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**Annie:** Hi friends, and welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun, our 10th anniversary year of the podcast. 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 show is sponsored by [BetterHelp](#). While you might be thinking about some new rhythms this year, and we even talk about healthy emotions and relationships today with Mike Foster, consider what role therapy could play for you in 2024.

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**Intro:** Today on the show I get to talk with my friend, Mike Foster. You may know Mike from his podcast, Fun Therapy, or from his bestselling books like People of the Second Chance. Today we talk about his latest book, The Seven Primal Questions, which is a framework to help you find emotional freedom and healing.

I think this is such a great conversation for us to have to really step into 2024 with all the information we need to have to make, what Emily P. Freeman says, the next right step for ourselves, our emotions, our relationships. I'm so thankful for the work that Mike has put in to help us get there.

Man, this feels like God has got a theme for us, and we are in the middle of it. So we are talking today about how we are our healthiest selves emotionally. Just like we talked about our spiritual health, our physical health, we're talking about our emotional health today. And I'm telling you, these seven primal questions are brilliant. I cannot wait for y'all to hear this conversation with my friend, Mike Foster.

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**Annie:** Mike Foster, here's what I can't believe as we start this episode: you've never been on That Sounds Fun?

**Mike:** Never.

**Annie:** I'm so embarrassed. So let me lead with my embarrassment because you are so important to me, I cannot imagine that you haven't been on the show. So I'm so sorry I've just hidden you away. I apologize. But welcome to That Sounds Fun.

**Mike:** I am so honored to be here. I've been looking forward to this conversation for a long time. It's just good to be connecting and talking with you today, Annie.

**Annie:** Oh, I feel the same. Okay, so first of all, the first question we're asking this year, in year 10 of That Sounds Fun, is, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you, Mike.

**Mike:** Oh my gosh, what's kind of funny is I always get accused of not being very fun. I tend to be like the more serious guy or the quieter guy or the thinker, reader guy. But you know what sounds fun to me is sitting on my patio, and I've got a little fountain out there, and just reading a really nice book underneath the San Diego sun. So that sounds fun to me.

**Annie:** That is a good answer. Are you a reader of fiction and nonfiction or are you just like learning all the time?

**Mike:** Learning all the time.

**Annie:** I know.

**Mike:** I prefer nonfiction. There's probably like five books in my bag right now that I'm reading. So I just love learning, love discovering new things. And so, yeah.

**Annie:** When you start a new year like this, is there a book you always pick up? Is there a book that you like go back to? I mean, obviously, the Bible is the Jesusy answer that we believe in, but is there something you go back to or is there a rhythm that you have about reading in the new year?

**Mike:** You know, it's pretty all over the place. I'm not very organized that way. I probably should revisit things. But I take really good notes when I'm reading books. So it's

not that I necessarily go back to the book to read it again, but I'll go back to the first couple of pages where I've just scribbled all kinds of notes and things that stood out from the book and I'll review that. So it's almost like a cliff notes version of the book.

**Annie:** Oh my gosh. So you open the front cover of the book and you write your notes right there?

**Mike:** Yes.

**Annie:** Mike, that is brilliant. So then do you lend your books out?

**Mike:** No.

**Annie:** No, yeah, you couldn't. You're like, this is my library for eternity.

**Mike:** Yeah, it's like my journals. I wouldn't lend out my journals. So it's like these books-

**Annie:** Oh my gosh.

**Mike:** Yeah. So that's kind of how my process works.

**Annie:** One of my favorite creative books is *Walking on Water* by Madeleine L'Engle. And I was gifting a copy to a man at Christmas and the cover I have is this beautiful, like stained glass cover and they don't make it anymore because I got the book in 2003 or something.

And I was like, "You know what? I'm just going to give him my copy because this is a really beautiful cover." And I started flipping through it and I was like, "Nope, nope, nope, nope. This stays right here. I'm not putting this." So I got another copy for him, but I was like, "No, no, no, there's no world where I'm putting it..." Much like you, I'm not handing my journal off as a Christmas gift.

**Mike:** Exactly. There's too much vulnerable stuff in those notes that we can't just hand out to the world.

**Annie:** Okay, San Diego weather in January. Is it the best?

**Mike:** It's pretty good. I pinch myself every once in a while going, "I can't believe I get to live here." Obviously, there's a lot of downside, traffic, taxes, not so great, but the weather's incredible. So I do like to spend a lot of time on that patio. It's super fun to me to, all through the year, be able to just kind of... And we got a little fireplace

out there too. So it's just like my perfect spot. I don't want to go anywhere, Annie, except my patio.

**Annie:** Yeah, I love it. I think that's perfect. I'm jealous. I have a porch that I love like that too, but I can only sit on it about nine months out of the year, not 12. So Nashville makes a way.

**Mike:** Come out to San Diego.

**Annie:** I know. I need to. I've never been there. I know.

**Mike:** We're gonna fix that.

**Annie:** I know.

**Annie:** Bob says the same thing to me. And I'm like, "I know. I just have never been down there."

**Mike:** Bob Goff, we're kind of the unofficial mayors of San Diego.

**Annie:** 100%.

**Mike:** Bob's really the mayor, I'm the co-mayor.

**Annie:** Y'all are the two people I think of the most when I think of San Diego. Okay, so here's why I thought you'd been on the show. We talked about this for a second before we started. I was on an episode of your podcast, Fun Therapy, in fall of 2017.

**Mike:** Oh my gosh.

**Annie:** And I know it so clearly because it literally changed my life. Let's talk about Fun Therapy for a minute. I don't think you do that show anymore, right? But the episodes are all there for people to listen to.

**Mike:** All the episodes are there. The episode that we did in 2017 is there. It's really like a mini therapy session that listeners get to listen into.

**Annie:** Yeah, it ruined my life, Mike Foster. You know that. I mean, tell the truth.

**Mike:** I'm so sorry.

**Annie:** Tell the truth. We hit "stop" and what did you tell me to do? Do you remember?

**Mike:** I don't remember.

**Annie:** You told me to go to Onsite.

**Mike:** Oh, that's right. I do remember that, yes.

**Annie:** You literally were like, "Annie, I love you. I think it's to have you heard of a place called Onsite." I was in-

**Mike:** And you did, didn't you?

**Annie:** I did. It changed my life. I mean, I was in so much profound pain the season that you and I sat down. It wasn't just that day, but it was a couple of weeks. I was in such profound pain. I mean, I think you and I recorded in like November or something, and I was at Onsite in January. I was at Onsite... how many years ago is that? Seven years ago right now, as people are listening to this. I went the first week of January. So seven years ago? No, six years ago, because it was 2018.

So thank you, Mike. I mean, that one conversation... your investment in my life over a bunch of years always seems to be like Ebenezer Stone moments. We only get a few of them, but they always seem to mark my life. So I just wanted to publicly thank you for marking my life in such a profound way with that Fun Therapy conversation.

**Mike:** Well, I am so proud of you for just digging in and doing that work. That conversation was just so powerful, your vulnerability. And I think it gave all of us the permission to dig into the things that hurt sometimes and are painful sometimes.

So I'm always inspired by you, Annie, because I think there's just a willingness. Like whatever is there, whatever we discover inside of ourselves, like if it needs healing, let's go after that healing. And you did that and are getting the rewards of that work.

**Annie:** Yeah. I mean, the beautiful thing they say at Onsite is..., and it doesn't just have to be Onsite, there are so many resources like this, it's just the one that I've experienced, is they say, this doesn't change your life in 180 degrees, it changes your life two degrees. And over time, you will see that. And I'm like, Oh, I can see that so profoundly now. Six years later, I'm like, oh, my life is in a different continent because those two degrees over six years have been so profoundly changing for me. So, man, I'm just so thankful for Miles and what Onsite does.

**Mike:** Actually, when I describe what I do with people, I always describe myself as a bumper. Like I just kind of come in and I'll bump them just a little bit, kind of bring some clarity, bring some truth, hopefully a next action item, and just bump them. And then usually people know what to do from that point on. But I love those moments where we get to just kind of have a little bump and you got bumped and now you're just thriving and doing amazing stuff.

**Annie:** All the better for it. One of the things we're doing this year... and I've been really thoughtful about this, Mike, because when I want to be more spiritually healthy, as I pursue that, I love sharing those resources with my friends that are on the other side of my work. When I want to be more physically healthy, I want to share those resources. It doesn't mean everyone has to adopt everything I do, but I want to share what I'm experiencing.

So when it comes to my emotional health and my mental health, I want to do the same. So having you on at the start of this year was so important to me because of the seven primal questions. I mean, we're going to dig into this and I am going to cry. But can we start with like, how did you come up with this? How did you come up with these seven primal questions?

**Mike:** So I'm an executive coach. Last five years have been kind of in the trenches with people studying their deepest emotional needs. So 6,000 hours of one-on-one interviews, five years of research. We've had over 10,000 people take the assessment, the primal question assessment. And really my goal is to help simplify what's going on inside of us. Because sometimes that can be very complex, emotions, thoughts, trauma, our wounds, our pain, relationships, it can get very confusing inside of us.

So what the primal question does is it takes all of that stuff, all that psychology, all that human psychology, and takes it down into a really simple concept that helps us understand what drives us, helps us understand the emotional control center of our lives. And then once we see what's going on inside of us, it really empowers us to take the next step towards health and healing.

**Annie:** So I have to ask you a question upfront. There's seven of them. There are nine Enneagram types. And there feels like a lot of... like as I was reading the book, I was like, yeah, this has some... it smells a little bit of Enneagram. In a good way. You know me. I'm an Enneagram... I mean, the good news is all the people that chirp about Enneagram about did the devil write it or did God write it were like, Mike Foster wrote the seven primal questions, so you can feel fine about this. There is no question-

**Mike:** Mike is not God or the devil, I'll tell you that.

**Annie:** Yeah. So guess what? As innocent as the Enneagram actually is, so is the seven primal questions. So talk about that. I mean, where's the similarity here? Where's the difference? Because it does feel like some of the paths could feel similar.

**Mike:** I love the Enneagram too. But full confession, I find, at least for my world, I find that Enneagram to be a bit too complicated sometimes. And there's so much going on that I get a little confused. And I've been saying the thing for a while. So the thing that I like about the primal questions is it really is simple. It's like one thing. And if we can know that one thing, we can see how it informs everything.

Also, I think when I was writing the book, when I'm coaching people, I'm doing workshops, I'm all about: let's equip people to do something with what we have learned or what we know. It's like empower action. And so one of the things I think is really... not that the Enneagram doesn't empower action, but the seven primal questions is all about, okay, now that you know this, go do this. These are your next steps. These are your action items.

**Annie:** So as we are thinking about this year, Mike, as I'm going into 2024, so I want us to go over the questions. I took the quiz, [primalquestions.com](http://primalquestions.com), is that right?

**Mike:** [Primalquestion.com](http://Primalquestion.com).

**Annie:** [Primalquestion.com](http://Primalquestion.com). So if y'all are listening or watching and you want to pause right now and go to [primalquestion.com](http://primalquestion.com) so that you can know. I mean, I took it and I was like exposed immediately. So I want us to talk about those. But as we're going into 2024, talk to me about why does it help to know the central question that you are asking the world? Why does that help us this year?

**Mike:** Well, really what that central question represents, the primal question represents is your highest emotional need. And why is that important? Because when that need is unmet, it drives all kinds of feelings, emotions, and thoughts, and then drives all kinds of behaviors, choices, and actions.

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Mike:** And so if you don't understand the core of who you are... And here's kind of a simple way to say it. When your primal question is answered with a yes, you're going to thrive, flourish. You're going to feel good. You're going to be your best

self. But when that primal question, that emotional need gets answered with a no, then you go into what I call the scramble. I write about this in the book.

**Annie:** Oh, the scramble is brilliant.

**Mike:** This is all the unhelpful things we do to try to force the answer back to a yes. People-pleasing, perfectionism, abandoning ourselves, just all the things that we do that we don't have to do, that really actually undermine our lives when we can really learn to actually answer our own question with a yes, and honestly, Annie, to know that God answers that question with a yes, and so we no longer have to live in the scramble.

I tell people there's nothing wrong with having a primal question. What's wrong is living in the scramble and having that primal question control our lives.

**Annie:** Yeah, that's so good. As I read about the scramble, I was like, Mike Foster, that is the perfect word because that is what I do. When I get a "no" to my primal question, I am scrambling. I'm suddenly high-level alert to make myself feel better as quick as possible, right?

**Mike:** Yes.

**Annie:** And for my personality type, for my Enneagram 7-ness, it is escape. Like, go do something. Get out of here. Either escape inward or escape to food or escape to Dollywood or escape to a friend's house or whatever, right? Escape to Instagram. So, man, just having that language when I'm going into this year and working on emotional health, physical health, and spiritual health, if I'm thinking about my emotional health, I'm like, maybe one of the biggest wins, Mike, is when we can identify our own scrambling, right?

**Mike:** Yes, absolutely. And that's a big part of the action item is for you to have language to identify what's going on inside of you. It's like, oh, I just got a "no" to my primal question. Oh, my highest emotional need was just squashed and unmet in that conversation I had with my friend or my boss or my spouse or whatever is happening, and now I'm reacting to that.

Kind of the second part of the book I write about this whole concept of self-leadership. It's really about, we are gonna be activated, we are gonna get nos to our primal question, but what do we do then? Well, we step in and we lead ourselves through that. We remind ourselves that we're gonna be okay, that we can answer our own question with a yes in that moment instead of being controlled by other people's answers to that question.

**Annie:** Yeah, it's beautiful. Okay, will you go through the seven questions?

**Mike:** Yes. And I can't wait to hear what yours is.

**Annie:** I'm sure. I don't know if you wanna guess or not, but we'll talk about it.

**Mike:** Well, I'm gonna just have you share because I think that's awesome. By the way, think about it. As I go through these seven questions, I'll go through them pretty quickly, all of the seven questions represent an emotional need. Now, all of us are gonna have parts of these questions within us, but there's one that's driving the ship. There's one that says, okay, this is really the filter of how I see my life, of who I am, the really kind of number one priority in terms of my emotional needs.

Again, Annie, all of this gets imprinted in our early childhood, and we can talk about that more later, but it's something that we've carried pretty much all of our lives.

**Annie:** Is any of it nature or is it all nurture?

**Mike:** You know, most of it's about what we experience and really the confusion as we're these kids soaking up the rules of life and what love and security and success and purpose. Like we're learning all these lessons as kids, and there's something that's confusing that we're learning from our caretakers. So maybe we're feeling unloved or we're not feeling safe or whatever it is. And so we then carry this question into our adulthood and we keep asking it.

So we're gonna have parts of all seven, but there's one that definitely is our question. So you can do the assessment. I do this with clients. You know, it takes about 20 minutes. We explore different parts. But what's interesting is sometimes when I just go through the seven questions, people go, boom, that's mine, because they've been carrying that. It's like gives language to the thing that they have felt their entire life.

So let me go through these real quick for you, and then we'll talk a little bit more. So question number one is, am I safe? And this is really the need for physical and emotional safety. A lot of people who have this question experience trauma in their early lives, a chaotic family, an unsafe family, there was just not this foundation of safety for that person. So they grow up and they keep asking this question, am I safe, am I safe, am I safe? And when they get a yes, they feel good. But when they get a no or a maybe, they go into their scramble.

By the way, this is my question that I work with every single day, where I had abuse in my early childhood by a family friend. So safety was something that wasn't in my childhood. It's just I never felt safe. And so now I grow up as an adult, and I am risk-averse. I don't do anything where I might get hurt. I wanna know everything. I'm hypervigilant with details. And this is all driven by my primal question.

But here's also the good thing, and as we're going through this, every question has a gift associated with it. So one of the things the research shows, Annie, is that we take our own primal question and we put it over everybody else and assume they're asking the same question.

**Annie:** And we want them to get a yes.

**Mike:** Exactly, exactly. So why do people open up and tell Mike Foster their deepest darkest secrets on Fun Therapy Podcast?

**Annie:** Because you feel safe.

**Mike:** You feel safe to do that. Exactly.

**Annie:** Dude, this is my... so it's your fault that I did that. Now I understand. Now I understand. It's because you were answering your primal question over me.

**Mike:** Exactly. I wanted you to feel safe and protected, which created this atmosphere for us to have those really vulnerable conversations. So that's a gift that comes through really a lot of pain that I experienced in my early childhood.

This is what I love about God, right? He takes all this sort of messy, painful wounding of our childhood and he can redeem it and really give us this amazing superpower. So question one, am I safe?

Question two is, am I secure? Which has to do really about financial security. This is where perhaps you grew up in a home where there wasn't a lot of resourcing or our money was tight or mom and dad were always worried about bills. It just always felt like there wasn't enough. So really the main emotional need that you have is financial security. And when you have that financial security, you feel great.

But man, if that bank account's getting a little bit too low, you're feeling like you can't afford life, you go into your scramble and you start going to really unhelpful coping mechanisms for that question.

By the way, my favorite person on this question is Dwayne (The Rock) Johnson. If you think about Dwayne (The Rock) Johnson, I've seen him interviewed a lot about this. His primal question would be, am I secure? So the thing that drives Dwayne (The Rock) Johnson, biggest celebrity, superstar, is not fame. It's not success. It's not him to be adorned by other people. It is his need for financial security.

And you see this in his story. Like he grew up, his dad was a wrestler so money was pretty tight. He talks openly about kind of them not knowing if they can pay their bills. He named his production company Seven Bucks Productions because it's all around like he was down to his last seven bucks in his pocket when he made the decision to really kind of become what he is today.

**Annie:** Gosh.

**Mike:** So it's really fun watching people talk about their needs, talk about their story, talk about what drives them. And you can see the question that they're trying to answer in what they share. So am I secure is really just around, when he gets a yes, he's feeling great. When he gets a no, he scrambles. And he goes into all those mechanisms that he uses to help him meet that need for security.

**Annie:** Sorry, let me interrupt you and ask you an overarching question before we go to number three. Is there ever enough money? Is there ever enough safety? Do you ever hit the, okay, I'm satisfied now?

**Mike:** Such a great question. So one of the things I write about in the book is that math is no match for emotions. I have a client that I work with, he flies in on his \$50 million jet. He's probably worth \$500 million. His primal question is, am I secure? So he constantly feels like he doesn't have enough.

**Annie:** My primary question is, is he married? No, I'm just kidding. Just kidding.

**Mike:** Yes, he is.

**Annie:** Okay, great, congratulations to them. Great.

**Mike:** That's such a great question. So the work that we do together is help him understand that there is this kind of core driver, this need for financial security in his life. And there's nothing wrong with that need, by the way. We don't judge any of these needs. It's just it's there, let's deal with it, okay?

So kind of the prescription for our primal question is to stop asking the question and start living in what I call the primal truth. And that's where we take our

question and turn it into a statement. So instead of asking, "Am I secure? or "Am I safe?" we turn it into a statement, I am secure, I am safe, and then we make our choices and our decisions for our life. As long as we're living in that question, it's going to send us on a path that is not going to be beneficial to our lives.

**Annie:** We have this button that we push called the wowie zowie button [wowie zowie] whenever somebody blows my mind. And that's it. The primal truth turning it to I am secure. Like it becomes not about your circumstances but about what is true. So that's beautiful. That's beautiful.

**Mike:** Annie, a lot of this is because what we're bringing to our adult lives is our child logic. We're allowing our wounded child to analyze our life as an adult. See, my friend who's worth \$500 million, right? When he wonders if he has enough, he's going back to the home that he grew up in that didn't have enough, where poverty was a real thing. So he's bringing this wounded child now into his adult life to make his adult decisions instead of living in the primal truth.

Like for me, I didn't feel safe as a kid, okay? But I can remind myself now, and I actually do this, I remind myself I'm 6'4", 220 pounds and I live in a suburb of San Diego. I'm pretty safe, all right?

**Annie:** Right. Right.

**Mike:** I got friends who got my back. I got resources to protect myself. I have a voice. I didn't have a voice as a wounded child, okay? I have a voice now that I can use. And that's this whole idea of the primal truth is like we can live in that very empowered place instead of allowing this question to drive our lives: Am I safe? Am I secure? We can now say, I am.

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

[00:27:23] <music>

**Sponsor:** I have one other amazing partner to tell you about, [Ritual](#). Did you know 97% of women ages 19 to 50 are not getting enough vitamin D from their diet? The shorter days right now mean we need to work just a little bit harder to get some vitamin D in there too. But Ritual's Essential for Women 18+ was shown to increase vitamin D levels by 43% in a clinical study.

It is made with high-quality ingredients and nine traceable key nutrients. So you just take two capsules a day. And their capsule has this delayed release design to help make it gentle on an empty stomach, which I think is awesome.

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Okay, now back to our conversation with Mike.

[00:29:52] <music>

**Annie:** Okay, question three. Keep us going.

**Mike:** Okay, am I loved? Question three. And this is really just the need to be known and seen and heard. Adele's primal question, am I loved?

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Mike:** You look at everything that Adele sings about, you look at her relationships, how she makes people feel. She loves her audience, right? She wants to be connected to people. She wants to know them and be friends. You look at her lyrics that she sings about, it's all about love.

So this is, again, her highest emotional need is being expressed in everything that she does. It's both her gifting but also the thing that she has to manage. Because she's gonna get some "nos" to that. In fact, she just went through a divorce a couple years ago and she talks about that as being the most devastating moment of her life. She talked about going to therapy every single day to get through that because her primal question of "Am I loved?" was being answered with a big fat no, right?

**Annie:** Right.

**Mike:** And that just sent her into her scramble.

**Annie:** Right. Wow, okay.

**Mike:** Okay, question four, am I wanted? This is Bob Goff's primal question, by the way. One of the kind of examples I'd use with this question, this is really the need to be included, to be wanted, belonging. You see Bob's primal gift in a really clear way because he takes his question, "Am I wanted?" he puts it over Annie, he puts it over Mike, he puts it over every person that he ever meets, right? And he's like your best friend, okay? You're included. And Bob wants to answer, yes, you're wanted. And this is because Bob experienced a lot of rejection in his life.

One of the things that Bob shared with me and he's actually shared openly is that one of the reasons why he feels like he has to be the fun guy or the balloon guy or the happy guy is because that's in many ways a coping mechanism to be included, that you're gonna want somebody like that with you or you wanna be around somebody like that. You also look at Bob... Bob's the only guy that I know has put his cell phone in the back of his book-

**Annie:** Jeez, it was wild.

**Mike:** ...and said, call me. Why does he do that? Because every time he gets a phone call, his primal question of "Am I wanted?" is answered with a yes. But it's also communicating to everybody out there that you're wanted, that I care about you, that you're my friend. So it's really fun when we understand the question, we can start seeing it in almost everything that we do and how we think and how we act.

**Annie:** Totally.

**Mike:** So question five, am I successful? I'll go faster here. Am I successful?

**Annie:** No. This is great.

**Mike:** Okay. Sometimes I'm like, I mean, I could just talk about one question for like an hour, but I don't wanna do that. The question five, am I successful? This is really about typically people who grew up in competitive homes where it's about kind of scorekeeping and maybe it was sibling rivalry or maybe mom and dad were really concerned about grades and being excellent and winning.

I always kind of describe this as, when you won the baseball game, it's your little league game and dad was really talkative to you and he was really proud of you and he was really kind of jazzed and you were experienced that in the ride home in the car. And then when you lost or didn't play well, maybe it was a lot quieter. Maybe you felt sort of like dad wasn't proud of you any more or wasn't that excited that you were his son or his daughter.

Again, none of this is about blaming parents. This is about some of the confusion that happens in our lives where we then carry the question going, well, in order for me to be... I have to be successful. And when I'm successful, then I'm a good person. Dad's gonna like me if I win versus when I'm not, when I fail, I'd again go into my scramble. So they tend to be very competitive people and it's about winning.

Question six, am I good enough? This is a big one. It's the one we see a lot show up in the assessment.

**Annie:** Oh wow.

**Mike:** It's really this need to feel worthy, right, to be affirmed, having their unique humanity valued and recognized. So a lot of times this question gets implanted in early childhood. When you grew up in a kind of a very critical home, a judgmental home where it was never quite enough, like you did your best, but it's like, oh, you could have done better. Maybe your mom nitpicked your wardrobe or your hairstyle or whatever. It's like maybe dad was really critical to calling you, you're lazy or you're not really good.

These messages get seared into our emotional system and we carry that now into, again, our adulthood. So these people struggle with a lot of insecurity and often a lot of shame, just feeling like I am inherently flawed. I will never measure up.

Again, the gift that comes out of that is these people are amazing value creators because they know... they have a PhD in value. They know how to get value and be valued because they understand this idea of being good enough.

And so they tend to be very high performers. Sometimes that's because of their perfectionistic tendencies but they're excellent at what they do because they're working so hard to get that yes, to say, yes, you are good enough and to avoid that no.

**Annie:** Right.

**Mike:** And then the final question, and then I can't wait to hear what Annie's question is, is question seven, do I have a purpose? And you know what's interesting, Annie, on this one is that a lot of the research shows that people who grew up in faith-based homes have this question.

**Annie:** Interesting.

**Mike:** Because I think what happened in these homes, we talk about making an impact, making a difference in the world. Like God's got a great plan and calling on your life. So these are the conversations that are happening at the dinner table with mom and dad. So now there's this kind of this sense and this pressure to have a purpose, to have a big impact.

So really the emotional need here is to have significance in your life, to have meaningful work, to make an impact, to be part of something bigger than themselves. And what happens is when you get a no, like maybe you're just, I don't know... maybe you're a manager at a car dealership and you're like, "Well, what difference does this make? This doesn't have any impact. I'm not changing the world here."

So they deal with a lot of calling angst. They feel like, is this enough? And they're just always very judgmental towards themselves and their position in life. Instead of saying, hey, whatever I'm doing every day, whether it's being a parent to my child, being a good friend, encouraging others, that kind of work is full of purpose too. It doesn't mean we have to be over in Africa saving a country.

**Annie:** Right, right, right. Wow.

**Mike:** I mean, these seven are... I'm glad everyone got to hear them. Again, dear everyone listening or watching, please pause and go take this quiz so that you can know. Because I want us to dive deeper into some of them. But again, it's primalquestion.com is where they can go.

**Mike:** And it's a free quiz. It takes about five minutes.

**Annie:** Yeah. It was very easy. I think the first question says this, or the pre-question page says, don't think too long. Like go. Like just answer. Don't sit on this. So I kind of like very Annie, I went: definitely disagree, definitely agree, definitely. I mean, I like threw the thing all the way down and all the way up. Okay, Mike, so my primal question is question four: Am I wanted?

**Mike:** Yes, totally.

**Annie:** I know. Me and Bob Goff, we're-

**Mike:** I just want to give you a big hug right now.

**Annie:** I know, I know.

**Mike:** Listen, Annie, I want to encourage you on that, okay?

**Annie:** Okay.

**Mike:** Here's the thing. And this is why, you know, I love you so much, why I love Bob so much. Because you know, your primal gift is so clear. Anybody listening to this right now can see like, of course, that is the filter of how she does everything.

**Annie:** Everything.

**Mike:** Right?

**Annie:** I know.

**Mike:** And it's such a gift that you give to other people to let them into your lives. I mean, you're everybody's friend, right?

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Mike:** Whether you know them or not. But that's because you want to say yes, that they're wanted, that they're included. You don't want anybody left out. You know, one of the things I love about this question is they tend to look for the outsider, the person that is kind of on the periphery, and they have a heart for those people. It's a very powerful, beautiful gift that you have. But it all stems from your own emotional need to feel wanted and to belong and to be pursued.

That "pursued" is a big word in that... and I write about this in the book. The idea that somebody comes after me, that wants me, that is a big yes for a question for, am I wanted?

**Annie:** So ever since I took the quiz yesterday, I have filtered everything. I've been like, Oh, that's why I do that. Oh, that's why I do that. We had a series we did for Advent, and we had a guidebook, and we had it in English, of course. And then I thought, we need it in Spanish. We need it in Spanish. So we spent \$1,000 to get it translated. We sold five. Five.

I mean, the ROI was invisible, except to me, where I'm like, great. Great. That means it exists forever. That means five people who couldn't do this got to do it. I mean, we didn't sell 10,000.

**Mike:** No one's left out.

**Annie:** No one. If anyone spoke Spanish and any perchance wanted to be a part of this at Christmas, we had a way. Only five people took advantage of that. But that still met my need. Do you know what I mean? Like, I still feel in my core like they felt... anyone who speaks Spanish felt wanted. So not everyone on my team has the same question. So not everyone has the same value. But for me, I went like, "Great. Perfect. I love that."

I mean, I've seen it in... it's been really funny, Mike, because for a couple of weeks, I've been at... I don't ever look at my Instagram numbers. It does not serve. It does not help. There's bots everywhere. You can't know. But when you're switching between 263,000 and 264,000, you notice the three and four, right?

So for weeks, I jumped back and forth and it was torturing me. And I was saying to someone over the Christmas break, why do I care? I do not care about this ever. Well, here's why I care, because I'm always asking if I'm wanted. So whereas normally I can quiet that particular noise because I'm able to put it in its right place, when it is sitting on a ledge like that, it gets very loud to me because it's answering my primal question every day. I'm going from yes to no every day.

**Mike:** Exactly.

**Annie:** Okay.

**Mike:** I always say like, once you see it, you can't unsee it.

**Annie:** I know.

**Mike:** So you're gonna discover all kinds of things in your life, Annie, in terms of the choices that you make, the things that bother you, the things that trigger you. And that's such a great example of why we live in our primal truth. Because you don't want to have Instagram numbers answering your primal question.

**Annie:** No, of course not. Oh my gosh, of course not, right? Of course I don't.

**Mike:** Because it goes yes, no, yes, no, yes, no.

**Annie:** Constantly, constantly.

**Mike:** Constantly. Yes.

**Annie:** I mean, it overly explains why the internet has mattered too much to me and why I have to deal with... I need thicker skin and I need to be okay when people are unhappy with me. I've always called it immaturity in me. And what it actually is, is the Instagram is particularly triggering for my primal question.

**Mike:** Yes, it is. Well, one of the things I talk about in the book is every primal question has what I call kryptonite. And the kryptonite is really the thing that will instantly send you into your scramble. And for question four is, "Am I wanted?" rejection is the kryptonite. Rejection is the thing that-

**Annie:** And that's not true for everybody? That shocks me.

**Mike:** No, it's not true for me.

**Annie:** That shocks me.

**Mike:** I don't like to be rejected, but my deal is safety. So if I feel, for me, like any... don't throw Mike Foster a surprise party, okay? Because I don't want any surprises. I don't want anything that I can't predict or understand or know exactly what to do in any situation.

And that's also the kind of the interesting thing about your question that gives you an additional gift, not only the gift of making everybody feel wanted. But it also means that these other questions aren't as powerful in your life or these other needs are not as powerful. So like for me, I'm a bit, I guess, inoculated against rejection because I'm dealing with safety over here.

**Annie:** Yeah, right.

**Mike:** I don't really care that much about my purpose. Like if I have a legacy, great. If I don't, no big deal.

**Annie:** Oh yeah, that question, I was like, Oh, no. I don't care. But there are people who that is their like center core thing.

**Mike:** Absolutely. So we gotta understand that. We gotta understand that center core thing so we can understand ourselves and then make better choices and decisions and really kind of know what's going on inside of us. I mean, we can't come up with solutions or cures if we don't know what the problem is. So this just helps people identify what's going on inside of them.

**Annie:** I think it's really important that our friends listening hear that the primal question is not just about your friendships, it's not just about your romantic life, it's not just about your work. It's everywhere.

**Mike:** And I think what's really important here, Annie, is that this isn't just an affirmation that we say over ourselves, isn't sort of just kind of words or kind of like this new age sort of thing.

**Annie:** Not a mantra.

**Mike:** It's not a mantra. It's actually inviting ourselves into radical truth. You are wanted. No matter what is happening around you or what somebody might do or say or the rejection you might get in a particular interaction, you can go back to this really rock-solid place to know that I am wanted. Period.

**Annie:** And it makes me show up a more authentic version of me because I'm not scared. Right?

**Mike:** You're no longer having the pressure or the responsibility to manage the question anymore. You're released from that work and you can actually show up sort of this confidence, you know, knowing that you're living in your primal truth, I am wanted.

And so it gives you this great resilience and strength and clarity. And that fundamentally is your true self. It's not the wounded child showing up to that interaction with that individual. It's the healthy adult Annie saying, I'm leading myself well around a really key emotional need that I have, but I get to be in charge of it, not the everybody else.

**Annie:** And it felt like me and the Lord kind of... This is wild, but this is what your work does. I felt like me and the Lord understood each other better.

**Mike:** Well, you know what I say to people is our relationship with God is directly connected to our primal question. Basically I believe, this is my theology, is that God is trying to interact with you and answer with the biggest yes possible around our primal question. So like for me, the Bible verses that means so much to me is God being my protector, my refuge, the person who reminds me that everything's gonna be okay.

Like the message that God's trying to get to Annie F. Downs is "You belong. I pursue you. I want relationship with you." And if your question is question seven, do you have a purpose? God's saying, yes, you have a purpose. I have a great plan for your life. So like His interaction with us is He knows what our deepest emotional need is. He knows our primal question and He wants to answer yes, yes, yes, yes, yes all day long.

**Annie:** That's how it's felt. I mean, it has shifted me, friendship, romantic, work, and all those ways. But just between me and the Lord in the last two days, I've been like, Oh, that's why it always matters so much when I see that or when you say that. You know, I was like, oh, that's why, is because my primal question is being answered with a divine yes.

**Mike:** Beautiful. That's exactly right.

**Annie:** It's fantastic.

**Mike:** Again, I love the framework. I love teaching people the framework. I love doing the assessment with people. But the great thing is it's like this new sense of clarity and just this gusto to like, okay, now I know what's going on. I know what to do. Let's get after it.

And instead of being kind of hindered or held back or, you know, getting down on ourselves for feeling certain things or, you know, why do I always get triggered by this? Now we know and we can do something about it.

**Annie:** I mean, I feel like I want to tattoo on myself, don't scramble, don't scramble. No need to scramble.

[00:48:14] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to share about one of our amazing partners, [Hiya Health](#). This one's for my mini BFFs. Listen, I know you may not love taking your vitamins, but Hiya Health is a good one. So parents, if you're looking for a children's vitamin that both tastes good and doesn't have a bunch of junk in it, check out Hiya Health.

A lot of children's vitamins end up having unnecessary sugar and unhealthy chemicals in them. So Hiya was created so you can feel good about what you're given to my mini BFFs. Hiya isn't candy in disguise. Instead, it's pressed with a blend of 12 organic fruits and veggies, then filled with 15 essential vitamins and minerals.

Plus your first shipment comes with these cute little stickers for your kids to stick on the bottles. Hiya is also sent straight to your door. So you don't have to remember to add it to your grocery list.

We've worked out a special deal with Hiya for their best-selling children's vitamin. Receive 50% off your first order. You guys, 50%. To claim this deal, you must go to [Hiyahealth.com/thatsoundsfun](https://hiyahealth.com/thatsoundsfun) and get your kids the full body nourishment they need to grow into healthy adults.

**Sponsor:** And one more amazing partner to tell you about, Liquid IV. If you're trying to stay more hydrated this year, [Liquid IV](#) will come to the rescue. And you guys know we love that stuff around here. You don't need to reinvent yourself for the new year. Just revive yourself with Liquid IV.

It has three times the electrolytes of the leading sports drink, plus eight vitamins and nutrients for everyday wellness. Liquid I.V. hydrates two times faster than water alone, and it's all in a single sugar-free stick. So you can feel hydrated, revived, and ready to take on 2024.

That one little stick you just dump it into your water bottle. And now the hydration multiplier comes in these three really good sugar-free flavors: the white peach, the green grape, and the lemon-lime. There's no artificial sweeteners, zero sugar, and it's also non-GMO and free from gluten, dairy, and soy.

Revive yourself for the new year. Grab your Liquid IV hydration multiplier, sugar-free and bulk nationwide at Costco, or get 20% off your first order when you go to [liquidiv.com](https://liquidiv.com) and use the code THATSOUNDSFUN at checkout. That's 20% off your first order when you shop better hydration today using promo code THATSOUNDSFUN at [liquidiv.com](https://liquidiv.com).

**Sponsor:** Okay, when I am thinking through what I need in my house, Thrive Market is literally my go-to for getting all of my groceries handled and stocked up on my household essentials as well. You just can't beat the convenience of picking out everything online and then it magically arrives at your doorstep.

I really love that Thrive Market carries brands with the highest quality ingredients. And their filtering system is super easy to use so you can sort based on your lifestyle needs. Whether you're looking for organic kid snacks, low-sugar alternatives, or gluten-free pantry essentials, you can curate your own shopping experience really easily.

And as a Thrive Market member, I save money on every single grocery order, like an average of 30% each time, you guys. They also have a deals page that changes daily, and it always has some of my favorite brands on it. Plus, when you join Thrive Market, you are also helping a family in need with their one-for-one membership matching program. You join and they give.

Join in on the savings with Thrive Market today and get 30% off your first order, plus a free \$60 gift. Go to [thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun](https://thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun) for 30% off your first order, plus a free \$60 gift. That's [thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun](https://thrivemarket.com/thatsoundsfun).

And now back to finish up our conversation with Mike.

[00:51:50] <music>

**Annie:** Okay, let me ask you one more question, because selfishly I get to do that because it's you and me sitting here, and then we'll kind of wrap up. But a thought I have about my particular question about am I wanted and me, is my fear and my scramble one of the reasons that I am so averse to men pursuing me is because it's actually what I really want the most?

**Mike:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Because I rush too quick, but I'm rushing because I want to cut off the chance of them not doing it, right?

**Mike:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Mike:** Well, one of the things I write about in the book is this concept called primal avoidance. And what that is is where we take our primal question and we actually take it off the table. We no longer ask it because it's a protection mechanism, right?

**Annie:** Right.

**Mike:** It's a way that we don't risk getting a no or a maybe to our primal question. So we just take it off the table. And this isn't about living in your primal truth. This is actually the unhealthy response where we pull it off the table, we avoid, we're just shut down. So that protects us from getting those nos or maybes.

So when you think about kind of putting yourself out there, okay, you know, live in that place of primal truth, knowing that it's okay... there are going to be people in your life who are gonna say no to your question. And that's okay.

**Annie:** And that's okay.

**Mike:** Because you know and you remind yourself, well, I am wanted, okay? And just like for me, I know there are people who will make me feel unsafe. There will be people that will really rattle my snow globe and I'll get all... and I understand that. But I don't have to live in sort of this... Again, the child logic place. I can be an adult about it and say, Okay, that's one person's opinion. That's one person's rejection of me. That's not everybody's rejecting me or everybody's going to reject you. So yes.

And I think for you in terms of the romantic relationship side, it is your most vulnerable place. So you're going to be very, very cautious and protective of it because it does have the most potency to wound you if you keep asking the question versus if you're living in that place of primal truth, then its power is really depleted. It doesn't have that same control over you.

**Annie:** And then when the power is depleted, I actually get the yes.

**Mike:** Exactly.

**Annie:** Yeah, that's the wild part.

**Mike:** Because you're showing up as your best self. You're showing up as your true self instead of this person that's managing this question and trying to get a response. You're trying to get a yes from everybody, right? You go on these dates and you connect with these different perhaps suitors and you want to get the yes, but that's not your true self. You're managing a question instead of just showing up going, "I am wanted. You're lucky to have me. You're lucky that I'm even here right now."

**Annie:** Right. Or going like, I'm wanted. Are you interested in being one of the people who wants me? Like, are you... do you?

**Mike:** Exactly. Oh my gosh.

**Annie:** Because you can say no, but that doesn't leave me without being wanted. That just leaves me without you wanting me. So I will have feelings around you not wanting me, but I will not be unwanted over it. And I think eight year ago Annie, 10 year ago Annie would have gone, if you don't want me, I'm unwanted. And now my sentence is, if you don't want me, you don't want me. That's it. That's it. If you don't want me, you don't want me. And that doesn't mean I'm unwanted.

So I think that's the switch I'm experiencing. You're giving me language for a switch that I've experienced in the last few months that I have not known before.

**Mike:** I love that.

**Annie:** That's fun. This is good.

**Mike:** I just want to give you a hug. That's so good, Annie.

**Annie:** Well, I'm so thankful for you. Because now I'm like, man, I am a tornado on my worst days. Annie of 2013, I am a tornado of unhealthy Enneagram seven, or am I wanted, and anxious attachment. I'm just a tornado of it. And so God bless everybody I knew in 2013 who experienced that.

But now I'm like, oh, there are gifts to all of these. There's even a gift to the anxious attachment because it means I want to be connected to you. But I have to manage it, right?

**Mike:** That's right.

**Annie:** So it just feels like the primal questions, these seven questions are giving me language. I'm like, man, I need everybody on our staff to take it. I need everyone

I'm ever going to date to take it. I need my parents, my siblings to take it. I just want to know everyone's question.

**Mike:** Absolutely. Well, I always say this for couples—I do a lot of couples counseling—and I tell them that basically the reason why you have conflict or the reason why this relationship is failing or not working is because you are answering your spouse's primal question with a no or a maybe.

Once they have the language, like how do I answer my spouse's question with a yes, the relationship starts to work. It's not more date nights. It's not about money problems. It's not about sex. It's about you're not answering your spouse's primal question with a yes.

And there is no relationship that will succeed if the person in that relationship keeps getting a no to their primal question. And that's true for romantic relationships, work relationships, friendships. I can't be in relationship with somebody who constantly makes me feel unsafe. I can't work for somebody who constantly makes me feel unsafe.

You know, just like you. You can't be friends with somebody who constantly sort of is aloof to being with you or doesn't kind of reject you or just like, yeah, I'll take it or leave it. Like that relationship won't work because they're giving you a no or maybe.

And that doesn't make them a bad person, but it just shows the power of that need within you and within me and with everybody who's listening. That we've got to be aware of it. We got to communicate that to our key people. This is important to me. So like your team members, they need to know like, why did you do the Spanish version? Because you want everyone to belong. You want everybody to be included. That's the way Annie works, okay?

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Mike:** They need to know that about you.

**Annie:** Okay, so what do we do now, Mike? We've taken our assessment. We know our question. What is our next move to continue to pursue emotional health in this?

**Mike:** Well, one of the things I do in the book is I talk about this primal map.

**Annie:** Oh, it's amazing.

**Mike:** And the primal map is really just about building out kind of all the different implications of how this question is impacting your life.

**Annie:** Can I show this?

**Mike:** Sure, yeah.

**Annie:** If they're watching on video, there it is. And does every number have the same map?

**Mike:** Every number has the same map. But what it is, it's an exercise where you can identify your primal gift and what does that look like and what are the different areas? You can identify, what does your scramble look like? Like when I start getting very hypervigilant or catastrophic thinking, I'm like, oh, I know what's going on here. My primal question of "Am I safe" was answered with a no.

**Annie:** Oh yeah. Am I in line at the Dairy Queen? I have scrambled. I have scrambled. It's not a Dairy Queen problem. It's, why is Annie at Dairy Queen? I've scrambled.

**Mike:** Exactly. So like the map gives us this opportunity to kind of identify those things so we understand what's really going on here so we can get back to really that healthy adult place of living in our primal truth. So that's a big kind of easy tool of just kind of seeing the different implications of both positive and negative. And it really gives us this great launching point to live our lives to the maximum and really flourish in our relationships, at work, and obviously in our personal lives.

**Annie:** Yeah, and there's coaching available, right? So if we're like, I gotta go next level on this, coaching's available at [primalquestion.com](http://primalquestion.com).

**Mike:** Yeah. There's really two options. So at our website, you can do the assessment and get a coach. But the other thing is, and this is the most fun thing I'm doing right now, Annie, is I'm training coaches, counselors, therapists, pastors, other leaders, how to use this framework to help people kind of have that aha moment and understand what's going on inside of them so that they can really begin to grow and flourish in their lives.

So every Monday I'm training 80 to 100 people in this framework. So it's a certification process, it's fantastic. So it's the really, really deep dive into this process, but it's a great way to understand, not only for you but then to help others within your team or who you're coaching or counseling.

**Annie:** Yeah, great. And the book's available everywhere, right? Like we can go on Amazon, we can get it anywhere we want it.

**Mike:** Amazon's the best place. I would say, if you go to Amazon, leave a review. That is probably the greatest gift you can give an author is just leave a little review if you like the book. If you don't like the book, don't leave a review.

**Annie:** Don't leave a review. That's exactly right. I mean, that is so true. So they can go right now in Amazon, get the book, and go take Primal Question Quiz at [primalquestion.com](http://primalquestion.com). You have so many video resources. I mean, it really is a course in humaning, you know, and like being a good human.

I'm about to become quite the evangelist, Mike, because I'm like, this has answered my questions. This is my next growth place, I think. While I see growth, I also see room to grow, right? Man, I'm really grateful. I can't wait for people to get about this. How can they get in touch with you, Mike?

**Mike:** Again, [primalquestion.com](http://primalquestion.com) is a great place. There's contact information there. You know, I speak, I do workshops on this. Instagram's great too. I'm @mikefoster2000, the number 2000. I'm posting different videos about emotional health and the primal question, and sometimes pictures of my two Pomeranians that are my fur babies. I post those on Instagram too, but-

**Annie:** And you celebrate your wife all the time on Instagram. I love it.

**Mike:** I do. We've been married almost 30 years now, and we're...

**Annie:** That's amazing.

**Mike:** And by the way, the primal questions really helped our marriage in a big way, like, oh my gosh. We finally have cracked the code on how to connect with each other. And we've done a pretty good job up to that, to knowing the primal question, but this is just kind of taking it to the next level, which has been fun and exciting too for marriage.

**Annie:** I'm so grateful, Mike. Thank you for making time to do this today. You are such a gift. I can't wait for people to get going on their primal question.

**Mike:** Yes. Well, thanks, Annie. I love just everything about who you are and how your Q4, your question, am I wanted, gets expressed in the world. We are all beneficiaries of you letting us belong in your world and be your friend. So thank you for just being you, and thanks for letting me talk about this concept today.

**Annie:** You're very kind. Thank you, my friend.

[01:03:27] <music>

**Outro:** Oh, you guys, isn't he great? Wasn't that awesome? Oh my gosh, these seven questions, like when I tell you, it is all I have thought about. Oh my gosh. I mean, it is telling me something right now about ways I can keep growing.

So remember you can go take that assessment at [primalquestion.com](http://primalquestion.com). All the resource is there. You can grab a copy of The Seven Primal Questions on Amazon. You're gonna want that book to look through to get that map that he talked about.

And listen, reading the other six questions was very helpful to me as well. So did you see me do that math real quick in my head? But I really want y'all to try this. Just go take the assessment, see what you think.

And then go follow Mike on social media, tell him thanks again for being on this show. I can't believe it was his first time. It will not be his last.

And don't forget, all of this year's episodes are now available to watch on YouTube. And if you didn't hear the other big news, I've got a new guided journal coming out on March 5th called Let's Read the Gospels. Y'all, it is so beautiful. Yes, it's based on the podcast. It's a 30-day guided journal featuring a new Bible reading plan that we have never done before.

So we are going to do that in April on Let's Read the Gospels. It's a beautiful book. I cannot wait for us all to go through it together in April. So go pre-order your copy right now wherever you love to buy books, wherever you're picking up The Seven Primal Questions, get you some copies of the Let's Read the Gospels guided journal as well.

If you have any 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 @thatoundsfunpodcast. We'll try to answer them there.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, in Rwanda, Africa currently, you guys. So anywhere you need me, that's how you can find me.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out, do something that sounds fun to you, and I will do the same. And today, what sounds fun to me, I cannot know. I'm in Rwanda. That sounds fun to me. I'm doing something fun today. That's for sure.

Make sure you're checking in with me and Carlos and our team on our socials as we get to share more and more with you about the work of Africa New Life. I am so excited, so grateful to get to see it firsthand and show it to you. So make sure you're checking in with us on social media.

Y'all have a great weekend. We'll see you back here on Monday. Y'all, the theme continues. You aren't ready with an incredible author that I have revered for years. I cannot believe we got to talk to her. Y'all are going to love her. Her name is Michelle McKinney Hammond.

We'll see you back here on Monday. Guess what? We're still talking about seasons. We're still talking about seasons. We'll see y'all on Monday.