

[00:00:00] <music>

Annie: Friends, have you gotten your copies of So Happy to Know You!? It's the book I wanted to write for my MiniBFFs to remind them God made each of them on purpose. It's a kids' book-size reminder that we need them just as they are. Their voice, their heart, their talents, their unique selves that no one else has. Jennie Poh beautifully brought it to life with her illustrations, and So Happy to Know You! is just the encouragement your kids need today to live confidently, and honestly, probably a message we all need no matter our age.

And you know when this book started rolling around in my brain? When I started telling you always Annie stories, things I would do that were a little and a lot. I realize the stories that make me me are your favorite ones and mine too. So this book hopefully helps your kiddos and you see yourself as perfectly unique. And we are so happy to know you. So get your copies of So Happy To Know You! wherever books are sold. Available right now.

[00:01:07] <Music>

Annie: Hi, friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you today. Happy Thanksgiving to all of our friends here in the States. Celebrating at the top of the list truly of things I'm thankful for is that even friends like you get to have these conversations with amazing guests who join us here on the podcast. And I am so, so thankful for our team that makes it so fun to come to work every day and makes these episodes possible. So thank you guys.

Intro: Today on the show, I get to talk with my new friend Anh Lyn. Y'all are going to love her. If you're not already following her on Instagram, which you probably are, her account is @girlandtheword, which is also the name of the lifestyle blog she started back in 2014. Of course, now it's all expanded to YouTube and Instagram, and TikTok. And I need you to go see her beautiful DIY styling and design videos, y'all. It is so fun. She's so good.

Every time I watch one of her videos, I want to start a new makeover project in my house. And listen if home decor is on your Christmas wish list or if you're getting ready to decorate for Christmas and want some tips, her videos and this conversation will inspire some great ideas.

Anh is also the author of Forever Home, which is her new book that just came out in September. It's really beautifully written. And I think you'll really enjoy the read. So whether you're listening to this on your way to your family's house for Thanksgiving, or you're cooking, or preparing to host, or if you are out on a walk

on Thanksgiving morning, and you're listening maybe over the weekend, I'm so glad you're here. I think you're really going to love this one.

So here is my conversation with my friend, Anh Lynn.

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Annie: Anh, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

Anh Lin: I'm so glad to be here.

Annie: I mean, Happy Thanksgiving.

Anh Lin: Yes, you too. Oh my gosh, what a day to be talking to Annie F. Downs!

Annie: I feel the same. I feel very thankful for you. Tell me what you're doing today on Thanksgiving.

Anh Lin: I am going to spend the day with my best friend and manager and her family. So we've been spending Thanksgiving together these past couple of years. So it's like tradition.

Annie: So talk a little bit about that. Because so many of our friends listening, if they can't get home, if they choose not to get home, if it's too expensive right now to get home, they've chosen a friend's giving opportunity as well. Will you talk a little bit about how y'all built that? Like where did that even start?

Anh Lin: So she wasn't my personal friend at first. I met her through my boyfriend at the time. And she was my boyfriend's classmate's girlfriend.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Anh Lin: So the relational line was pretty distant. But it wasn't until I started my YouTube channel that I totally piqued her interest and she reached out to me to potentially work together as partners. And I said, "Really say, less, I would love to work with you. You are a wonderful person." We've kind of just been best friends ever since.

Annie: That is amazing. So she's your manager as well now?

Anh Lin: She is.

Annie: You know, a lot of my co-workers are also my friends. To me, that's like 95% great and 5% challenging.

Anh Lin: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

Annie: Is that true for you too? Does sometimes friendship bump into work relationship?

Anh Lin: You know, I feel like if she was more similar to me, we probably would have more challenges because I am more of that open book. I tend to not draw such professional lines around people I'm comfortable with but she is so good at that. So she knows where the limits are and never crosses any lines and lets me be who I am without forcing me to be like her. And I think our dynamic just works out better.

Annie: So what are you responsible for on Thanksgiving?

Anh Lin: Honestly, the people around me are so nice. They just expect me to show up. Like that's it.

Annie: What a gift!

Anh Lin: Yeah, truly-

Annie: Your presence is a presence.

Anh Lin: Yeah, it really is. And I'm so grateful for that because I don't cook very often.

Annie: Me either. In New York, one of the funny things has been people talking about apartments and being like, "Well, the kitchen is bigger. The kitchen is small." And I'm like, "I don't really use that room. So it's fine."

Anh Lin: You're like, "I don't know really."

Annie: I'd like it to have a fridge and a microwave or an oven. That's about what I'm asking.

Anh Lin: That's all you need.

Annie: That's right. My whole family is in New York for Thanksgiving today. So we're seeing the parade that we're going to, but nobody's cooking. We're eating everything out.

Anh Lin: That's amazing. That also means no cleanup. So that's awesome.

Annie: Right. That's exactly right. I mean, you write about this, and *Forever Home*, which is a beautiful memoir. I wonder, can you tell people a little bit about your

upbringing? Do you have some examples of Thanksgiving as a child that will give them kind of a bird's eye view of your upbringing?

Anh Lin: Yes. I have always loved Thanksgiving, because it was one of the three holidays that my family really celebrated. I mean, we're kind of a mixed salad of ethnicities. There are Mexican people, Japanese, Vietnamese, of course, and I'm Chinese, White, French. So there are a ton of people from different backgrounds all coming together, bringing their cultural dishes.

So I would grow up just waiting for Thanksgiving to happen, because I could make my sushi roll, and then eat it with my dumplings. It was just a whole, you know, mixed bag of foods. We would all kind of have stomach aches afterwards. But it was always worth it.

I think it's because of my aunt that we get to have this wonderful gathering. She has personally been through so much hardship in her life and yet she still creates this safe space for all of our family members to come and kind of get to know each other. If it weren't for her, I would not have met most of my extended family members.

Annie: Remind me where you grew up. Where's everybody?

Anh Lin: My entire mom's side of the family is here in Southern California, mostly around the Pasadena area, which is also where I grew up. I grew up all over the 626 area. I don't know if any of your listeners know what that means. It's like the San Gabriel Valley, part of Los Angeles. A lot of Asian immigrants are established here. And yeah, that's where I call home.

Annie: I've never had a conversation about this before. But for immigrants that are mostly White, we have the Thanksgiving story of the pilgrims, right? I mean, for all the reasons we know that isn't the actual true story. I know. But you know what I mean? Like that's the story that gets told around my family's heritage and origins immigration to the US. And that's why we celebrate Thanksgiving. What is an Asian American immigrant family thinking about or celebrating on Thanksgiving? Because it's probably not the Pilgrim story?

Anh Lin: No. It's definitely not the traditional pilgrim story. But I think what we gather around is this idea of giving thanks for having each other. To this day, I don't know if the older generation still understand what Thanksgiving is about. We know that it's just that time of year where they get to see people that they didn't know they were related to and eat a bunch of good food together. And to them, I feel like that is more than enough. It's just a great excuse to get together. But above all, just to

give thanks for having each other. A lot of my family are Catholic as well. So we have that religious tied to Thanksgiving as well.

Annie: I love that. So one of the reasons I wanted us to talk today after reading... I mean, I'll tell you the whole truth is that after reading *Forever Home*, I changed our podcast schedule.

Anh Lin: Wow.

Annie: And I was like, "We have got to talk to her on Thanksgiving." Because I felt like you do such a beautiful job in your story and in your life online as well of going like, wherever you are, you can be home. Is that a fair sentence to say based on your story?

Anh Lin: Yes, absolutely.

Annie: How has that been true for you? How have you found that to be true?

Anh Lin: Well, it was quite a journey as you've read. I didn't think much about my physical environment growing up. I just kind of survived it and that's all I knew to just get through it. There was never a season where I understood what it meant to thrive in my environment. I just know how to stay alive. And those are two completely different experiences.

And for those who are listening who might feel like they are in this season where they just need to get through it, I feel like I can completely empathize. That experience can actually get better, believe it or not. Like you have the capacity-

Annie: It doesn't feel like that when you're in the middle of it, right?

Anh Lin: Oh, no, absolutely not. Like it feels so helpless and hopeless. And sometimes you want to just, you know, like, what's the point? You get all existential about things. But the whole idea of having Christ in your life is that you already have the victory. So the war has already been won.

I came across this amazing quote recently that talks about how we had to form this new person in order to survive, and we thank that person for getting us through it. But now, the war has already been won. And we have to let go of that person that we formed.

I think the grieving of letting go of your survival mode is so real and especially during times like Thanksgiving when there could be a lot of emotional triggers. In times like this, I really want to encourage your listeners to just take some time for

themselves. Before they do anything else, either out of obligation or whatever it may be, just take some time to reflect, to see what really brings you joy and ups during this potentially triggering day, and treat yourself to something sweet, you know, either a small meal or maybe a bath if you never really do that. Just fill your tank before you get out there and do whatever it is you need to do.

Annie: On Thanksgiving of 2020 I was unable to go home, so I used my grandmother's China when I ate Thanksgiving at my house.

Anh Lin: That's lovely.

Annie: I was still holding all the feelings I was holding about having a different Thanksgiving than I was used to having. But I was trying to implement what you're teaching of like, what's something that can make this actually special and unique? So how do we hold both of those things, Anh? I mean, you do it so beautifully in your story. But how have you learned how to hold the suffering of today and suffering of your history that may get bumped into in the holidays and beautiful new experiences at the same time?

Anh Lin: Oh, wow. You know, God has made us so complex. I feel like that's what it means to be made in His image, that we are able to hold all of these conflicting experiences, and yet still have hope for our story in the future. I personally just created these new nooks in my home. And that's where anyone can start, you know, it doesn't have to be a full room makeover.

You can start with a T-station, what I call my place of peace. It's like right outside my bedroom. And I set it up so that it aligns with my daily routine. It allows me to immediately feel at peace and calm and happy when I get that first sip of warm tea in the morning. Something that's just for you, you know. It could also be an altar.

I erected my own version of the altar that I had in my childhood home since I came from a Catholic background. Even though I'm not Catholic now, I still see such value in having that symbol of Christ in my home. I feel like my inner child completely comes alive when I'm coloring or journaling under that altar. So you can pick these notes to establish in your current home, and it will remind you of God's goodness, and that He does have this more abundant story for you.

Annie: Gosh, that's a great idea of making just a portion. Because so many of our friends listening share their homes with a lot of people, right? Like multigenerational or maybe they have a bunch of kids in there. There's the language of she shed or a man cave.

Anh Lin: Or man cave. Yeah.

Annie: You may not have that kind of space. So in seasons like this, finding just a corner that you can make yours. Talk to me about how you make a nook on a budget. Because girl I can go online and I can purchase everything I need to make sure I have the nook of my dreams. But then I'm out of \$1,000. So how can we do it in a sensible way?

Anh Lin: Well, thrifting is always an amazing option. Not only do you get to, you know, save things from going to the landfill, you also get that really therapeutic walk through the aisles and just picking out the things that resonate with you. I would say start with plants.

Annie: Oh, wow..

Anh Lin: I think a lot of plants could be more affordable, and you get to have that feeling of taking care of something. So it's very rewarding. Scientifically too it's proven to bring the same feelings as being in nature. Even fake plants could trick our brain into releasing the same happy hormones. So really good to-

Annie: Fake plants do it too, Anh?

Anh Lin: Yeah, yeah.

Annie: Because my fake Christmas tree is what I will live and die on. I believe in a fake Christmas tree. It does not have to be real for it to change your life.

Anh Lin: Seriously. And studies show that. So really you don't have to take on more than you can chew. Just start small. Start with things that would really benefit you and serve you and then see how it feels and go from there.

[00:16:15] <Music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about one of our amazing partners, [Shopify](#). Y'all, when I started this podcast, an online store was the furthest thing from my mind. And now I get to sell things like our "Is it Christmas yet?" sweatshirts. And it is so easy, y'all because of Shopify. In fact, we're having a sale over on our shop right now. So don't miss it. [Shopanniefdowns.com](#).

Shopify is the global commerce platform that helps you sell at every stage of your business. From the launch of your online shop stage to the first real-life store stage, to the did we just hit a million order stage. Shopify is able to help you grow. Whether you're selling scented soaps or offering outdoor outfits, Shopify helps you

sell everywhere. They have an all-in-one e-commerce platform and an in-person POS system. So wherever and whatever you're selling, Shopify has got you covered.

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Sponsor: And I gotta tell you about one more amazing partner, [Masterclass](https://www.masterclass.com). Are your friends and family the type of people that like an experience as a Christmas gift instead of another Stanley cup or a jacket? I love an experience as a gift. And that's why you've got to check out Masterclass and the deal they are running right now, y'all.

Masterclass makes such a meaningful gift this season for you and anyone on your list because both of you can learn from the best. I mean, they offer classes on all kinds of things. One thing I took was a cooking class from Gordon Ramsay. It was so fun. You could take a writing class from Judy Blume. Or how about a gymnastics fundamentals class for your daughter or son taught by Simone Biles? Y'all, what? It is amazing.

And it's like Masterclass instructors are your own personal mentors. How much would it cost to take a one-on-one class from the best? Well, easily hundreds to thousands of dollars but with a Masterclass annual membership it is \$10 a month. Y'all membership start at \$120 a year for unlimited access to one-on-one classes with all 180 plus Masterclass instructors.

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Okay, now back to our conversation with Anh.

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Annie: I have been amazed in New York as I... So the quick story is I'm in an apartment that I rented but it was furnished but not furnished like someone lives here because

no one lives here. So my first couple of days I was kind of like, this does not feel like a house that I live in. This just feels like a glorified hotel room a little bit.

So I started adding some pieces and I didn't know that there were these Facebook groups that are buy nothing Facebook groups where people just leave their stuff on the sidewalk or like do you want this? I'll put it outside on a Thursday. I mean, people are just giving stuff away.

Anh Lin: Facebook Marketplace is its own universe.

Annie: That's what it feels like. It feels like you have to take a course to know how to do it well. But it's amazing.

Anh Lin: I think there are courses.

Annie: I believe it. I absolutely do. So a nook is a great way... Because I'm also thinking about... so one of the girls in my book club sent a text today, and she said, "Has everybody got the book that we're reading this month so that on Thanksgiving, you can escape to your childhood bedroom for 30 minutes?" And I was like, "That is hilarious." And we all have that, like, Can I get a minute to myself?

But then there are also people who are listening and who are going to spend Thanksgiving alone. So can you just give a little encouragement to the people who are like, what if today is really lonely for someone?

Anh Lin: Well, I definitely empathize with that a lot. I know that when you feel like you're stuck in this construction site of your life and everyone else seems to be moving onwards and upwards without you, it could just break you a little bit, and it could feel so demoralizing. I mean, I'll just tell a quick story of like when I was so poor, during the Christmas Thanksgiving season, I couldn't even afford tacos. And all I was waiting for was my aunt's Thanksgiving dinner.

Annie: Oh my gosh, you're like, If I can just make it to dinner.

Anh Lin: Seriously, if I could just make it to Thanksgiving, I will be fed. So I empathize with that feeling of extreme loneliness and wanting to give up. But you know, do something nice for yourself. Don't just stay cooped up in your house today if that's what's going to bring you down. Walk in the park. Allow yourself to meet strangers and say hi when you're just enjoying yourself. And have that courage to put yourself out there. Because we're not made to experience life alone.

It could totally break us in very substantial ways. So really put yourself out there, go for a walk, say hi to strangers. Have some meaningful human connection. And

even if you will ultimately have to go home and spend the night by yourself. Create this date for yourself. Like create a routine that you can look forward to.

Like, "I am going to watch this movie that I enjoy and I'm going to order in tonight." Do something that would make yourself proud. And then ultimately find a community that you can spend these kind of milestones with and these holidays with.

Annie: I mean, I'm listening to your story and talking about from a season when you had real financial hardship to like a published author, massive following online, beautiful home as we see behind you. Will you tell a little bit of that story? What is that journey that's gotten you to where you are today?

Anh Lin: It was truly God's ordained. How do I put it? It's really His sovereignty that got me here. I don't even know where to start because the direction of my life prior to meeting Christ was a dead end.

Annie: Really?

Anh Lin: I came from such poverty, and when we moved to the US, we had to start all over again, so once again, we were in poverty. And then as soon as we saved up enough money to buy our first family home, my dad was diagnosed with stage four cancer and passed away like three months after his diagnosis and it completely confused and shattered me and my mother.

Our relationship turned so sour. We couldn't even sustain a single conversation without getting irritated or getting in a fight. And we were once best friends. So as a preteen, I was completely confused. I didn't know what was happening. And of course, now looking back at it, I know why. I mean, she's now a single mother, she didn't speak a lick of English. And now she had this brand new mortgage with no college degree.

Annie: Oh my gosh. In a country with a language she does not speak with a child to care for.

Anh Lin: Yes. I mean, I would go crazy too. So I have a lot of understanding for her in retrospect. But in the moment, all I knew as a 12-year-old was my mom hates me now. So I went to high school feeling this way and had to find new friends with this mindset of now you don't have anybody to cover you or protect you. And so that kind of led me down the wrong path, hanging out with the wrong people, eventually met the wrong guy who really took advantage of me and our relationship turned super abusive. I know this is kind of a tough thing to talk about on Thanksgiving.

Annie: No, no, it's-

Anh Lin: But that's the reality of my life. And after that relationship was done, I was thrust into the deepest depression I had ever been. During one Saturday while I was, you know, once again, trashing myself with all kinds of trash substances and things like that, I was so messed up, I really couldn't even feel the weather. Like I was so physically and mentally and emotionally.

And then the party ended and they kicked us out, and we kind of got into cars. I stumbled into a stranger's car and then the car filled up with all my friends and then the stranger took off. It was so dangerous, but honestly, we were so messed up, we didn't care.

And he started blasting really loud techno music and there I was in the backseat sobbing. Like, I just had this come to myself moment where I realized nobody truly loves you. And it hit me like a ton of bricks. But just as soon as I had that thought, I saw in my mind's eye this painting of Jesus that my mom had in my childhood home. It was the altar that she would bring with us to every weird place that we moved to.

And when I saw that painting of Jesus, I felt this comfort wash over me from my head down to my toes. And I had never felt that kind of peace before. It felt like the warmest hug from my favorite person. I just learned two days ago that that painting is called Divine Mercy.

Annie: Wow.

Anh Lin: I know. God is so good. He truly saved me when I was at my darkest, when I wanted nothing to do with Him or religion at all. So that sparked my curiosity and I contacted the only Christian friend I knew in high school, the following school day, and she brought me to her home church where her brother was preaching and I just fell to my knees and gave my life to Christ. And of course, it wasn't like smooth sailing.

Annie: "And then everything was fine. I was rich."

Anh Lin: No, no, no. I was still broken, still poor. The only thing that changed was now I had hope. And I felt like I have this second chance now. And that changed everything for me. Feeling like you have something to hold on to, would mean the difference between giving up and really allowing God to work in through you. So He gave me that hope and I just made the most out of it.

You know, and it's been a journey of like, healing a lot of the trauma that I went through, and it's an ongoing journey. But I think ultimately, He's brought me to a place where I have full faith in Him and I am okay. Even if I lost everything tomorrow, of course, I'd be devastated at my core, I would still feel like it's going to be all right. I can start over again if I have Jesus. That was not my own doing.

Annie: That's beautiful. How did you get into home decor and interior designing, and all of this?

Anh Lin: I know, it's so random, even for me, because I majored in English and I wanted to be a teacher.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Anh Lin: So it's a completely different path. But then I got into interior design and interior styling and all that when I essentially got kicked out of my mom's house after college, and I dabbled in it. And I felt like wow, this is a fun hobby and makes me feel better. But I didn't take it too seriously until, you know, things happened and I had to move back and then live with the shame of that.

Annie: It gets written in the book.

Anh Lin: I know. So it was just a lot of moving back and forth. But then, at some point, I found myself in my own studio apartment, having my own space, paid with my own money for the first time and I just felt this quiet in my soul. It was so beautiful and inexplicable. From that, peace and shalom, I guess, I decided to use one full paycheck to transform that studio into something I can truly be proud of. And, you know, with one paycheck of like \$1,000 or something, which was everything to me at the time.

Annie: It's still a lot of money for anybody.

Anh Lin: It's still a lot of money I know. But I felt like it was worth it because I already knew how affected I was by my environment. So I thought, you know, this is an investment. So I slathered on brick wallpaper and concrete wallpaper and made this weird apartment look like a loft. And I took a photo of it, put it on my personal Instagram in it kind of blew up.

And that was when I thought, Wow, I can do this as a fun hobby. But once you do something consistently enough and you do it well enough, the sponsorships come in. And that's when I thought, Wow, you can make money off of this. This is so weird. So I just kept going with it until the sponsorships replaced my full-time income. And then I quit my full-time job. But then I got burnt out really quickly

because I was just taking pictures of 10 different angles of my bed. You know, it was very unfulfilling.

So I was privileged enough at that time to take a month off of Instagram to just recenter myself and ask God for inspiration again, and sit... this is such an unbelievable story. But when you ask God for inspiration, He's gonna deliver, you know. I was walking my dog one day and we came across this brand spanking new downtown apartment. It was a high rise. It was totally out of my financial league but I thought, why not? Just go look.

So it was the first day that they were opening their space up for tours. I walked in with my dogs, they like, huh, come in. And the first unit that they swung the door open on and I saw the balcony and I saw the view, it just felt right. Like I didn't know how to explain it. I was like, "This is my next home. And then I saw how much it costs per month and I was like, Uh.

Annie: You're like, no.

Anh Lin: Yeah, I'm like, no. It made no financial sense. But I just knew in my soul that this was where I needed to be in order to tell my story. So I sold my car to have at least three months' worth of rent. That's how much it costed. I sold my car as a plan B. I went carless and I signed the lease. And I said, you know God, you brought me here, so please sustain me. So I delved into videography during that month and decided to tell my story through video on YouTube. The second video took off. Like it just went viral and gave me like 100,000 subscribers within a month. And from-

Annie: How long ago was this by the way? Will you put a year on this?

Anh Lin: That was 2019. That was super recent.

Annie: I know. That's what I wanted people to know is that this isn't like 2014. It was just a few years ago.

Anh Lin: It was the year before the pandemic. I mean, the vast majority of my life was spent in strife. And it wasn't until... Did you hear

[crosstalk 00:33:37]

Annie: Yeah, so he tries to make himself known because he's like, you know, you took a picture of me for your book.

Annie: That's right. He's like, You didn't pay me to be on the book cover. So I'm gonna make all the noise.

Anh Lin: So anyway, yeah, I did not intend to be in this space but I found a love for it once realizing that God really uses everything around us, including the creative things, to transform us and to give us hope, and to bring us back to life honestly. And yeah, He continued to give me the means to build out this new passion project of mine. I continue to rely on Him for inspiration and insight.

Annie: How many people are watching your YouTube videos now?

Anh Lin: I think we are close to 600k. Hopefully, by Thanksgiving, we will be there.

Annie: That is crazy. That is absolutely crazy. It's amazing.

Anh Lin: Especially for the niche that I'm in because it's not just home decor. I speak very clearly about the gospel. So I didn't expect this many people together. But when people hear the truth, and it's presented in a more disarming way, I feel like it's like a drink of fresh water.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

[00:35:00] <Music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about another amazing partner, [KiwiCo](#). Okay, KiwiCo is such a great gift idea for the MiniBFFs in your life. It is like unwrapping a box of fun every month and they get to create some of the cutest stuff. They can make a baking set, or they learn about fractions, or get lessons in physics while they make a basketball catapult. There are so many options.

KiwiCo actually has nine different subscription options for different ages and subjects. So there's something for everybody. And when you give KiwiCo, it is so much more than gifting a box of toys. It's a gift of discovery because their hands-on experiences are giving kids the tools to learn about topics that they love from dinosaurs to rocket ships.

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Okay, now back to our conversation with our friend Anh.

[00:37:29] <Music>

Annie: One of my questions after reading your book, when I'm thinking about today and thinking about, you know, me living in this place for two months, and then going back to Nashville and not sure what's next, how does a home heal us? Because I mean, you talk about a little bit in the book, but also like that's been my experience too is I've been able to build homes that helped heal me. So what is that? What is it about a place that can be healing?

Anh Lin: Wow, you know, we're such visual creatures. And it's not just the visuals either, it's the functionality of it and how taken care of we feel, especially by our environment. I'll give a very practical example. When I first moved into this forever home that we built, everything was white. It was like a white box. My office was a white box. And you know, of course, this is a story of privilege. I'm not gonna say everyone can relate to this. But this is how design can affect us.

I was so uninspired sitting in this white box that I found myself going to the cafe every day to work. And I have this moment where I thought, "Why am I spending so much money at cafes when I just spent so much money making over this home? So I need to do something about this." So I decided to paint a mural on the wall to bring some color in. I put plants all over the place. And it worked. It was like, "Oh, wow. Now I'm inspired to sit here, and my brain is moving. And you know, I feel good. I feel good in this space."

But then before I knew it, I was overstimulated by all of the colors that I brought in. Because now it works so well that my brain is like stop. You know, you need some room to focus. And I was like, "Dude, I don't know what's wrong with me. I'm just never content. What's going on?"

And then finally, after research and just being real with myself and reflecting on what I need, I had this like aha moment where I realized, Hey, you can have the best of both worlds. I can have an all-white office in the daytime, where it'll give me room to think and then I can turn on these colorful lights at night for stimulation and inspiration when I need it.

And this new setup just completely improved my mental health and improved my productivity. So that is one very practical, very non-spiritual example.

Annie: That's great.

Anh Lin: But if we're talking about like, our actual forever home, it's in heaven. You know, everything on earth will fall away. And even though I use the analogy of building your home from scratch and from the foundation to the framing upwards in my book, ultimately our home is found in heaven. And the way that we live now, what it could do is bring a piece of heaven down to earth in the immediate.

So when you want to truly feel at home and you don't have the means to literally do anything about your environment, start with your soul. Like reestablish that foundation. What is your foundation on right now, because I know that when I first moved into this 1940s fixer-upper, the first thing that my engineer had to look at was how firm the foundation was. Because if we were to put all of these new things on top, if it couldn't support it, it's going to fall apart. So put your foundation on God's love and learn to attach yourself to Him securely, knowing that He's there even when you can't hear Him or feel Him.

And then once you have that solid relationship, then move on to the framing, the boundaries, the things that keep the bad out and the good in, the thing that allows you to assess which level of intimacy you allow your people to have. And then

once the framing and the boundaries are erect, then you can take care of all the other stuff and then like the drywall, so to speak, and the electricals so to speak.

But then once things look like they are in place in your life, allow the Holy Spirit to do a thorough inspection. Think of Him as the ultimate city inspector. Nobody looks forward to having their home inspected, it just delays projects by a whole bunch. And you don't want to be told that you have to rip everything out and start again. But I think the most important part of having Him inspect us is that He sees areas that we didn't even know were built wrong. You know, He exposes wounds we didn't even know we had.

And when we expose these wounds, we can properly heal them and truly feel assured that this new life that we've built is one that is sustainable and one that brings glory to God and is fulfilling to us. And then I end the book with this section called adorn. And I just feel like I needed to include it because so many Christian women, especially, feel like we are not worthy of beauty.

We feel guilty for indulging in things that make us feel beautiful and we are just generally expected to give, give, give and just not indulge ourselves. But I feel like that is a lie. And our God is a beautiful God and He is a very visual God. He's a creator. And what He has in store for us is beautiful. So you don't have to spend a ton of money adorning your life.

What I'm talking about more is allowing yourself the space to feel beautiful, to surround yourself with people who make you feel beautiful, and to adorn your life with meaningful things and meaningful people and experiences that builds you up. And I think that's completely biblical.

Annie: Yeah, that's beautiful. Okay, so let's end here right with the adorn part. Because a lot of our friends have already done it. Some are getting started on decorating for Christmas. So in my family growing up, we did not get to put up a tree before the day after Thanksgiving. So talk to me a little bit about why is it that holiday decorations matter so much to us?

Anh Lin: Oh yeah. I mean, it creates this atmosphere of it being a sanctuary I feel. We want our homes to make us feel cozy, elevated, safe, and all that. And I feel like a lot of the ambient lighting around the holidays give us that cozy feeling. I'm all for it. Being in the home design niche, if you're not decorating for Christmas after Halloween, you're late.

Annie: That's right.

Anh Lin: But then I rebel against that. I repeat that. I try my best to not put up the tree after Thanksgiving. I mean until after Thanksgiving either. And, you know, I suffer the consequences for being late but there's no rush. There's no rush at all.

Annie: That's right. Okay, tell us one decorating tip or one idea that we should for sure implement this holiday season.

Anh Lin: Hmm, there are so many ideas. Oh, you know what I've been really into, our origami stars. So origami ornaments. And it is much easier than you think. You just take some tissue paper and you fold like a fan out of it and you fold like four fans, and then you cut the edges and glue them all together and it just creates this beautiful snowflake ornament. It's beautiful.

Annie: Oh, I love it. Do you have a tutorial or anything that we could watch?

Anh Lin: Oh, I think by now it should be up. Yes.

Annie: Oh, great. Okay, perfect. We will share it this week. Yes, 100%. Okay, is there anything we didn't talk about that you want to make sure we talk about, Anh?

Anh Lin: I don't know, I think we got it covered.

Annie: Well, you did it. I'm so glad to meet you. This was one of my highlights of the day is I was like, I finally get to meet her. So I'm just so grateful. I love your work. I just think it's beautiful. It's really a gift and the beauty you bring to the world and the honesty and your book *Forever Home* is just also beautiful. So thank you for the world with you.

Anh Lin: Thank you. Annie. I feel the same way about you. I was fangirling so hard when I saw that you were following me and I was like, "Oh my gosh, it's her. So please. Thank you for letting-

Annie: Oh, we're friends now.

Anh Lin: Oh, yes, we are.

Annie: That's one of the rules. People know that the only guests I have on the podcast are people I'm already friends with or people I want to be friends with. Because I'm not great at talking to strangers, but I can talk to a friend. So we're gonna be great.

Anh Lin: Same here.

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

Anh Lin: Wow, what sounds fun right now is a nice facial. I just need some self-maintenance right now. That sounds amazing actually.

Annie: A facial. I have only had one in my life and I didn't love it. I should try it again?

Anh Lin: Oh, yeah. Oh, you gotta go to the right place. I feel like it's like going on a date almost.

Annie: Right. You gotta kiss some frogs before you find the prince of facials as well?

Anh Lin: Exactly.

Annie: For sure.

Anh Lin: Because it's so intimate. It's your face. You know?

Annie: It's your face. That's what happened last time was my whole face hurt. I was like, This hurts. I'm out of here. So I'll try it again. We'll have new year, a new glow will be us in 2024.

Anh Lin: I love that.

Annie: Anh, thanks so much. Happy Thanksgiving. Thanks for joining us.

Anh Lin: Thank you for having me here. Happy Thanksgiving, everyone.

[00:47:27] <Music>

Annie: Oh, you guys, isn't she brilliant? I know. I know. Her story is so interesting, so important, and really transformational. I think you'll really love reading about it in Forever Home, her new book. I think you're gonna love it. I think you're gonna love gifting it to a friend for Christmas. Go make sure you're following Anh on social media, tell her thanks for being on the show. And you're gonna live for the videos. You're gonna live for them.

If you have any other questions from this episode, drop them in the Q&A box on your Spotify app if you're a Spotify listener or send them to us on Instagram @thatsoundsfunpodcast and we'll try to answer them.

Okay, if you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, New York City, Thanksgiving Day Parade. All the places you may need me today, that is where you can find me.

And I think that's it. Go out, stay home, do something that sounds fun to you, and I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me, y'all look at the temperature in New York. It's freezing. It's freezing. So what sounds fun to me today is figuring out a lot of Thanksgiving things to do inside.

Happy Thanksgiving, friends. We'll get to see you back here on Monday as we start talking all things Christmas with Chris Brown from Elevation Worship. Listen, if you're looking for a new album, Echo the Angels is a great one to start today and then we'll talk about it on Monday. We'll see y'all then.