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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.

Today on the show, one of our favorite people is back. How are we this lucky to have a January full of our favorites? He is such a wise and thoughtful voice who helps us navigate politics. Also, a member of the Hall of Fun. Just like our guest last Thursday, John Mark Comer, Michael is also part of the Hall of Fun.

His new book, *The Spirit of Our Politics*, comes out tomorrow. It is such a good read, you guys. It is so helpful. It is so balanced. I think it's a really perfect resource to help us prepare for election season, especially when even bringing up the word election may cause some different emotions in a lot of us. Stick with me. Don't give up because this is about elections and politics. Stick with us.

Through this new book, Michael is giving us a way to look at political involvement that's rooted in the teachings of Jesus so we can approach conversations with humility and healing instead of bitterness and division.

This is a great episode, and Michael's new book is a great book to order for your pastor, your spiritual leader, the people you are hoping will be voices for you during this election year. Send them this podcast episode so you have a conversation to start with them. Send them a copy of *The Spirit of Our Politics*. What a great book for people to read through right now as all of it is kicking up.

So I'm really thankful for Michael and Melissa, his wife. I'm thankful for their friendship. And I am really happy he's back today. So here's my conversation with Michael Wear.

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Annie: Michael Wear, welcome back to That Sounds Fun.

Michael: Hi, it's so good to be back.

Annie: Total honor. Okay, listen, I gotta tell you, we have a big announcement for you.

Michael: Okay.

Annie: This is technically your sixth episode, which means you are in the Hall of Fun, my friend. Look at you right there.

Michael: Oh, this is amazing.

Annie: Michael Wear, you're in the Hall of Fun.

Michael: I love it.

Annie: Five episodes, it gets you in the Hall of Fun. So far, there are only, three times four is 12, 14 people out of over 800 episodes.

Michael: It's an honor. It's an honor.

Annie: You're one of 14.

Michael: I'm so glad.

Annie: Also, Dave Barnes and Santa Claus are on there, so that may be a double, but you know, either way, either way. Thank you for the way you've invested in our community over the last 10 years. I'm just so, so grateful.

Michael: Well, thank you, Annie. I mean this sincerely, my conversations with you and because of... like through that, my conversations with your listeners, I don't know if the work I'm doing now would be shaped in the same way without the opportunity to be involved in this ongoing conversation with That Sounds Fun about the important kinds of issues and topics we're gonna discuss today that I work on, yeah.

Annie: Well, I'm really, really thankful for you. As we are in our 10th year of the podcast, we're starting the show different and we are saying, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, let's start with what sounds fun to you, Michael Wear. What sounds fun to you right now?

Michael: So, first, I used to be intimidated of making fresh pasta entirely.

Annie: Now you're a pro.

Michael: But then I was intimidated of like filled pasta, like making tortellini, making ravioli. But that is the new frontier, Annie F. Downs.

Annie: Is it?

Michael: So for a few years I tried having lasagna be our Christmas tradition and Melissa was finally like, "I don't like this."

Annie: Oh my gosh. Marriage.

Michael: So I decided this year I was gonna try and do tortellini in broth. And to my surprise, it was like a smashing success. So I'm like, I'm hooked now. So that sounds fun to me. And it's great with our girls. It gives them all kinds of little things that they could do. So, yeah, that's my little hobby right now.

Annie: Have you ravioli-ed yet?

Michael: I have. I've ravioli-ed.

Annie: And do you have the little roly thing that goes along the edges and makes it?

Michael: Yes. And it is the coolest.

Annie: Oh, so cool.

Michael: The coolest device. Nothing better has been invented since.

Annie: Ever. No.

Michael: Ever. There is such a sense of satisfaction doing the little roller. Now, what I also have is the stamp, but I haven't used that yet. But you can do the stamp. But I like the roller.

Annie: And it does all four sides.

Michael: I feel like Wendell Berry when I'm using the roller. It feels very agricultural.

Annie: I was thinking of the main guy in *The Bear*. I feel like when he makes ravioli, he does it-

Michael: Thank you. That would be, I guess, a more direct comparison. But for my Wendell Berry fans out there, they'll go.

Annie: You nailed it. That's exactly right. How much did you and Melissa love *The Bear*? I just feel like that is y'all's kind of show.

Michael: Melissa turns to me during one episode and she's like, "I understand so much about you now." That sort of... people watch it. And even me, even though this is my background, a lot of people report watching it, how much anxiety the show

promotes with all the yelling and cross talk. And Melissa's like, "Michael, I feel like I'm at Thanksgiving with your family." And it's true. I mean, the episode where it was a flashback at his sort of Italian family, which was a heartbreaking episode-

Annie: The Seven Fishes. Unbelievable.

Michael: The Seven Fishes. Exactly right. But yeah. My family wasn't, of course, exactly like that, but my blood pressure rose watching the show. It's a brilliant show.

Annie: It's brilliant.

Michael: And oddly touching, even though it is such an... they don't like sand off the edges. It is a somewhat abrasive, bracing show. But yeah.

Annie: I think because I'm naturally such a loud person and I struggle to be an interrupter, I love it. Because I'm kind of like, Oh, let's go. Just keep talking over each other. That's what I think is great. Have y'all watched *Drops of God*?

Michael: No, no, I don't even know what it is.

Annie: Oh my gosh, it's this sommelier, this big wine guy dies and he leaves his... he has millions and millions of dollars worth of a wine cellar collection, a wine collection. And when he dies he leaves the collection to his daughter, who he is not in relationship anymore, and one of his students at the wine school, and they have to compete for it.

Michael: Okay.

Annie: And it's in French and Japanese because he lives in Japan now.

Michael: Oh, wow.

Annie: So you have to pay attention. It's beautiful. It's beautiful.

Michael: Okay, I'll check it out. I'll check it out for sure.

Annie: Yeah, *Drops of God*. I mean, it's kind of unbelievable. It's beautiful. It's beautiful. I think you'll like it because it's got its Italian feeling.

Michael: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I was at a restaurant just last month and the table next to me ordered one of those bottles where they want to cork it, they get like hot metal and burn off the bottle. And I got to watch it and I felt like I was getting... I felt almost

like, should I chip in for the... because this is a privilege just to see it taking place. It was so cool. And I did not give them any money. I stole that experience.

Annie: One of the things we share so deeply that a lot of our friends listening share is like, give me a good experience with food. Like, let me see... That's why I love *The Bear*, is like watching that one episode, I think it's called Forks maybe, or Spoons, and it's him working at that really fine dining. I mean, I live for a fine dining experience, even if it's... I like the experience as much as I like the food.

Michael: Yes, I don't need to eat.

Annie: That's it. That's it. I don't need to eat.

Michael: My grandmother would watch me eat and wouldn't eat anything at all. And she got so much pleasure out of just seeing someone eat food that she had lovingly prepared. There's just something about it that speaks to me.

Annie: Me too. We're just ready for the feast of the lamb. We're just ready for the feast. The Lord knew. He's gonna let us sit next to each other, you and me and Melissa.

Michael: It's a foretaste.

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

Michael: Literally a foretaste.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. Well, listen, let's jump into *Wear We Are*, y'all's podcast that, full disclosure, is on the That Sounds Fun Network because I was dying for y'all to be on our network. Will you talk about the rhythm of that show, especially, here we are, 2024, an election year that people are... a lot of moderates are dreading. Talk a little bit about *Wear We Are* and what y'all's rhythm is for that show.

Michael: Every weekend we do a long form. That's Melissa and I talking about issues of the day, bringing our experience to bear and also doing it in the context of our marriage and the fact that-

Annie: It's the best.

Michael: ...these are the kinds of conversations that we have when the recorders aren't going. We're also very upfront with the fact that the podcast gives us an opportunity to have a 45-minute conversation together with two toddlers. It's a rarity. So we love

doing that weekend episode. We'll do topical episodes. I also love doing listener Q&A episodes. Our audience is so wonderful and asks such wonderful questions.

Annie: I love those too, Michael. I love your Q&A episodes.

Michael: They're so great and we love that. And then Mondays through Thursdays, we do something called The Morning Five. That is typically five to seven minutes of prayer, scripture, and then going over the top three or four headlines that will shape the day. The episode's usually live at like 3 a.m. so you could start your day.

We know we have a lot of listeners who are parents who listen to it with their kids. It's like a good entry point into praying with your kids as you send them off to school. It's brief. It's a good way to just get a sense of what some of the headline items are. We don't go in-depth. There's not really opinion in it. It's really just headlines.

The main point that I'm trying to send with that and the rhythm I'm hoping to build up and the confidence I'm hoping to build up is we want Christians and we want our listeners to know and feel confident that God is not intimidated by the news of the day. That they could bring their faith to whatever challenges or opportunities the world is facing and that God is not absent from those challenges and opportunities. So that's the podcast. I think we're just about to hit 400 episodes.

Annie: It's unbelievable.

Michael: It's been so much fun partnering with TSF, yeah.

Annie: Well, it is. I will tell everybody, I could not give it a higher endorsement. I listen every day. I mean, I've almost got the prayer at the end memorized because you always do the Lord's Prayer by... not Tim. Is it Tim Keller? No.

Michael: It's Willard.

Annie: Willard, of course. Dallas Willard. I mean, it is so helpful to me because I listen to... the three political shows I listen to every day, or politics adjacent, if they would not like me to say they're political, is The Daily and Daily Wire because those are both coming from two very different points of view. So I like to hear both of them every day. And then y'all. Because y'all are kind of my like, "Now we recenter to what is... let's talk about scripture. Let's hear scripture. Let's pray together."

But these four stories... y'all very rarely give an opinion about these four stories. You just say, hey, you need to know that Utah is voting on something that is

actually gonna matter in every state. So you need to know that's happening today. I'm such a fan. Well, you know. I'm such a fan of you and Melissa, but I am such a fan of what y'all offer.

And this year feels like the year that people need to get in to a political show that is, even though humans make it-

Michael: Grounding.

Annie: That is grounding and as unbiased as I experience it to be unbiased. So I'm very grateful for that.

Michael: Thank you. Thank you. Appreciate that.

Annie: Yeah, it's beautiful. So what if I was like, so thanks for coming, everybody. Go listen to *Wear We Are*. Have a good day, Michael. But the bigger fun is everybody's hearing this today on Monday and tomorrow your new book comes out, *The Spirit of Our Politics*. How do you feel? You haven't released a book in a month of Sundays, Michael Wear.

Michael: I'm really excited about it. It's a book I've wanted to write for a long time. The book applies and draws on the ideas of Dallas Willard.

Annie: I had no idea he was so political until I read his book.

Michael: What I hope the book does is give Christians, pastors, and others a vernacular that is more at home and natural for the church from which then we can enter and talk about and have an exchange with politics. I think one of the reasons why Christians feel so disempowered and embattled and just nervous about our political life is because we've accepted this idea that somehow our language, our resources aren't up to the task.

So if we're gonna talk about politics, then we need to be looking at the polls every day and we need to take on a whole different kind of language when my experience has been that Christianity itself offers tremendous resources that our politics desperately needs. So that's what the book tries to do. It makes the case that spiritual formation into the likeness of Christ is central to the health of our politics.

Annie: I told you this when I was reading it the first time. I was in an airport and I am very good... I mean, I read 10 books a week, five books, five to 10 books a week for podcasting. So I'm very good at reading every page. And I remember I texted you, I was like, "Hey, I'm supposed to read every page. You are making me want to read

every word. This is going so slow. I have a rhythm and you've busted it. You busted my rhythm." Because I wanted to read absolutely every word.

I mean, just look at how much I've marked it up. I mean, just every folded-down pages everywhere. So I love it, Michael, because—and I'd love for you to speak to this—I consider myself pretty moderate. I do have some opinions, but I'm pretty moderate politically. And I am so frustrated at the extremes and how popular the extremes are.

Because both of them say, "If you're a real Christian, comma, then you would never vote for. If you're a real Christian, then you would never... If you're a real Christian, you don't vote for Biden. If you're a real Christian, you don't vote for Trump." And then you're like, that is so unfair. I mean, the spirit of the politics is off to me. Is that true, like in general?

Michael: Yes. The problem is so much of our politics wants us to treat our political opinions as our religion. And it wants us to baptize our political opinions. But for those of us who... frankly, like if you just pay attention, you just realize how fallible even the opinions of political experts are. The people who do this and have committed their lives to political ideas and getting this policy. And then they achieve what they wanted to achieve, and the year after they're going, well, that didn't turn out the way I wanted it to.

So I think there's just a sense we know that we need to be engaged in politics because it affects our communities, it affects the lives of those.... But we need to find a way to be involved without making it our identity and not basing our worth and our value in our political opinions. Obviously I talk about this in the book. It makes it so much easier for politicians and political parties if you do treat them as brands, if you do treat them-

Annie: Oh, interesting.

Michael: ...as not things that you're seeking to influence and vehicles, but like an identity marker itself. We need to push back against that. And as Christians, we have every resource that we need to push back against that.

You know, this year is gonna be an opportunity... Dallas Willard was once counseling a friend who was having a serious challenge. And after the friend shared his challenge with Dallas, Dallas paused, and what he told his friend was, This is going to be a test of your joyful confidence in the Lord. And I feel like 2024 is going to be a test of our joyful confidence in the Lord. But that test is an invitation. And it's an invitation that we could take up if we choose to do so.

[00:20:13] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about one of our amazing partners, [Bite Toothpaste](#). Okay, have y'all seen the Bite Toothpaste bits? They are so cool. It's these dry toothpaste tablets. And they are so simple. You just pop a bit in your mouth, chew it up, start brushing, it will turn to paste just like that. And it's exactly what you're used to, but no plastic tube or mess.

They are made with clean ingredients and are sulfate-free, palm oil-free, and glycerin-free, which is awesome. So many commercial toothpastes have harsh chemicals, artificial flavors and preservatives in them. So Bite is a better way to go. I am all for cleaner options that are also less messy.

Bite also makes plastic-free alternatives for everything on your bathroom sink, like toothpaste, mouthwash, toothbrushes and deodorant, so you can cut out the harsh chemicals and plastic waste. The Bite bits come in sleek refillable glass bottles and jars that look amazing on your counter. They send refills and compostable pouches, so they're better for our bodies and our earth.

Bite is offering our friends 20% off your first order. Go to trybite.com/thatsoundsfun, or use the code THATSOUNDSFUN at checkout to claim this deal. That's trybite.com/thatsoundsfun.

Sponsor: And one more amazing partner I get to tell you about, [ZocDoc](#). Y'all know I've been sorting out some health things lately, which has meant getting input from a few extra experts and needing to schedule more appointments than normal. The whole hunting for a new doctor thing can be so frustrating if you think you found the right one, but then you can't get an appointment with them for months, or if you find one really close to where you live, but they don't take your insurance. Listen, you can skip that headache and ZocDoc will help you find and book the doctor who is right for you and takes your insurance.

ZocDoc is a free app where you can find amazing doctors and book appointments online. We're talking about booking appointments with thousands of top-rated, patient-reviewed doctors and specialists. You can filter specifically for ones who take your insurance, are located near you, and treat almost any condition you're searching for. These docs all have verified reviews from actual, real patients.

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free, then find and book a top-rated doctor today. That's zocdoc.com/thatsoundsfun. Zocdoc.com/that sounds fun.

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](#). You know we love a quiz around here and 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 Michael.

[00:24:01] <music>

Annie: I don't know how on purpose you did this. I assume it was that like, okay, here's *the Spirit of Our Politics* in January. So it kind of gives us six months, five months before it gets real loud. I mean, I think the Republican primary is July.

Michael: Well, yeah. The conventions will be in the summer. The book releases on the date of the New Hampshire primary.

Annie: Oh, well done.

Michael: So tomorrow is the New Hampshire primary.

Annie: Yes, yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm gonna ask you to do this in a couple of categories. So we're getting *Spirit of Our Politics*. We're gonna read it. My encouragement is buy

one for yourself and buy one for your pastor, just to give him or her a resource that says, "I believe this is gonna be hard for you. Here is one resource that says I support you," right?

Michael: Yes, yes.

Annie: How do we prep? This year as we're reading the book, how do we prep in prayer for this political year?

Michael: Oh, I love that question. There are a number of ways. I think in the congregational context, and I know churches have different kinds of services and different opportunities, I would really encourage pastors and churches to think about how to routinize prayer for the election, for the political environment, for civic leaders in their church services. Because here's what happens.

Annie: Oh, interesting. Like starting now, not waiting till November.

Michael: Right, starting now.

Annie: Interesting.

Michael: Because what happens is if you're doing it regularly, then you aren't in the place of doing it reactively. The problem is that if you're not doing it regularly, then something happens in the news, and pastor's inboxes are bombarded with demands. "You must address this. And there are social media campaigns. If your church doesn't speak out about this issue, leave the church."

So then the pastor's in the position of saying, "Well, even generally, if I mention our government, it seems like I'm picking a side." And then things can get really, really tough. It's seen as a statement as opposed to something flowing out of scripture itself. Again, that won't be possible in every context, depending on how services are arranged.

But I'll just tell you, I've been personally blessed in my church through different administrations during prayers, not during the sermon, but during prayer time. We have prayed by name for Donald J. Trump and Joseph Biden. And it's been so freeing. So it says to the community of believers that we are standing in a different place than partisan politics when we think about government. So that's one way to think about it through the congregation.

There's a chapter in my book directed specifically to pastors and parents. I think that was obviously intentional. I think pastors and parents have both been under a

great deal of stress and burden because of our politics. I also think they're in God-ordained offices of dignity that we desperately need if we're going to navigate the season successfully.

So, for parents, I'd be thinking about how you can, over the course of this year, make sure that your children don't get the impression that when you talk about Christian things, that the Christian things are somehow too pure for the political, and when you're talking about political things, that politics isn't so corrupt or so practical that Christianity has nothing to offer there.

So politics offers so many opportunities to point out things about the kingdom of God and about human nature that will actually empower your kids and your own and embolden your kids in your own faith. I think too often we allow these political issues to undermine our confidence. So that would be, so think about how you're praying together as a family.

And then the last thing I'd mention is I have, during a number of presidential election cycles, formed a group, a politically diverse group of people to pray, of friends to pray together privately. We don't make a big to-do about it. But we pray together as a friend group and as people, again, who disagree politically.

And to have that group praying on a regular basis throughout the election cycle, it means that when we're in other conversations about politics, we're not talking about quote-unquote, the other side in a removed way. We're thinking about our friends whom we share common prayers with, not just personal prayers for our family and health, but for the nation. That's been a very powerful thing in my life as well.

Annie: That's really helpful. I'm sitting here thinking I'm doing marketing for you because I'm sitting here being like, you should make a prayer guide that helps with when you purchase the book, you can download a prayer guide because I would print that out and hang it up in my house. Because I also like-

Michael: I'm taking notes.

Annie: Please do. Because I'm like, man, a thing I have not done, Michael... if I did it in the last election cycle, my Dory memory does not remember. But if I pray for the candidates by name, everything changes when you pray for someone. So I can pray for the one I have a lean toward and I can pray for the one I have a lean away and it will change me if I am praying for both of them. So as we see who that ends up being, which is predicted, but I mean, who can know, this world is crazy. But I think, man, if we just prayed for them, both of them by name, or three of them, if we can get RFK in there, let's go. Come on, RFK.

Michael: I was at a church in Oklahoma and before I spoke, the pastor led the church in an exercise. And this was during the 2016 election. And he put up childhood photos. And now looking back, it seems that it should have been obvious what he was doing, but really it felt... we didn't know what it was. And he put up childhood photos of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton on the screen and he asked the members of his congregation to think about, by that point in the race, both of them had become so dehumanized. And he said, think about the prayers that their parents had for these children. And think about...It was a very powerful...

Our politicians, and we talk about politics as if those in elected office or those running for elected office are like soulless machines I've been in settings with, and they have the same insecurities. They have the same sort of aspirations that you and I have. And that doesn't mean they also have responsibilities. They shouldn't be excused for everything.

But if we could just remember that these are human beings with their own personal stories and not give ourselves the permission to dehumanize them or the people who support them in our lives, then I don't mean to make this a very practical thing, but sometimes people wanna hear, well, what's the practical side of that?

And I'll tell you, I think the practical side of it is you'll be much more likely to gain a hearing with people when you treat them as though they have some positive motivations for doing what they're doing, as opposed to immediately condemning everyone who disagrees with you politically. That's not really a conversation opener or an open door to persuasion.

Annie: When I sit here talking to you, I'm like, man, it's true. I like hearing from my friends who believe different than me. And then when we're sitting at Thanksgiving, I'm like, are you insane? I mean, I can feel it in me and I am one of the least confrontational politically people that I have friends with. And I feel it rise up in me and think, how could you think that way?

So be practical with my brain for a minute, Michael, because it is only going to get louder for me and for our friends listening as we see people post on Instagram and Facebook, as we see people... because I have an Instagram friend that I wanna be like, stop doing that. Right now, already, January, I'll be like, Stop it. Stop, that is not nice. What do we do? Do we still stay quiet? Do we reach out to our friends? Is it face-to-face? Do we leave a comment? What do we do?

Michael: It so depends on the relationship you have with that person. I have a chapter in the book on gentleness. And I choose gentleness because to me, even more than

self-control or love, gentleness seems like the thing that you say, and people just say, I don't see how that could play a role in politics at all. If politics seems antithetical to anything, it's gentleness.

I talk in that chapter about this when we engage with people in politics, we need to be careful that we're considering, not just our own self-expression, but what we intend, and more importantly, what God intends to do with and for that person.

Annie: Wow.

Michael: So even a right correction or a right rebuke is undermined if it is not done with the intention, not to condemn that person, but to help that person. If there was one idea, one mental image that people came away from my book with that I think would transform our politics, our own lives, Bonhoeffer in his book, *Life Together*, has this beautiful idea that when Christians meet, we never meet one-on-one. That Jesus always stands in the midst of us and between us.

And he says, because of that, the Christian never seeks to act on his brother or sister, but Jesus mediates our interaction with one another. So we don't need to coerce, we don't need to bully, we don't need to act out of scarcity or feel like if we can't get the person to do what we want, we won't get what we need. No, Jesus provides for us.

Just imagine how our politics would change, imagine how our relationships would change if we carried that idea into political conversations. If when that person who raised that view that we disagree with, if we didn't see it as our responsibility to... if I don't step in to correct them, then they'll be lost. Or what if we turn to Jesus? Jesus, what is your intention for this person and this conversation and this moment?

And sometimes that will lead us to engage, sometimes that will lead us to intervene, and sometimes it will lead us in a different direction. We'll sense a discernment with the Holy Spirit that an intervention at this moment is not going to be serving this person or anyone else around them.

And you get that feeling on social media sometimes too. Like I sense, and I'm not perfect, but sometimes I'll reach out to someone, Hey, that tweet, it didn't seem like you... But there are other times where you just go, oh, this person is going through something. And if I try to sort of intervene at this point, they're not going to receive it as an aid. They're going to receive it as an attack, you know?

Annie: Yeah, that's right. Oh, let me get my button. We have a mind-blown button. [Wowie zowie] It says wowie zowie. Because when I tell you I've never thought about

gentleness being a fruit of the Spirit. I've said it every time I've made the list, I have never thought about asking God to increase my gentleness when it comes to how I view and respond to my friends politically.

I mean, honestly, the thing I want to do is I have a friend I want to call and be like, hey, if you're going to do this, you got to lead with gentleness. Because people often will talk about leading with love. And then they say, but love tells the truth. Love can be hard. With gentleness, there's no excuse. Gentleness is gentleness. And that is a fruit of the Spirit. Don't get us preaching, everybody listening. Don't get me and Michael preaching. That is a fruit of the Spirit.

Michael: The idea of the fruit of the Spirit is not like you pick your favorite one.

Annie: That's right.

Michael: No, this is the character of Christ. This is what we're trying to step into. And it's not, oh, you know, I'm majoring in self-control, but joy, you know, I'm just too... the world is too crazy for joy. No. And this isn't to be a burden on people. We all have different makeups and some things are easier than others. We need to have confidence that the kind of life Jesus is inviting us into isn't a gauntlet or some kind of a tease that Jesus wants it more for us than we want it for ourselves.

If we could actually view Jesus as someone that we could talk to... you know, I'm struggling with anger. Jesus, what would you have me do so that we could work on this anger issue together and I could put it away? Jesus wants to have that conversation with you. It's not a challenge that is put out for you to go deal with yourself or ignore or feel guilty about. No. This is life with Jesus.

[00:41:49] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one more time to share about one of our amazing partners, [Ritual](#). Y'all know getting vitamin D is important. But did you know that 97% of women ages 19 to 50 are not getting enough of it from their diet? Yikes.

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There are over 200 classes to choose from with new ones being added every month. I've tried a cooking class with Gordon Ramsay and it was so much fun. I learned a lot. And these are world-class instructors. So whether you're wanting to master negotiation with Chris Voss or think like a boss with Martha Stewart, learn tennis from Serena Williams, or country music from Reba, you got a ton of options to choose from. I mean, why not learn the thing you've been wanting to try or do a deep dive on something you're really needing help with?

If you got a new dog for Christmas, that dog training class just might be for you. Plus, every new membership comes with a 30-day money-back guarantee, so there's no risk. And right now, our friends will get an additional 15% off an annual membership at [masterclass.com/soundsfun](https://www.masterclass.com/soundsfun). Get 15% off right now at [masterclass.com/soundsfun](https://www.masterclass.com/soundsfun). [Masterclass.com/soundsfun](https://www.masterclass.com/soundsfun).

And now back to finish up our conversation with Michael.

[00:44:21] <music>

Annie: I want you to give us a little bit of hope about this election as well. I'm gonna quote you to you and then give us a little bit of hope. Because you say... I'm spoiling the end of the book, everyone, sorry. "It seems improbable now with our politics as sick as it is, our illusions dispelled and our plans thwarted. The old political answers that once captivated our attention now seem inadequate. There is such disappointment. It can feel like we have reached our end. What future is there for

our politics, for our churches, for us? When will our politics provide us with the right answers? It is there at our end that we find a new beginning."

What is the new beginning that's happened in the last 20 years? I mean, this is not the election of my 20s. These are not the elections of my early 30s. These last three elections have been very different. So if something that we thought was good has ended, what's the hope of the new beginning in this season of politics when it feels like nothing good has begun?

Michael: The new beginning is the opportunity to recognize now what has always been true, which is that our politics is not the answer. It is vital. God moves through history. And Christians, in politics and in other spheres of life, can be a part of partnering with God in advancing his kingdom. But when we, with the illusions that our politics is going to solve all of our problems for us, with that collapsed, I think it's very difficult to find people now who go, Oh yeah, I think we're just a couple elections away from just taking care of this thing.

Annie: I would love to meet that person. I bet they're super fun at parties. That is who I want to be next to at parties.

Michael: Well, we can actually free ourselves and free our politics from the burden of pretending as if, and forcing our politicians to pretend as if they could do what they cannot, and instead just view politics as... Willard describes a kingdom generally as the range of your effective will. So God's kingdom is the range of His effective will. And yet each of us have our own kingdoms, those areas of our life in which basically what we say goes.

Politics is within the range of our effective will. I love thinking about politics in this way, because what it does is it takes us thinking about politics in this way, because what it does is it, to me, it rightly situates it. We have to be involved in politics because as citizens in this country, we already have political influence.

Politics is already within the range of our effective will. And yet, though some political influence is within the range of our effective will, there is so much that happens in our politics, actually the vast, vast majority of it, it's not what we say goes. So what we say goes applies to how we cast our vote. It applies to how we deal with others in political conversations.

But we're actually able to free ourselves from this idea that it all rises and falls with our political opinion. That if I show up at that protest, everything is gonna change. Or if I'm not able to show up at the school board meeting, everything's gonna

collapse. No, we're actually just able to have a rightly sized approach to our role, not just in politics, but in life.

You know, there's been a really healthy theological development in many evangelical churches to separate this idea that we are judged based on outcomes as opposed to faithfulness. And yet politics is this one area where we have not extended that logic. We actually think the outcomes are sort of the thing that we're judged on. But no, God is just asking for us to be faithful with the limited influence we have. So yeah.

Annie: And I think the thing I have to work on in me is believing that the people I don't agree with are doing that too. Do I actually believe that everyone who votes next to me on either side that maybe we all go to the same church, we all show up to vote at the same time, we vote for three different candidates for president? Do I believe that they have been as thoughtful toward their decision as I have? If I'm gonna bring gentleness to this party, then I have to believe that they have been as thoughtful as I have been.

Michael: Right. Or at least that it's possible, you know, without knowing... that it's possible that they have arrived to their conclusions with the level of thoughtfulness and faithfulness that you have. I think there are certainly some circumstances where once you get to know someone, you know, there are just determinations made, wow, the path that they took to get where they went is not a good one. Like I don't wanna walk down that path.

But yes, there are people voting diametrically opposed to you who are doing so for, you know, equally faithful reasons that you are. And we need to be able to provide other believers with that benefit of the doubt until proven otherwise. You know?

Annie: Yeah, that's right. That's beautiful, Michael. I can't wait for people to get... I mean, then go ahead and order it today and it'll be there tomorrow. So that's exactly... I mean, what a gift to start our year this way. I cannot control anyone. I can barely control myself.

But I really hope that this year... and we may be getting you back in here to do something with us, but I really hope this year that we can, as a community of That Sounds Fun, be really thoughtful politically and land in different places. I'm not asking everybody to vote like me. But we can land wherever. But just believing like, I bet that other person who's friends with Annie too is being thoughtful about their decision. And we have landed in different places, but we're all gonna be feasting with the lamb. We're all gonna be eating that ravioli. That heavenly ravioli.

If we all believe in Jesus, that is the backbone. That is the rest of its ribs. The rest of its ribs.

Michael: And I'll be holding the pasta cutter.

Annie: That's it. Then he's putting you to work. He's putting you to work.

Michael: That's right.

Annie: Is there anything we didn't say you want to make sure that we say?

Michael: Oh, I don't think so. I think we covered the right ground. Yeah.

Annie: Will you tell people a little bit how to keep up with you, but also how to keep up with the Center for Christianity and Public Life? Because I think that's a really helpful resource now too.

Michael: Thank you. Yeah, I should have. Yeah, I should have.

Annie: No, no, no. I was gonna ask you.

Michael: I'm the founder and president of an organization called The Center for Christianity & Public Life. It is a new nonprofit. We just hit a year. In many ways, the book will introduce people to the work we do and why we do it, the spirit with which we do it. And so people can learn more about us at ccpubliclife.org.

We have wonderful staff, a wonderful board. We hold an annual summit that's just been... we held the first in November and it was just an incredible experience. And would love for folks who feel like... I believe that Christianity has to have something to offer the public, but I'm just not quite sure of the words. I'm not quite sure of what that is. Would love for you to plug in our organization and learn more. And folks could do that by visiting the website and reaching out.

Annie: It's a very helpful Instagram follow as well for everyone. We'll make sure they can find it really easily. Okay, I got two more questions for you, then we'll be done. Number one, is RFK gonna be on the ballot? Do you think he's got it? Is any third-party person ever going to actually get on a nationwide ballot?

Michael: The efforts to keep third-party candidates off the ballot are so intense.

Annie: Yeah, lots of money. Lots of money put toward it.

Michael: I don't know. I'd kind of be surprised if RFK wasn't on the ballot in California. I mean, you kind of want to assume someone's putting this much effort, their homestead, you know. But the barriers to entry are very high.

Annie: So high.

Michael: So that's actually why I don't really have a strong prediction on it. You know, between RFK, Cornel West, Jill Stein, you know, we'll see how it shakes out. We could have more, you know, known candidates on the ballot than we've had in a long time but the barriers to entry are pretty, pretty high.

Annie: It's really fascinating. I've never experienced... I think part of this is thanks to the internet because there are so many independent journalists now who are doing real trustworthy work, but are not connected to a broadcast network. And they are showing us more than the two.

Michael: Right, yes.

Annie: So I have found it very interesting to watch that this year, uniquely.

Michael: Yeah, me too. Me too. I think so.

Annie: If you don't mind, would you finish this out by praying Dallas Willard's prayer that y'all do on Wear We Are? I think that'd be a beautiful way to end this episode.

Michael: Yeah, I'd love to. This is Dallas Willard's rendition of the Lord's Prayer. I believe it comes from the divine conspiracy. I've just found it to be incredibly helpful in my own personal life, and then we've made it sort of a mainstay on the podcast. So yeah, let's do that.

Dear Father always near us, may your name be treasured and loved, may your rule be completed in us-may your will be done here on earth in just the way it is done in heaven. Give us today the things we need today, and forgive us our sins and impositions on you as we are forgiving all who in any way offend us. Please don't put us through trials, but deliver us from everything bad. Because you are the one in charge, and you have all the power, and the glory too is all yours-forever-which is just the way we want it!

Now, Annie, one thing that Dallas says as a sort of postscript to this, is he says, you know, a translation, you know, into this sort of language "amen" is not sort of perfect. But he goes, you know, what I will sometimes do that I really think captures the spirit of it is Dallas would end this prayer with whoopee. We haven't

done that on the podcast yet, but sometimes I'll end with a whoopee. And that puts a kick to the start of my day. So whoopee, yeah.

Annie: Whoopee. Thank you, Michael.

Michael: Thank you. Thank you, Annie. Good to be with you.

[00:57:04] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, isn't he the best? He's so smart. The gentleness thing, the gentleness thing, why have I never thought of that? [Wowie zowie] 100% wowie zowie. Make sure you grab a copy of *The Spirit of Our Politics*. It comes out tomorrow. But get one for yourself. Get one for your pastor, your spiritual leader, your spouse, your friends. This is a great book to help us walk into this year together. And that is the goal, is we walk in and we walk out together.

And make sure you are subscribed to the Wear We Are podcast. Truly one of my daily must-listens. It is so good. It is so good. And that prayer, right? Oh, that prayer. Oh, I just loved it. Absolutely loved it. Make sure you're following Michael on social media. Tell him thanks so much for being on the show again.

If you have any questions for me from this episode, just drop them in the Q&A box if you're listening on Spotify, or you can DM them to us @thatsoundsfunpodcast, or leave a comment along with the post from this episode, whatever's easiest for you. We'll try to answer all those questions over there.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, back home in Nashville. All the places you may need me, that is how you can find me.

And I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home. Do something that sounds fun to you, and I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me, you know it's sleeping in my own bed. After a couple of weeks in Rwanda, I am glad to be home.

Y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday with our first of monthly experiences with our good buddy, Eddie Kaufholz. We're gonna do a year in review to celebrate our 10th anniversary of That Sounds Fun. So coming on Thursday, Eddie and I are gonna review for you 2014, the year the podcast started. And we'll see y'all then.