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Annie: Hi, friends, and 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. A happy birthday to the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I hope for all of us, it's a day we're able to reflect on the incredible work and sacrifice of Dr. King while we continue what he started. That racial reconciliation wouldn't be something we think about once a year on his birthday, but daily.

I am thrilled to continue our talk about seasons on today's episode of That Sounds Fun. Y'all, it is blowing my mind. It's blowing my mind.

But before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors. This show is sponsored by [BetterHelp](#). If therapy is something you've been considering, BetterHelp is one of the most accessible ways to give it a try.

As we talk with Michelle today, sometimes seasons in our lives don't look at all the way we wanted them to. And when I've been in that place, therapy has been an incredible tool for me to process what's going on, what I'm feeling, and what I don't want to feel, and what steps to take.

Maybe this is your year to give BetterHelp a try. They've made it so simple to get started. It's entirely online and designed to be convenient, flexible, and suited to your schedule. Your sessions can be done from right at home. All you do is fill out a brief questionnaire—y'all know we love a quiz—and you'll get matched with a licensed therapist. And you can switch therapists anytime for no additional charge because finding the right match for you is really important too.

Let's celebrate the progress you've already made and keep building on it in 2024. So visit betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun today to get 10% off your first month. That's betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun.

Intro: Today on the show, y'all, I cannot believe I got to talk with Michelle McKinney Hammond. I've been a fan for two decades. I am blown away at this conversation. She's an Emmy Award winner, entrepreneur, and author.

Y'all know how the Lord just keeps bringing up things on our podcast sometimes. And this theme is loud. It's this topic that just keeps coming up over and over again. Well, we got one. Like we talked about with Pastor Banning and with Mike Foster, we're talking to Michelle today about shifting seasons in our lives.

Today, we talk about what to do when you're in a place where you feel like God hasn't provided the thing you've asked for, or as she calls it in her new book, *When Shift Happens*, S-H-I-F-T. Shift, y'all. We talk about that title and dating, and the different seasons we're all in. You are going to love her.

So here is my conversation with my friend, Michelle McKinney Hammond.

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Annie: All right, Ms Michelle McKinney Hammond, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

Michelle: I love the name. That sounds fun.

Annie: Oh, thank you.

Michelle: Anything fun, I wanna do it.

Annie: Okay, so that's my first question for you. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what you do for fun.

Michelle: Cook with friends, scream with friends, do anything with friends. Friends.

Annie: Okay. Do you live here in Nashville?

Michelle: No, but I have great friends down there, and the Tripp family is my adopted family in Nashville.

Annie: Yes, of course. So where are you? Where's your family based?

Michelle: Well, my family is based in Ghana, West Africa, and Chicago, Illinois. Yeah, so.

Annie: I did know that. I read that in the book that you were trying to go home and it was right when COVID started and you couldn't get into Ghana for seven months or something.

Michelle: Right.

Annie: Wow, wow, okay. Well, I love Chicago. And cooking with friends, that's what you gotta do in the winter up there. Just inside.

Michelle: Inside. In the warmest spot in the house, the kitchen.

Annie: That's exactly right, that's exactly right. Okay, so you started to tell me a story before I hit record that I begged you to stop because I told you I have been a fan of yours for 20 years. I didn't realize this was your first book, *What to Do When Love Finds You*. I read that when I was in college in '99 or 2000.

Michelle: That tells you how old I am, though, now.

Annie: Yeah. But will you tell the story of writing your first book?

Michelle: Sure. Well, I was a very miserable single. So that book was just really like a hilarious smack from God for me. Because I finally got to a place called Happy, and I'm talking to my mentor, Bunny Wilson, who had written *Knight in Shining Armor*.

Annie: Which I loved as well.

Michelle: And she said, "You need to write that." And I said, "Bunny, I'm in advertising. I can't write a book. 30 seconds is all I got." She said, "Girl, as much as you like to run your mouth, you can write a book. It's just one long conversation." And I took that and ran with it.

So I started writing it. I'm a happy sanguine, so a short attention span. Wrote a chapter, thought it was cute. Set it to the side, forgot about it. Maybe about a year went by, I got let go from my job, I'm walking across the street to a Hamburger Helper voiceover interview, and I get hit by a car. I end up in the middle of the street thinking, well, I'm just gonna pop up, but no, that didn't happen.

Three surgeries, a year and a half in bed later, I finished *What to Do Until Love Finds You* in bed. Harvest House took it. It sold out of its first 12,000 copies in three weeks, and they were like, "Who is this person?" So that's the story behind *What to Do Until Love Finds You*, which is still out there.

Annie: It's still out there. I mean, statistically, we think about half of our listeners are not married yet, like me. So what's your big advice for 2024? For the single women and men who hope to get married and want to get married, what's your advice for us for this year? Well, like the title says, *What to Do Until Love Finds You*. Do life and love will find you. You know, that's what Ruth did. She was doing life and Boaz found her.

It's in the circulating. It's in the doing of what you do, your purpose, exercising who you are that attracts the right person that complements what you're already doing.

So don't sit there waiting for life and love to happen. You make life happen and you make love happen.

Annie: I was in my late 30s and I got this... no, early 30s, sorry. And I got this opportunity to move to Scotland. And I remember saying to a friend, Ms. Michelle, I said, "But I want to get married." And she was like, "But there are men in Scotland." She was like, "What are you talking about?" And I had this realization of like, at the time, you know, I'm early 30s and I'm thinking I could blink and be 40. And if I say no to this and I'm still single at 40, what have I done?

Michelle: Yes, exactly.

Annie: And here I am 43, not married yet. And I'm like, I have gotten to do really great opportunities because I've paid attention to the open doors instead of only knocking on the closed door. Now, listen, Ms. Michelle, I knock on that closed door. Don't you worry.

Michelle: Oh, we've done it.

Annie: Listen, the Lord ain't gonna say I didn't ask for it. That's for sure.

Michelle: Exactly. And I always tell single people anyway, you know you're single by choice, right? They go, no, I'm not. I said, yes, there were people who were interested in you that you said no to. So it's been your choice to be alone. You've got something you're looking for and that something is looking for you. In the meantime, get busy with the business of doing life because there's so many great adventures that fulfill you.

And the one thing that I've found is that the hole in your heart is not a person-sized hole, it's a purpose-sized hole. So when you get busy doing life, you'll be amazed at how happy and fulfilled you are, which then leaves room to attract the right person into your life instead of those that come to suck the life out of you because they smell your neediness 10 miles away.

Annie: Listen, I know. Okay, so talk to us for a minute about people who would say to you, but Ms. Michelle, I've done that. I've run the race. I'm having a great time. I'm in my mid-30s. I'm in my mid 50s and God has not provided. Then I would say, you know, He says every good and perfect gift comes from above. If it was good and perfect for you, you'd have it now.

So He knows that the best gift for you right now is your singleness and what you're operating in. I'll be 66 this year. And I'm telling you, I'm having the time of my life.

Marriage is something... it's like in the back of my mind. Like, that's a nice idea, but is it a prayer point on a daily basis? No, it's not because so much other stuff fills up my world that that person's gonna have to come and make room and inspire me to wanna let go of some things to be with them. So, you know, I think that when we get to that place, it frees us up to attract the type of love that we really want. So let's get-

Annie: Do you feel that with men? When I meet men and they have a full life, I'm attracted to that. I'm like, "Oh wait, I hope I can fit into that. I wanna fit into that. That looks fun and exciting." It looks like you're on purpose versus a man who's waiting. And I know that's not as often as it looks like with women, but I'm like, "Man, the thing you're explaining, I experienced with men too."

Michelle: Sure, exactly. I think that everyone is attracted to something that's happening. Nobody wants to be just, you know, sitting there like a bump on a log because that's too much responsibility for you to now make them happy. That's a lot of work.

Annie: I don't have that in me. I don't have that in my spirit.

Michelle: Thank you. Thank you.

Annie: Yeah, he and the Lord had got to sort out who he is.

Michelle: I'm telling you.

Annie: I can't. You and I, we got too much purpose to fulfill to fix that.

Michelle: I'm telling you. Yeah.

Annie: That's you and the Lord. Okay, so, *When Shift Happens* is your newest book. I told you this before we started, but I want to tell everybody what has blown my mind this week is the Lord is telling us something about seasons. Everyone has already heard Pastor Banning from Jesus Culture teach on it. And then Mike Foster hit it. And all of a sudden I'm like, Oh, Ms. Michelle, the Lord is aligning something for us. Why does it matter? Teach me from 20 years ahead of me. Why does it matter that we pay attention what season of life we're in right now?

Michelle: Well, you know, first of all, it makes you prepare properly for your next. It also stops your frustration level because you understand where you are, the purpose of why you are where you are. And that gives you an idea of where your focus should be while you're there. When you don't know your season, it throws you off-kilter and off center and you start pursuing the wrong things.

I lived in Chicago for many years and there was a woman that everyone called Mad Mary. In the summertime, she wore a fur coat down the street and we all knew that she was disturbed. Something in her psyche did not understand the season. Therefore she wasn't dressed properly for it and she suffered for it.

Annie: Wow.

Michelle: So when we talk about being in season, you know, the sons of Issachar understood the seasons. They understood what was going on around them, why it was happening at that particular time. And we who know the Lord should be very sensitive to that.

We need to know when we're in our spring season, when things are budding and begin and the harvest is beginning to show forth.

Then there's the summer where it's hot. Can you take the heat when the summer comes, you know? We pray for summer all through winter and then winter comes, we start complaining about the heat.

Annie: That's right, that's right.

Michelle: So get out that bikini and get happy, you know. So fall is a time of harvest as well, but it's also preparing for winter. And winter is a time when things die off to make room for things to bloom afresh. So when we understand what season we're in, maybe you're in a season where it seems like everything is drying up and dying in your life. Get excited. Don't mourn. It's preparation time.

I was talking with a young lady, she says, "Well, it just looks like nothing's happening." I said, "You've been in the winter before. It looks like everything's dead, but there's a lot going on beneath the surface because when spring comes, all of a sudden those sprouts come out seemingly overnight."

No, they've been working on coming out all winter. The roots have been traveling that have been planted, finding the right spot to sprout. And the roots have been digging deep to gain traction so that they can hold what they're getting ready to shoot through the surface.

So the same thing happens in our life. When things are dying off, it's prep time. When it's springtime, we have to be super wise because you can get really excited about all the fruit and all the amazing things that are happening and lose sight of your focus, lose sight of preparing and knowing that seasons are cyclical.

Annie: So it's really amazing because when Pastor Banning was on, we asked everybody, pray and ask God what season you're in right now. Pay attention to the words you hear, pay attention to the pictures you see in your mind. And so can we just take a couple of minutes and go through each season? Because everybody listening, hopefully, if they haven't, pause the podcast right now, ask the Lord, ask the Lord what season you're in.

Can we just go through each season for a minute and kind of... Can I ask you some questions of my experience in each season and see if we can help everybody kind of have some handholds?

Michelle: Sure.

Annie: So let's start in winter since that's what we're actually experiencing outside.

Michelle: Yeah.

Annie: When it starts, I get scared. When I start realizing like I was just harvesting, I was just getting everything and my kitchen was full and my life felt full and suddenly nothing is working. How do we combat that fear at the start of that season switch?

Michelle: It's really about keeping our eyes on God. It's about-

Annie: You say that so much in the book. You say, look up, look up, look up.

Michelle: Look up, yeah. Also trusting His process, knowing that there's a process. I think sometimes in Christendom, we want the quick fix. There's no such thing. No story that you read in the Bible had a quick fix. And you know what? I'll even go so far as to say, God is merciful to us. When you read stories in the Bible, their fixes took a lot longer than our fixes take. We don't have as much time and God moves faster in our lives than He did back in the day. So take the grace from that.

But also understand that there's a process. And trust His agenda for your life. See, the enemy comes and tries to make you suspicious of what God is doing. Oh, you know, things aren't going right because you did this or you made a wrong choice or God doesn't like you this week. You know, He comes up with all kinds of stuff. But what you've got to understand is that God is madly and passionately loves you. His agenda towards you is always good.

Jeremiah 29:11 in The Message version says, "I know what I'm doing. I've got it all planned out, plans for your good and not to harm you, to give you the future that

you hope for. Now, that's rich because what do I hope for? Are my hopes in alignment with what God wants for me? If so, He's gonna kiss it and bless it and it's gonna sprout up when it's supposed to. But in the meantime, He's preparing you to have the capacity to maintain what you attain.

Annie: Wow.

Michelle: That's what we've got to know, is that God's working on us. I had a pastor in LA that told me many years ago when I was young and perky and, you know, why isn't everything going the way I want it to? He said, "Michelle, when the situation is wrong and you are wrong, God says, no. When the situation is right, but you are wrong, God says, grow. When the situation is wrong, but you are right, God says, slow. And when the situation is right and you are right, God says, go.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Michelle: And I have clung to that over the years.

Annie: Can we just post that quoting you on the internet today?

Michelle: Sure.

Annie: Because I want to hang that up in my house. I mean, that's when people say the right guy at the wrong time is the wrong guy.

Michelle: At any time. That's right.

Annie: Right, right. Wow.

Michelle: So what we've got to know is that winter is preparing for spring. It's not just sitting there idly by killing everything. It's literally rejuvenating, reviving, restoring underground what it wants to push to the surface. So if we can just say, I'm in prep mode and also enjoy the rest. Be like that bear. Hibernate. Take those days off, get that popcorn, get in front of the TV and watch a good movie, and not pressure yourself to produce anything. It's not time yet. And guess what? You're gonna long for one of those days of nothingness soon because spring is coming.

[00:17:22] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about one of our amazing partners, [Happy Viking](#). Who is on a smoothie kick right now? I know. I love a good smoothie and I love adding some protein powder to it. It really keeps

me fuller longer. But there are a million protein powder options out there, so I definitely am always wanting to make sure it has the best ingredients.

This is where Happy Viking comes in. It's got everything you need in one plant-based powder: proteins, vitamins, minerals, probiotics, prebiotics, fiber, electrolytes, and more. And only two grams of sugar. Plus 93% of customers say Happy Viking is the best-tasting plant protein powder they have ever had, your girl included.

Happy Viking has some really good flavors too, like the triple chocolate flavor, you guys. I mean, golly. Mix that with some peanut butter and a banana and some almond milk. That is the smoothie you need. They also have vanilla bean flavor, strawberry smoothie, green eclat, iced coffee, and cookies and cream.

Happy Viking protein and superfoods powder made by tennis champion, Venus Williams, is hands down the best-tasting plant protein powder out there. So visit drinkhappyviking.com and use the code TSF. And my friends get 20% off their first purchase. That's 20% off at drinkhappyviking.com with the code TSF, like That Sounds Fun.

That link and literally every other link you could ever hope for are in the show notes or we'll send it to you Friday in Friday's AFD Week in Review. You can sign up for that in the show notes as well.

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.

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.

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Sponsor: Y'all are always so kind to compliment my hair. Number one, thank you, and number two, you need to know it's [Prose](https://prose.com). You know we love a quiz around here. Prose has a hair consultation quiz where you answer questions on everything, from the climate where you live, the issues you are having with your hair, your hair type and texture, and your eating habits.

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Okay, now back to our conversation with Michelle.

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Annie: What are we praying in the winter?

Michelle: In the winter, we are saying, God, help us to keep our eye on You. Help us be sensitive to Your voice so that we know when to move and how to move.

Annie: Ah. Like, almost help me have eyes for spring?

Michelle: Help me have eyes for spring and help me rest in the process of what you're doing right now.

Annie: Right. We have this little button called the mind-blown emoji button. [wowie zowie] And it says wowie zowie. Because you're teaching me something I've never thought about. That part of the gift of winter is that spring and summer and fall are a lot of work.

Michelle: Yes, they are.

Annie: And winter is not. So where we can be discouraged that nothing is growing-

Michelle: Exactly.

Annie: ...the Lord's like, Will you just lay down?

Michelle: Yeah.

Annie: "Because I need you to be rested." Interesting.

Michelle: "I need you to be rested. I need you to be strong. I need you to be alert and focused." And all of that comes from the downtime, you know?

Annie: Okay, you hear that winter, friends? You gotta rest. You gotta rest.

Michelle: Rest.

Annie: Wow. So then when I'm going from winter to spring, I don't believe it. I go, "Nah, this is never gonna work. This ain't gonna work out." But the Lord's going, "I said spring." And I'm saying, I know this is never... it's gonna freeze over again.

Michelle: There's always that natural tendency. But you know what? God doesn't actually need your faith, you do.

Annie: You are. [wowie zowie]

Michelle: Listen, He created a whole universe without us agreeing anything or believing anything. Okay.

Annie: That's right.

Michelle: He doesn't need our faith, we do. Faith is not just a substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Faith is the motivator that makes you obey God because you trust Him to meet you on the other side of your obedience.

Annie: Wow. Wow.

Michelle: So faith is really for us. Faith is what makes us obedient so that we get the blessing He promised. It literally positions you to receive what He promised. Now, if you don't believe, let's say, I don't believe that tithing really works. Well, then you never get to see that increase that-

Annie: That's right.

Michelle: You understand? I don't believe that, God won't marry me if I don't sleep with him. So then you end up with just a wrecked heart because sex isn't a promise, it's an experience until it becomes covenant. So we can go on and on with the list of things that we don't believe that rob us of the blessing on the other side of that belief.

Annie: So the faith, so for those of us sitting in spring, if you're gonna risk, risk toward faith, don't risk away from faith.

Michelle: Exactly.

Annie: I don't know if this is God, so I'm going to assume that it is with the risk of looking foolish, or I assume this isn't God and you're gonna miss out on the better levels with the Holy Spirit.

Michelle: Listen, I always say follow where his finger points. And if you're going wrong, he'll yank your chain, all of a sudden, you just won't have the peace, you won't... He'll shut stuff down around you. And you know, sometimes God is very quirky. God is quirky. He's mischievous. He's really out the box, you know.

If you wanna make Him that stodgy old God, you go right ahead. But the God I know is adventurous and does crazy stuff. So you gotta be ready to roll with Him, you know?

Annie: Yes, yes.

Michelle: And then you go, oh, that's why you did there. You'll have the aha moment along the way. But sometimes you're just screaming, wait a minute, where are we going?

Annie: Yeah. You know, a funny story. I think we'll leave this in the show, it's really personal, but I wanna tell you. I got my heart broken two years ago. And I had a conversation with the Lord about a month and a half ago. So, you know, a two-year window. And the conviction from the Lord was, Annie, you've stopped believing

me for crazy things because you got hurt. And I had this moment of like, "Oh, I have been turning down the voice of the Holy Spirit in my head because last time I turned it up, it broke my heart."

So talk to our friends in the spring who are saying, Hey, I've trusted him for spring before and none of the fruits and vegetables came to pass.

Michelle: Well, there's always a first time.

Annie: That's right.

Michelle: You know?

Annie: That's right.

Michelle: We never know when it's gonna happen. When we put a clock on God, we really damage ourselves and it paralyzes us, you know? So, you know, just look at it this way. Every time that you start over is not really a start over because you're starting with experience. Hopefully you learn something from the last disappointment, the last mistake, the last seeming failure that should equip you on how to approach this same chance again.

You know, this time you're gonna do it with caution. This time you're gonna ask a few more questions. This time you're gonna take your time. This time you're gonna pace yourself. Whatever it is that you learned from the last time, you're gonna now get to use that this time and say, thanks God for that last experience. Even though it didn't feel so good at the time, I'm reaping the benefits of it now that we're moving forward.

Annie: One of the things you said in the spring chapter is you said seeds have to be planted three times

Michelle: Mm-hmm.

Annie: Will you talk about that? I thought that was really interesting. Will you talk about that theological truth that something has to happen three times before? What is that?

Michelle: Well, we see that in scripture with Joseph, Moses, you know, Abraham, different people. That there was always this seeming cycle of three times-

Annie: Three times.

Michelle: You know, hoping for and then being disappointed, hoping for and being disappointed, and then finally God breaks through, you know? So there's something about us surrendering it to each part of the Godhead before it comes into fulfillment.

Annie: Wow. Wow, that's really interesting. Because that may be why the Lord had to really push on me a few weeks ago because the Holy Spirit and I weren't in alignment. God and I were fine. Jesus and I were fine. The Holy Spirit and I... I had taken a TV timeout.

Michelle: You know, when it says the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy, it's not just talking about holiness and salvation. It's talking about right alignment.

Annie: Wow.

Michelle: So when we're aligned with God, that peace comes. And peace always ushers in joy that gives us strength. So there's this whole domino effect that happens being in alignment with the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, hearing what they're saying, following where they point, trusting them completely and not leaning to our own understanding. That's the faith walk. You just step out. Like Indiana Jones in the Raiders of the Lost Ark. You're out there for the step to appear.

Annie: That's right. That's right. So for our friends who have got a grip on spring, it's happening and they're going to summer. What's the shift into summer from like, oh man, I haven't been doing any work? I've just been asking God, and now the thing is happening. Yeah. And now it's summer and like everything is loomed.

Michelle: Yeah. Everything is ramped up. And you know what? Really winter and spring trains you for summer because summer can be very heady. You can lose it in summer.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Michelle: You can get distracted. Or you might not be able to take the heat of success, the heat of that relationship when all the pressure is on you now to respond, to produce, to show up for everything. And so summer is a very heady time, it's exciting, but don't lose focus in summer because close around the corner, leaves are going to start falling. Preparing for winter again and another cycle of something in your life...

It might be a different part of your life or it could be the same area of life. Whatever it takes for God to complete what He's doing in you, how He's aligning your character, how He's deepening your integrity, how He's strengthening your faith walk and your relationship with Him so that you're coming to know Him more. Because actually it's all designed for us to know God more and become more like Him. Those are the two biggest goals of all.

Annie: I forgot to ask you this. So I'll back up to this first spring and then for summer. What are we praying in the spring?

Michelle: In the spring, we're saying we're grateful. We're grateful that we see Your handiwork beginning to be manifest. Give us the wisdom to know what to do with the fruit that's before us.

Annie: Wow. Wow. Wow. Right. And then in summer, what are we praying?

Michelle: In the summer, we're saying, God, keep us level. Keep us focused. Keep us in the center.

Annie: Help me.

Michelle: Help me to maintain all that you've now blessed me with. Help me to sustain it and maintain it in excellence in a way that will make you smile and bless others.

Annie: Yeah, that's it, right? Because in some areas of our lives, the reason we go from spring to summer is not just for us. This is all for growth with God, but also this is for others.

Michelle: Yes.

Annie: Okay.

Michelle: As long as we're in kingdom, it's about everyone in the kingdom.

Annie: That's it. That's it. It's about everyone in the kingdom. And the transition to fall, I think in my life, the times I've seen like, okay, we're hustling through the summer, it's hot, it's busy, this is what I was doing. And then things seem to be shifting and it's really beautiful-

Michelle: It's gorgeous.

Annie: ...but I can tell something is ending.

Michelle: Yes.

Annie: How do we acknowledge that shift? How do we start calling the fall fall? That's the hardest one for me to call.

Michelle: Well, you know, there's some stuff to still glean because in fall there's a harvest as well, you know? So it's the difference between harvesting what you can harvest and transitioning into that season of rest and letting go of some things that might've overgrown. I look at it as a tilling your garden season because some stuff, you know, comes out too much and you need to glean back, you know?

God likes to prune His vineyard. And it looks a little ugly, but it bears sweeter, richer, rounder, more robust fruit. So we're making room for things. I love fall. Fall is probably my favorite season.

Annie: Is it?

Michelle: Oh yeah, I think so. Because it's pretty, you know, all the leaves are turning and it's just right for wearing all the cute clothes. You're not being too cold or too hot, you know? So it's a very fashionable season. So for me, it's all about dressing for the season and embracing the season, and being grateful for each season. Because this season is a blessing.

Annie: Can we have different seasons going on in our lives at the same time? Like, can we be in the winter romantically, but in the summer professionally and in the spring physically, in our physical health?

Michelle: Yes, that's very, very possible.

Annie: Do we need to be paying attention to that? Do we need to ask the Lord to get that granular? Like right now in my life, He is saying spring to me. But do I need to go granular and say, well, is that true professionally? Is that true romantically? Is that true where I serve?

Michelle: I don't think that we need to micromanage. It should be more organic. You know, understanding where you are. Okay, this is where I am in that area. And this is the beauty of journaling. You know, get out that pie shape and separate it out, you know, relational, physical, spiritual, and emotional. Make that pie for yourself.

And then evaluate where you are, where you want to be, and what you think needs to happen. Well, God gives us those times. And God, you know, He's good at

downloading divine strategies. He really is. When you say, God, my prayer these days is not so much my goal list, it's what is your goal list for me, God?

Annie: Wow.

Michelle: And how do I fulfill what You have in mind for me in this season? And then I begin to get those creative ideas and urgings inside. I remember one of my mentors said to me, what does the Holy Spirit sound like? He sounds like you. God's gonna use your voice to talk to you. So you'll think, "Something told me..." Well, no, someone told you, but you heard it in your voice. Go with it, follow it. Because there'll always be that conviction if it's not God.

The test monitor for if it's not God is do you have peace about it? If you don't have peace, it might not be that you're wrong, it might just not be the time. So God's saying, stick a pin in that, not now.

Annie: Slow. Go slow. That's the slow one, yeah.

Michelle: Go slow.

Annie: As we're transitioning into that from fall into winter, what are we praying in the fall?

Michelle: Father, show me what to harvest and what to throw away.

Annie: Oh, gosh.

Michelle: Show me what to lift and separate in this season of my life to make room for what You want to do moving forward.

Annie: That is so painful to ask the Lord what to throw away.

Michelle: But it's fun. It's exciting. It's like, you know, girl, every year I clean out my closet and everybody in my house loves that because it's a shopping sale for them. It's like, Ooh, I get that top, you know? So they come and they come with their little grocery bags to haul away the stuff. And you know what's so funny to me? I clean out my closet every year. How does it get full again?

Annie: I know. I know. I mean, it is true in every corner of my life. How did that get full again? It is time to clean it out. I'm just so bad... I mean, one of my like best weaknesses is I'm so bad at letting go of things that I want that God has said, let go.

Michelle: Yeah. Well, I have a rule in my closet. Have you worn this in the last year?

Annie: We can take that right into our spiritual life, huh?

Michelle: Yeah.

Annie: Have you worn this calling? Have you worn this desire? Have you worn any? Have you worn this in the last year?

Michelle: Because in Philippians it says something about knowing what really matters. And I think that when there's so many distractions in life and things that we're pressured to want to have in our lives, but what really matters? I mean, like if you were going to a desert island, you could only take five things that included people, whatever, what would be those five things? What really, really matters? You know, what would take your breath if you didn't have it in your life? It simplifies things quite.

Annie: Yeah. Yeah. It really does, doesn't it?

[00:37:17] <music>

Sponsor: Okay, have y'all listened to our latest episodes of Annie's MiniBFF Podcast yet? We are having the best time getting to read some of our favorite stories from the Gospels, from some of our favorite kids' storybook Bibles. And in case you missed the announcement, you can also watch the episodes on YouTube. Y'all, we are having a great time.

So if the MiniBFFs in your life want to follow along with what we're reading as they listen or watch, [Zaner? 00:37:49] Kids is offering a discount on the storybook Bibles that we're going through. It's the collection that includes the Jesus Storybook Bible, The Tiny Truths Illustrated Bible, and The I Wonder Bible. So just visit faithgateway.com and use the code AD20, like Annie Downs two-zero, for an extra 20% off any of these three products, the Jesus Storybook Bible, the Tiny Truths Illustrated Bible, or the I Wonder Bible. That's faithgateway.com and the code is AD20 for an extra 20% off any of these three products. Make sure you grab the bundle as we have more episodes coming up every Monday.

Annie: Did you hear the fun news? The Let's Read the Gospels Guided Journal comes out March 5th. You can pre-order it right now. We have loved going through the Gospels with you over on Let's Read the Gospels podcast. As we were talking about how special and sacred that has been, my publisher said, this really matters. So we decided to create this beautiful journal that includes a 30-day reading plan that we've never done together on the podcast, so it's brand new to us, too. It also

includes questions for you to process along the way and journaling prompts for you to go through.

We're going to do this book together as a community and on the podcast in April of 2024. So start thinking about who in your life you could invite to go through the Guided Journal and Gospels with you. And go ahead, get your copies of the Let's Read the Gospels Guided Journal today. You know what we say around here. You don't have to be in the Gospels every day to be changed, but every day you are in the Gospels will change you.

So go pre-order your copies of Let's Read the Gospels Guided Journal from Amazon or Target or wherever you love to buy books. This would make a great Easter gift for a basket or a birthday gift or just a little... It's a good Monday gift. So go pre-order your copies right now.

And now back to finish up our conversation with Michelle.

[00:39:39] <music>

Annie: So when you were writing *When Shift Happens*, which I love that title. Everyone who's walked by my desk has been like, "Does that book say when...? It has been such a trip that one of our coworkers said today, she said, "Annie, what's that book say?" I was like, Shift, *When Shift Happens*.

What made you write this now? I mean, you've written a ton of books. You are an actual like multi... you're like a five talent person in the Lord's economy. I mean, you're actress, producer, singer, author. I mean, you're all these things. Why is this the book right now? Why is God saying... I mean, He's saying it to us. Why is He saying seasons to us right now?

Michelle: You know, it is so wild. I was actually working on another book and God said, Sit down and write this right now. I'm gonna give it to you fast. This is the season. And I just said, okay. And I sat down and I wrote it. And the minute I wrote it, the word shift started coming up everywhere. There were billboards with shift on them. I mean, everybody was talking about shifting and I was like, God, you know, you're so hot. You're so ahead of your time. I just love you, you know?

Annie: Yeah. Because it just feels like... I don't know if you've experienced this going into 2024, but Pastor Banning and I were talking about it. There's a lot of anticipation this year. It feels like it's a different turning of the year than we've had in a while.

So for that to be true kind of globally, that's kind of the undercurrent amongst prophetic people and what people of God are feeling, and for God to stack on top of that, you better know what season you're in, just feels like He's up to something. He's up to something.

Michelle: He's up to something. I believe that, well, if you wanna ask me about the new year, I asked God, what's the word for the new year? And the word He gave me was a weird word. He said, unhinged.

Annie: Wow.

Michelle: And I said, "what does that mean, Jesus?" And He said, it's gonna be good and it's gonna be bad. For those who have felt stuck, like they've been trying to get through a door, He's gonna loosen the hinge for some people and they're gonna have great entree. Those that have been rooted and grounded and that have been waiting seemingly for season upon season upon season in that place where they feel that it's winter and do they dare to hope for spring, those people will be moving through those open doors.

Annie: Wow, that's beautiful.

Michelle: Then there are the people that are not rooted and grounded and their stuff is gonna be in the wind. I mean, there's gonna be a lot of stuff flapping. There are going to be a lot of scandals this year. There's going to be a lot of upsets this year, a lot of surprise outcomes this year that people were not expecting that are gonna make them have to shift their mindset and even some of their plans because they didn't see things going that way with life.

So it is a season where you really have to press into the center of God's heart, really be open to hear His voice, and don't be afraid to move on what He says to move on. Some stuff is gonna be very unusual instructions that are not gonna make sense, but they will on the other side of your obedience.

Annie: Listen, to me, those are some of the most fun things where I'm like, hey, let's just... I don't know why, but it could happen when we're driving home from the grocery store where you're like... this literally happened to me last two days ago. I was pointing to Kroger, pointing to Kroger and I kept thinking I should go to Trader Joe's. And I was like, "I don't wanna go to Trader Joe's. There's not a single open spot in the parking lot. I'm gonna have to park next door."

And then I turned in to go to Kroger and then I turned my car and went to Trader Joe's and I was like, Okay, Lord, I don't know why. I don't even know if you care,

but I'm going to practice that I think this is the Holy Spirit and doing something that does not make sense. And it did not make sense. I got some great cookies, but it did not make sense. I could have just as easily gone to Kroger.

But I think those are the things I want to be practicing. So when the ones you're talking about where the Lord's like, I need you to shut that thing down or I need you to build an ark, and I'll go, well, you told me to go to Trader Joe's. So if you trust me with a little thing, I hope I'll be found trustworthy with an ark because I was trustworthy with Trader Joe's.

Michelle: Because you know, poor little Noah, can you imagine?

Annie: Bless him.

Michelle: I mean, how many years did he build that thing? And I know the neighbors were tired of him and he probably became the laughing stock of the neighborhood. Like, "What's going on over there?" "Well, I'm building an ark." "Well, why?" "Because God says it's gonna rain." "But it's never rained before. What is rain?" "I'm sure people came to visit, they were like, "Come and see this dude who's been building this boat for years. He says it's gonna rain. Ah ha ha ha." But the waters came.

That's what we have to really understand about the word of God. It doesn't have to make sense. He doesn't need you to believe it. When it's time, it's gonna happen. We'll go without you. I wanna be in on it.

Annie: Me too. I wanna be in on it. As the friends listening know, I spent a little bit of time last year in New York. And as I was leaving, I felt the Lord kind of opening up this, "Hey, do you wanna do part-time Nashville, part-time New York in '24? And I was like, I don't know how to do that. I don't know how. I don't know how to do that relationally. I don't know how to do that financially. I don't know how to do that with schedule, with work." I mean, this is my office, you can tell.

So clearly the Sunday before Thanksgiving, Miss Michelle, I was sitting in church and the Lord said, "If you will just say yes, I'll handle the details." And I was like, "You know what? This is one of the craziest things I've ever done." But you see... It's my arc. It's my arc. And where I feel like people are laughing behind my back, like, "She is... what is she doing? She is messing up her life." And yet for some reason, it feels like that this... now it doesn't mean it's gonna rain and I'm gonna float away with all the animals. I don't know how the outcome ends up. I just know that I want Him to invite me to that crazy stuff, Miss Michelle. I want Him to.

Michelle: I mean, you know, that's the thing. There is never a dull moment in Christ if you do it right with Him.

Annie: Wow.

Michelle: If you just wanna have a little sideline faith because God has beneficial for you, but you're not beneficial for God, you'll never get to experience the whimsy, the excitement, the adventure, the unexpected surprises.

I mean, Annie, I was minding my own business in Chicago when God told me to move to Ghana, West Africa. And I said, "Satan, I rebuke you."

Annie: Right. "Get behind me."

Michelle: "Get behind me. That couldn't possibly be God. I'm a diva. Don't you know I'm a diva? What am I gonna be doing in Ghana, West Africa?" Now, I enjoyed Ghana for a vacation. But you know what's so funny is now Ghana has become the hotspot for all the movie stars. Who'd have thunk it?

Annie: I know.

Michelle: I've been there for 12 years and it has been... I mean, I flee from there at Christmas now because everybody from Hollywood is there. People are coming in from all over the world. You can't drive anywhere. It's packed with all kinds of music festivals and films. I mean, it's crazy.

Annie: I've been to Ghana. I love it.

Michelle: I love it.

Annie: I had great pizza in Ghana, surprisingly.

Michelle: But who would have thunk it? Who would have thunk that my dreams could come true in Ghana, West Africa? I was doing television here. I won an Emmy for co-hosting a talk show here on TLN. But I wanted to do movies. I wanted to do more. I wanted to have a talk show.

And I'm sitting at home minding my own business and there's a knock on my door, camera crew. They wanna rent my house for a movie. They ended up putting me in the movie. And after that, the whole thing opens up. And now I've been in like six soap operas, movies. I don't even know. I can't even remember how many I've been in anymore. But-

Annie: Wow.

Michelle: And I never auditioned. They literally write parts for me. I mean, who would have thunk it?

Annie: There's never a dull moment.

Michelle: I always loved music. I had my Christian rock band over there. You know, I mean, who would have thunk it? God thunk it. He just didn't let me in on it until I was obedient. Because that was the thing He told me: "Just move. I'm not gonna tell you what I've prepared for you. This is Abraham walk of obedience for you." So I just followed where He pointed and I've never had a day of regret. I can't believe I've been there for 12 years.

Annie: How much time are you split between there and Chicago?

Michelle: Well, lately I've been back and forth more because my mom's still here and my bonus dad is here and they have health issues. So I come back and forth every two to three months to just be a blessing to them. And then I go back home. But, you know, this is the most I've been here in a while. Once again, you go, God, what are you up to?

Annie: What are you up to? I know. I know.

Michelle: What are you doing?

Annie: And I'm telling you this whimsy is what I shut down for two years in my life. And I didn't realize I'd shut it down. I'm so thankful to God. I'm sure he tried to tell me four times between then and now. But I'm so thankful to God.

Michelle:

Annie: He did. And now He's like, okay, you ready to play again? Like, let's go. Let's do this again. I will be disappointed again by something. I'm not protected from disappointment over this, but I'm glad to hear you maintained life in two cities since I'm gonna attempt to do that this year.

Michelle: It's very doable. And I'll just tell you from my own experience, you know, I'll come here. And at one point it was like, I needed to be here for two things. And I said, well, I'm gonna come back and then I'm gonna come back. And my little living

daughter said, no, that's too much. Just stay there. I was like, what am I gonna do in Chicago for a whole month?

Girl, I was busy the whole time I was here. Got two new jobs while I was here. I mean, I got asked to host Sunday School Made Simple for Urban Ministries. I mean, all this stuff happened. "Can you come and pray for the city of Chicago with the mayor?" And I was like, "What the heck? What does that have to do with it?" So if you just go with God. Yeah. Just, you know, God's will, God's bill. He pays for everything. He takes care of it. And you have a ball.

Annie: So our friends listening who are hearing you and going like, "that is the life I want. I do not have it yet," what is the first step towards this life of whimsy with the Holy Spirit?

Michelle: It's really making Him the focus first. For me, it's all about what do you wanna do today, Lord? As opposed to God, this is what I wanna get done today. You see the difference? When I open my hands and say, what's the adventure plan you got for today? Anything can happen. And that doesn't mean that you don't make plans for your life. You should. I mean, those who fail to plan plan to fail.

But leave the room and the flexibility for allowing the Holy Spirit to show up and show off in your life. And make Him your delight because that's part of it. Making Him your delight. When you delight in Him, He delights in you. And He comes up with all kinds of amazing things to tickle your fancy because He knows He's got your heart.

And that is where it starts. It can't be spread over 10 things that you want desperately and passionately in life. He really must be the utmost of focus. He must be your utmost delight. When I say, what couldn't I do without because I wouldn't be able to breathe? It's really my relationship with God. I must have that. I must sense His presence. I must hear His voice. I must sense His will. I must feel His love. These are things I have... That's what makes me breathe. That's my fuel.

Annie: I feel like I could punch through a wall after talking to you. I'm like, Let's go. We're doing this. Ms. Michelle, is there anything we didn't talk about you want to make sure we cover?

Michelle: You know, all I will say is that seasons in your life and shifts and changes in your life are inevitable. How you respond is optional. And how you respond will have everything to do with the outcome of your life. And if you can maintain being grateful. Gratefulness is different from having gratitude. Gratitude is a feeling for a

moment, but gratefulness is being full of gratitude. It's a lifestyle. It's continuous. It's a state of being.

And when you choose to dwell in that space, God just shows up in amazing ways. No matter what the season is, you'll actually find the delight in it, even if you physically feel uncomfortable. And that's the thing. As long as you know it's taking you somewhere.

I've been through many things in my life, Annie. I've lost a loved one that I thought I'd be spending the rest of my life with to gunfire, long before gunfire was popular. I've had financial devastation. I've had physical devastation. I've been fired and rehired from the same job twice. I've lost everything, gotten it all back, a base and a bounding.

And through every season, my attitude was, I can't wait to see what's on the other side of this. I never parked where I was. I kept my car... I kept my idling on with the engine running anticipating getting through it. I knew God wouldn't take me out, but I knew he'd bring me through.

And I think that when we have an attitude of gratefulness, continuously, and living in a state of gratefulness that it anticipates the next and says yes to it, even when it doesn't know what it is yet. Because you know, it's all good if it's God. So it gets back to that relationship with Him, where you've built such a great intimacy that you trust Him no matter what's going on.

I mean, I had a friend when my leg wasn't working and I had that problem with my accident. He said, You just don't have enough faith. I said, well, faith would never be the issue with me because I would never have thought that this would happen to me in the first place. I never anticipated that God would allow. Because He has to allow. And if He allows, it's for the good. It isn't on that bad that I wrote my first book and it changed the course of my life.

So everything that's happened in my... when I lost my boyfriend, I found Christ. If you can just see what's always on the other side of that "oh no moment", you'll go, oh yes.

Annie: That's beautiful. Oh, thank you. Thank you for doing this today. So grateful. What a gift!

[00:55:28] <music>

Outro: You guys, isn't she great? Isn't she brilliant? I mean, [wowie zowie] how many mind-blown emojis do we need to do with these first few episodes of this year? Oh my gosh. Listen, grab a copy of her book, *When Shift Happens*. Go follow her on social media, tell her thank you so much for being on the show today.

Y'all are gonna love this book, especially as we've identified, hopefully, through the pastor Banning episode, with Mike Foster, you've kind of got an idea of what season God might have you in right now. Man, then you get *When Shift Happens* and you go right to that section. So helpful.

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

Remember, it is Monday, so that means a new episode of Annie's MiniBFF podcast dropped today. We're reading stories from the gospels from some of our favorite children's storybook Bibles, so do not miss an episode.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, in Rwanda. Anywhere you need me, that's where you can find me today.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you and I'll do the same. Today what sounds fun to me, I have to be honest, I don't know, but I bet I'm having a great time. Make sure you're keeping up with Carlos and I in Rwanda with Africa New Life this week. We will be back on Thursday, but we are there right now.

So follow me, Annie F. Downs, and Carlos Whitaker, Los Witt, and you can keep up with what we are doing and see how you can also be a part of what Africa New Life is up to.

Y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday with a pod favorite, a founding member of the Hall of Fun, Pastor John Mark Comer. We'll see y'all Thursday.