as close to holiness as possible?

And I think when we ask that question, we don't even have to touch on the other. Mm. Because when we're chasing after holiness with all of our hearts, we're not trying to, you know, dance with sin and get around it and, and figure out. It's just

like we're just pursuing holiness with everything. And I think with that, there's practical steps of like, "Hey, I had to get very real because for us, like I'm like, I'm attracted to you. I want to be with you. This is hard. I know holiness is great, but this looks pretty great too, you know?"

Annie: Yeah. Right.

Madi: And that's where it gets hard because you're like, Okay, but I know the truth, but my feelings are telling me this and my flesh is feeling this. Man, for us, we just had to bring accountability in and be like, Hey you know, we had these thoughts or we slipped up here, can you please step in and hold us accountable? So it got to the point where truly my roommate knew where I was at all times. She would check in on dates, ask us how we were. We wouldn't hang out past a certain hour. We wouldn't lay down on a couch together. I mean, just know your trigger points. Like for us, we knew our trigger points and then we brought in accountability to just help us stand firm in that. We even signed a purity contract individually.

Annie: You read about that... I mean, I read about that. You read about it. You wrote about it, I read about it.

Madi: No, I got with my girls and he got with his dudes. We did it separately. I think sometimes... I pray that when people read that it's not like we got together and we created this thing and then we-

Annie: Signed it with a quill pen. No.

Madi: It was very individual. Like I was with my accountability. He was with his accountability. We wanted to take the intense approach because I've just learned in my life, like where there's not sometimes intensity and intentionality that's where, at least for me, I kind of fall into this place of, whoops, didn't, shouldn't have done that or whoops, went too far.

So for us, just realizing, Okay, we gotta be super intentional about this. So I brought in mentor, accountability partner, signed it, gave it to them, and was like, Here you go. You have it. Here's my word. Here's my commitment. I mean, that's just something that worked for us.

Annie: I had a friend who's parenting teenagers, so his daughter started dating someone in high school. And he said when he sat down with the guy the first time he met him, he said, the percent of romances in high school that last into marriage are like 4% or something. I don't know. I'm making that up. And he said, so the chances are you're dating someone else's wife.

Madi: Wow.

Annie: So somewhere someone is dating your wife. How do you want to do this relationship with my daughter if she's someone else's wife?

Madi: That's good.

Annie: I am, you know this, the people listening know this, I am not an all-or-nothing person. So I'm not saying a nothing story. I'm saying that has actually shifted like, if this guy and I are going to be in a relationship, we are going to have a physical relationship as part of it. Emotional, spiritual, physical, and time and commitment.

But if he's someone else's husband, I want to be really thoughtful about how we grow our relationship to a point that feels healthy for me. We are gonna make mistakes, everybody makes mistakes, but also on the off chance he's someone else's husband. How can I leave him better than I found him? Not leave him with guilt and shame and you know. I mean, we're gonna mess up too. It's part of the game.

Madi: Even if he ends up being your husband. I've just seen even the lines that you cross and compromise leads to just confusion and just so much even carried into marriage. And that's why it's just not worth it. Purity and holiness is so worth it. It talks about in scripture like Matthew 5:8, blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. Purity is not to withhold from you. Purity is to protect you.

Annie: That's good.

Madi: Purity is to give you peace. Purity is to put you before God so you can see Him, so you can hear Him. Like, anytime Grant and I got close to crossing lines, or even if we made mistakes, it created confusion. It separated us not only from each other, but even from God. It was harder for us to see God, hear God, feel God. And man, that's why I'm like, it's so not worth it. And with that, there's no shame if that has happened for those listening.

Annie: Oh my gosh, yes, no shame.

Madi: I'm so not perfect. I talk about in my book how even at 13, 14 years old I got exposed to pornography.

Annie: Oh my gosh, your writing about pornography is so helpful. It is beautiful. Thank you.

Madi: That was the most vulnerable thing I've ever... I texted Jenny, my mentor, and I was like, "I don't know if I can put this in here. What do you think?"

Annie: I mean, even saying, "I couldn't talk about this because I thought this was a guy's thing," that is so powerful, Madi. Me and everybody else, everyone who's ever walked into any of that has thought, I can't ever talk about this.

Madi: I can't talk about this. Yeah. You feel so much shame. You feel like, Oh, this shouldn't be a girl's struggle. And it's like, no, that's such a lie.

Annie: It's so dumb.

Madi: That's such a lie.

Annie: It's so dumb. But we all swallow that pill.

Madi: But we all feel it. We all feel it. There is such freedom that comes with walking in purity. But I also just want to speak to those who-

Annie: Yeah, say that.

Madi: ...you know, that has not been your story up until this point. But the beautiful thing is that if you give God your past, He can give you freedom for your future and He can set you free from those things that have kept you bound, those things that have kept you bound for so long. Because even though the enemy promises us, like, if you do this, there's pleasure, there's fun, there's adventure, there's freedom. That's not what follows it. All that comes is shame and separation and guilt and so much. And with Jesus and choosing to recommit purity and choosing to pursue holiness moving forward, there is so much He wants to do in and through you.

Annie: I mean there is nothing anyone has done with anyone else that if you are pursuing God will keep you from what God has for you.

Madi: Oh my gosh. My husband has the craziest story. I'm like, I could share his whole testimony. He has the craziest story. But God has so redeemed it. And I truly, like in all honesty, can say he is one of the purest people I've ever met in my life. The Lord has fully redeemed his past fully, like given him new memories, like given him a new lens to look through. And not to say he doesn't ever struggle. We all struggle.

Annie: Right.

Madi: But the Lord has redeemed it. And it's so cool. He pushes me so much in purity. Not even just in... When we think of purity, we think of like, you know, don't have sex, all the things. But even just purity in heart and motive and what we see and

what we say. And he has pushed me and refined me in that area. And it's just so cool to see. So the Lord can redeem our darkest moments.

Annie: I hope. I know it.

Madi: Absolutely.

Annie: I know it in my life. Yeah. I mean, I've been gifted and blessed for so many things I do not deserve because I was at my darkest moment too. I have a hundred percent attendance to my wins and my sins. And I haven't missed any of them.

Madi: That's so amazing. I'm gonna steal that.

Annie: Do it. I haven't missed one of them. So when anyone tries to tell me everything I have I deserve, I'm like, well, lemme tell you what you missed. You miss the dark nights. You miss the sin. You miss the worst decision-making. I've done all that. And then I go, man, the Lord's kindness is beyond what I deserve and all things.

Madi: Amen.

Annie: So the thing we balance right is there is no shame and God redeems. And also moving forward we get to choose holiness.

Madi: There's a higher calling. There's more. There's an abundance of freedom and peace and joy-

Annie: Both are true.

Madi: ...that's available to us if we accept that calling of pursuing purity.

Annie: That's so good, Madi. I love talking about dating with you. When this book came across my desk, I was like, Well, a) it's my friend, but b)... I mean, something has unlocked here as we've talked about dating. It has given people conversations to have with their people, and to say, how do I do this? How do I know if I'm a pick-me girl? Blind spots are hard for me. I'm embarrassed by my blind spots. So when my friends say, "You're kind of pick me girl and pretty hard right here, I'm always like, I'm so embarrassed. And also you love me enough to tell me.

Madi: Amen.

Annie: And that is just-

- Madi:** Surround yourself with people that will call out the blind spots. Because we are blind. We only see what we can see. And there are things that we can't see. And we need people around us to point out, not only in our own lives but in relationships. Like I've had people be like, "Hmm, that's not God's best for you. He's not the one." But to me, I was like, "No, it can work. It can work." And I'm like trying to force something that is so clearly not God. And I've had to have people in my life be like, "Madi, no, this is not what you've prayed for. You're missing this." And they just start calling out all these things. And I'm like, "No, you're right. You're right."
- Annie:** Yeah. I mean, I had a situation where everyone said, "This is not," and I was like... I literally had to say to myself, "Do you hear them?" Because if there was one person that was a voice in your life that you trusted that said this is a good idea, you'd have some legs to stand on. So you have to actually ignore what you feel. Because if the Lord has this, He will turn their hearts. Because I've set them up as voices.
- Madi:** Totally.
- Annie:** Not because they're a peanut gallery who gets to decide what I do with my life. But I've set them up as the Jennies in my life. And for all of them, I was like, "I must need to run, not walk."
- Madi:** There's a lot of red flags happening right now and I need to lean into that.
- Annie:** Yeah, This is like a beach full of sharks. There are just red flags left and right. And I am acting like I should go swimming. So there have been times... I mean, only as I've grown older have I gone, "My feelings don't win." Because the wisdom I've set up in my life is saying no.
- Madi:** So good.
- Annie:** It is not fun.
- Madi:** No.
- Annie:** But it is good. Okay, what did we not talk about that you want to make sure we talk about?
- Madi:** That's so good. I have a chapter on love is blind, red flag alert, talk all about the red flags.
- Annie:** Dude, it's good.

Madi: And one of the red flags is like, if you don't have peace and if all of your people in your life are disagreeing with the relationship and that's... Listen, there are some circumstances where people... like I've had situations where even in dating Grant, there were some people who were like, No, I don't know. And ultimately I had to get before the Lord and be like, What are you speaking to me and saying to me?

But I do think there is something to be said when there are a lot of people in your life that you trust, you trust the relationship with the Lord and how they hear from the Lord, and they've done life with you long enough to know your heart and what you deserve, and they're like, "Hmm, I'm concerned." Lean into that. And then I have a chapter on feelings and I'm like, Hey, feelings are from the Lord-

Annie: It's such a good chapter.

Madi: ...and they're good indicators but they make really bad leaders. Because they're inconsistent. And you can't always trust them. So it's like pay attention to them, but don't just follow wherever they take you. Because that could lead down a road of resentment or a road of regret. And you'll be like, How did I get here? Because you just acted off of whatever whim.

Annie: It's why having mentors matters. Have voices of reason in your life because your feelings... We say this a lot: Your feelings can ride but they don't get to drive.

Madi: Yes.

Annie: So they're allowed to be in my car. I just need my mentors, I need Nancy saying, Hey, that sounds sideways to me.

Madi: Yes. Yes. And like walking in stuff with the Holy Spirit, being in God's word, making sure that your private life aligns with your public life. Like you're in the word of God every single morning because who you are in private is who you're gonna be in public. When you're under the pressure and the temptation and all of those things, like how you've invested in yourself, that's what's gonna come out when the pressure hits. I think that's so, so important to talk about because I think so many times we're kind of just like whatever we feel in the moment. And it's like, no, we gotta pre-decide before those moments of pressure and temptations come.

Because if you don't know who you are and what you value and what you believe, you're gonna find yourself in moments just like whatever people want of you, whatever everybody else is doing, you're gonna end up doing. And then you're gonna go on to regret it and beat yourself up over it. So take the time to ask yourself really hard questions, you know.

Ask yourself, do I truly believe that I'm valued by God? Am I really longing, you know, for God to be the one who satisfies me and completes me? Am I taking my longings to him? You know, where does my confidence and hope come from? What are my boundaries within purity? How do I want to respond when the people around me start gossiping or start drinking more than they should or whatever it may be? Like, ask yourself those really hard questions so that when you're faced with those moments of temptation, you already know how you're gonna respond.

Annie: Yes. Maddie, you're so wise. Okay, last question. One of the things we've had, Noah Herrin was on. Do you know Noah that's a church planter?

Madi: Yes.

Annie: And we have a couple of people that are in their 20s that are on the show this fall. I would love for you to tell me who are some of the female peers of yours that we should be following, that you love and respect that are doing good work that we can follow, that our little sisters can follow, the people we disciple can follow, maybe our daughters that are teenagers can follow. Who do you love?

Madi: So Jeanine Amapola is my best friend.

Annie: She's lovely.

Madi: She is awesome. She has a podcast and has kind of started her ministry from this thing called Abide Tribe, talking all about how, again, what I was just alluding to, like why our private life matters. Like abiding with Jesus. It all starts there. If we don't abide, we're not gonna have what we need for anything out here. So getting that relationship right.

So I would definitely say Jeanine. Of course, Sadie. I mean Sadie's a rock star. It's been so good having a friend like that in my life of just someone that I can just turn to and ask questions. She's been in this space longer than I have. So just being able to lean on her and be like, "Hey, what are your thoughts on this? So Sadie, of course.

Demi Tebow. Another good friend.

Annie: I love Demi.

Madi: Another rock star of the faith and just her and Tim are just awesome. And then, I mean, Jenny is not really a peer, but-

Annie: Jennie Allen.

Madi: But Jennie Allen is my girl.

Annie: I'll follow her anywhere.

Madi: No, truly. Jennie Allen is my girl. I mean, those are the few.

Annie: Thank You. It's been fun to meet people I didn't already know and that we can say, "Hey listen, this is a trustworthy voice for your younger friends, sisters, daughters. The last question we always ask, Madi Troutt is because the show is That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

Madi: You know, okay, so it's fall time now. We're, we're coming into fall.

Annie: We're manifesting fall.

Madi: We're manifesting fall. I'm like in Dallas, Texas, it's 104 degrees.

Annie: Brutal.

Madi: In Waco 104 degrees. I'm like, fall, we need you. But fall football.

Annie: Oh.

Madi: And so Auburn Auburn.

Annie: I Know.

Madi: I want you and me at Auburn football game.

Annie: I've never been to Auburn. My sister went there and I've never been.

Madi: ...with like a pretzel. Man, just us there at an Auburn game. It's fall, we're in a sweater Orange-

Annie: The breeze.

Madi: The breeze.

Annie: Orange.

Madi: We're in orange and we're screaming for, you know, Auburn.

- Annie:** Has the tree recovered that people burned down?
- Madi:** Yeah. I think that was like four ago. Like, Annie, where have you been? She's Like, "I don't care about Auburn."
- Annie:** I haven't checked on the tree in a while.
- Madi:** What sports team are you?
- Annie:** Georgia. Oh, sorry. I know. It's hard. I know. That's where I went.
- Madi:** It's okay. I can go for Georgia over Alabama.
- Annie:** Oh, certainly. Listen, in our family, my dad went to Alabama, mom, Georgia, me, Georgia, sister, Georgia.
- Madi:** Wow.
- Annie:** So the rule growing up was you can stay in state and you can go for free because it's in state for free or we can go to Alabama. Those were the options. And then the baby went to Auburn and my dad was like, what? They still don't watch the Iron Bowl together.
- Madi:** Oh. No, I get it. It's so intense.
- Annie:** It's so intense. Y'all's whole state. Alabama is so intense as a state about Auburn versus Alabama.
- Madi:** Yes.
- Annie:** It is wild fun.
- Madi:** It's like a big thing.
- Annie:** Wildly fun.
- Madi:** It was literally a cuss word growing up to say roll tide.
- Annie:** Oh, I'm sure.
- Madi:** Like a cuss word.

Annie: Have y'all been there forever? Were y'all in Auburn this whole time? Did you grow up there?

Madi: We moved to Auburn in, oh gosh... I was like 11 or 12.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Madi: So most of my life. Yes, yes. But-

Annie: All your decision-making life. Yes.

Madi: The years that I can really remember.

Annie: Okay. War Eagle. I'll say it.

Madi: War Eagle, baby.

Annie: War Eagle.

[01:09:07] <[Music]

Outro: Oh, y'all, isn't she great? I love. I just really am enjoying getting to open up these conversations and I love when we bring our different ideas and our different histories and we get to process it together. I hope one of the things you heard today is something you get to do around your table with your friends of really talk through ideas. Not necessarily agree on everything, but really process what you believe and what you think. So I hope y'all are getting to do that as well.

This is a great episode to share with your friends and then say, Okay, let's get dinner, let's get drinks, let's go on a walk, let's talk about what Annie and Madi were talking about. And make sure you grab a copy of her new book, *The Love Everybody Wants*. And follow her on social media, tell her thank you for being on the show.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that's how you can find me. And don't forget, you can find the That Sounds Fun Podcast on Instagram @thatsoundsfunpodcast.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me is I am continuing to locate all the students that I used to teach. It's been so special. Since I posted about them on Sunday night, they have come out of the woodwork. It has

been really sweet and especially as we're preparing to release *So Happy To Know You* that is dedicated to the students that I taught. It's fun to reconnect with them, you know, 15, 20 years later. So it's been really sweet.

So y'all have a great day. We'll see you back here actually tomorrow, y'all know we love a Friday bonus episode, with one of my favorite worship leaders in my life and probably one of yours, Matt Redman. You guys, we are here tomorrow with Matt Redman, so make sure you join us.