

[00:00:00] <music>

**Annie:** Hi friends, welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. Happy 10 years of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host, Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you today.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I wanna tell you about one of our incredible sponsors. This show is sponsored by [BetterHelp](#). We all know that relationships of any kind aren't easy, and sometimes the best ones happen when both people put in the work to make them great.

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**Intro:** Today on the show, I get to talk with my friend, Pastor Terry Crist. Terry is the co-lead pastor of City of Grace in Phoenix alongside his wife, Judith. I first met Terry and Judith this past summer when we were all part of a group that traveled to Greece to see the work of A21. It was incredible. I love that organization and I loved getting to know them. I knew right away that I wanted Terry to come on here and teach us and lead us.

Today we talk about his latest book, *Loving Samaritans*, and what it looks like to truly love each other well, even when we don't see eye to eye, which is a lot, right? It's interesting. We talked about this with Michael Wear too, but in a year where politics and campaigns will own the headlines and our differences are on display more often than not, we get to decide how we're going to handle it. Are we going to let our differences tear us apart or can we love each other through it?

This is another great episode to set us up well for what is ahead this year. So here is my conversation with Pastor Terry Crist.

[00:02:45] <music>

**Annie:** Okay, Terry Crist, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

**Terry:** Thank you. It's great to be in the fun house, I presume.

**Annie:** I know. Now, listen, a lot of our friends know your last name because we have a lot of friends in the public space with that last name, but you are not related to the other Crist that we all know publicly.

**Terry:** I'm not. I thought you were going with the fact that it's really close to Christ.

**Annie:** That's who I meant. That's who I meant, Jesus.

**Terry:** I'm missing the H and I'm not related to the other Crist. So it's a very small clan of Terry Crist.

**Annie:** I love it. Okay, so this year for our 10th year, we are starting the show by asking, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you. What do y'all do for fun?

**Terry:** What do we do for fun? Well, we watch trashy TV.

**Annie:** Oh, I know this.

**Terry:** We watch trashy TV.

**Annie:** What are you watching right now?

**Terry:** You know, when we first met, I probably should quickly get this in. We studied the Bible for fun. And we still study the Bible. When I first met Judith, the only way that she would ever communicate a conversation with me is if I would study the book of Revelation with her.

**Annie:** Uh-uh.

**Terry:** Yeah.

**Annie:** And y'all were like teenagers, right?

**Terry:** I was 17 and she was a little older. So what kind of a basis for a relationship does that create? You've got dreams and visions and dragons and fire and blood.

Somewhere along the line, we said, hey, we're going to study the book of Revelation seriously and watch trash TV for fun.

**Annie:** There we go.

**Terry:** So the better question is what haven't we watched?

**Annie:** I mean, the one that I know you and I've talked about is *Below Deck*.

**Terry:** Yes.

**Annie:** I love *Below Deck*. And *Drops of God*.

**Annie:** Oh, *Drops of God*. I think I may have watched it because you told me to, right?

**Terry:** I think.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Terry:** Did you like it?

**Annie:** I loved it.

**Terry:** Yes, I'm the one who encouraged it.

**Annie:** To me, that's not trash TV. That was such a beautiful, interesting story.

**Terry:** I grew up without a television. I grew up in a very fundamentalist pastor's home where we had no TV. We read, which was one virtuous thing that came out of it. So I don't know the difference between quality television programming. All I know is that I have no tolerance for cheesy Christian television. Apart from that, I'll give it a shot.

**Annie:** Yeah, that's right. I grew up similar. Our parents... we didn't turn the TV on from Sunday night after we got home from youth group until we could watch the Cosbys on Thursday night. And other than that, unless dad was watching Andy Griffith when he got home from work, that was the only time the TV turned on during the week. So I did a lot of reading as well. But man, when I got to college and suddenly I could watch MTV 24-7, I had a little bit of a binge for a minute.

**Terry:** It makes you curious about what is the other stuff that's being played and I don't have access to? Kind of like the law. When the law says don't do it, everything within you is awakened and inspired to do it.

**Annie:** Yeah, that's right. That's right. So trash TV, that's great. That's a good answer. Now, let me tell you the two movies that I've loved so much this summer since I saw you. *Meg* and *Meg 2*, about the sharks, the huge sharks. Have you watched either of these?

**Terry:** I have not seen either of those.

**Annie:** I think you and Judith would love. They are so silly.

**Terry:** Megalodon, is that where we're going?

**Annie:** Yes, yes. The movies would lead you to believe that they exist, they're just deeper than we know.

**Terry:** Okay.

**Annie:** The ocean. There's just so much we don't know.

**Terry:** It's terrifying. It's a terrifying place. And we were in the water on the sea together recently.

**Annie:** That's exactly right. That was one of the best water experiences I had because there were no fish.

**Terry:** That's right.

**Annie:** I loved it out in Greece. Okay, so that's where we met, you and I and your wife, Judith, in Greece.

**Terry:** Just recently.

**Annie:** I know.

**Terry:** With Nick and Chris Caine at A21.

**Annie:** It was the best.

**Terry:** It was outstanding.

**Annie:** We could not have picked a better group of us to be with together, because everybody just liked each other. We just all got along.

**Terry:** It was amazing. There were highs and lows in the sense that we were engaged in some really serious stuff, heavy topic of human trafficking, and yet in the midst of that, we found a way to have a lot of fun.

**Annie:** A lot of fun. Eat really good, swim a lot. It was so great. Now, y'all's church has been involved with A21 for a long time, right?

**Terry:** We have. I want to say it was within a year or two of the actual beginning.

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Terry:** So we've known Nick and Christine even longer than that, of course. But early on, they shared the vision and we resonated with the mission and with the sense that we together could make a difference in the world. And so we began supporting them and have continued to do so for, I want to say, 15 years or thereabouts.

**Annie:** That is wild. Was that your first time seeing their work? Or no, y'all have been before.

**Terry:** No, that was the first time to Greece. So we've certainly seen the office in other locations and have interacted with the staff, but that was our first trip with them to Greece.

**Annie:** It was amazing, right, to watch, like, it all started right there. A21, I walked away from that trip going like, that's the real deal. That is absolutely the real deal. I mean, we got to be there right after they had rescued 50 women or something, right? I mean, it was a crazy amount of women rescued right before we got there.

**Terry:** Which made it so real. Yeah.

**Annie:** That plus the bus rides through the brothels section. That also made it very real to me. Where I was like, Wow, we are in it. We are right here. I loved it.

So can we just talk about for just a second, so many of our friends listening, me included, have had experiences in the last year where the church was a painful experience. I was saying to someone yesterday, I was explaining 22 and I said, and the thing happened at church that I think has scarred me forever. I mean, before I even heard myself, it was out of my mouth and I was like, Huh. Yeah, I actually think that's probably true. I think that has marked me in a way.

You suffered really publicly and privately. Why do you stick with it? Why didn't you go, You know what? I'll do a marketing job for a while. Why stick with sharing

the gospel and leading a church when you've had such publicly painful experiences?

**Terry:** I believe deeply in the church. I believe it's God's dream. I believe it's Jesus' bride. I believe it is not just the ideal, but it's the actual. And despite the fact that our story is what it is, it's a story of triumph and loss, a story of victory and failure. It's not unlike our own personal stories.

If I look at my own individual life, the highs and the lows and what's gone right and what's gone wrong, I sort of broaden the lens out and look at the church. Well, the church is simply the community of God's people. And I am committed to the church. I'm committed to seeing the church become better. I'm committed to seeing the church live up to God's dream for us, to be the light of the world, to be a city of refuge, to be a place where people can come and be helped and not harmed.

I think it's going to take enough of us staying engaged around that dream in order for it to become a reality. So there is no other consideration on any level within my soul. It is all about the church.

**Annie:** And also, the thing I have dealt with is there's a thing that happened at church and I'm committed to the church, but also people I deeply loved caused the pain.

**Terry:** True.

**Annie:** So there's a friendship that I've lost that I don't know how to recover yet, that we're trying, but we're not. How do we do that? So many of our friends listening are leading in one way or another at their church and the other pastor at the church took money, or the other pastor at the church had an affair, the other pastor at the church did this. And they're like, well, I've got a public problem and a private problem. How have you maneuvered that in your soul? Is that counseling?

**Terry:** It is. It is consistent counseling. It is a mindfulness. I think it's easy for us to other other people and to see ourselves as being radically different from that. And we would never do the same thing as that. When I think about most pastors that we might categorize as having been abusive or having made profound mistakes that have harmed other people, I'm mindful of the fact that nobody goes into ministry to hurt other people.

Now, there may be the exception out there. There may be that television program that models that person or features that person. But I think even in the extreme cases of abuse, more often than not, it's something that happens along the way. It's an unhealed wound. It's an unresolved issue. It's some internal deficit within them.

And when I look at it through that lens, it gives me compassion, not just for the oppressed, but for the oppressor. And this is a big part of what I'm trying to communicate these days in *Loving Samaritans*, because I think it's easy for our hearts to go toward the victim. That's just sort of natural. And they should. And the victim should be first.

But I think at some level, we've got to recognize that we have been loved by a Savior who loves victims and victimizers. He loves the trafficked and those who traffic them. He loves people who are enslaved and those who enslave them. And that's hard.

**Annie:** Yeah, it's hard.

**Terry:** That's where it's really, really difficult. Depending on where you are on the political spectrum, you might find it easier to love progressives or to love the ultra-magic crowd. But I think we've got to do the hard and holy work of saying everybody is worthy of love.

Now, that doesn't mean everyone has unfettered access into our lives. We have to protect our souls. We have to live within boundaries and set boundaries so that others are unable to repeatedly harm us, and in some cases, harm others. But that doesn't give us a hall pass from loving people and doing that hard work within ourselves.

**Annie:** It has been really hard. It's been really hard for me to sort that out, to sit with the people that are wounded by a situation and then personally be dealing with my woundedness in the situation and that there's a relationship here that may be worth repairing to some degree. That is a lot for a person. Does that feel like a lot for you? You've got people that were very close to you that you have to rebuild relationship at some point? I don't know.

**Terry:** Work your way through the Old Testament and look at characters like Manasseh, cruel, despotic, demonic, sacrificed children, and delighted in the pain and suffering of others. And yet in prison, in a place of loneliness and isolation, he reaches out and touches the face of God.

And if God can do something like that for a wicked, despotic, demonic king, there's no one too far gone. I have to cling to that. My soul needs to know and love a Savior whose grace is so infinite and abundant that the worst of us even have hope, the worst of us even have the possibility of redemption. And maybe that's because I know who I am inside apart from this loving and gracious Savior.

I was in an interview the other day and their little custom in the interview was to ask which Bible character you identify with. So I picked a sanitized one, Daniel in Babylon. But I wanted to say-

**Annie:** That is a good answer for you.

**Terry:** Yeah. And there's some connection there. I relate to Daniel. But the other, and the one I probably should have chosen was Jacob. You know, we love the Daniel who has the prayer life and serves through the administrations and is diplomatic and navigates and is a beautiful representation of the kingdom of God. And then we have Jacob, you know, whose life is conflicted. And when he gets it right, it's great. But more often than not, he doesn't.

So I don't want to clean up the stories of those that I've loved and served because none of these stories are simple. And if we reduce them down to saying that was all bad, that season with that church under that leader was all bad. And maybe it is for some people, but more often than not, it's a mixture. So if I can look back and say, okay, you know, that sucked. Can we say sucked?

**Annie:** Yeah, totally.

**Terry:** That was painful, that hurt, but you know, at the same time, God did some extraordinary things in that season. I'm coming away from that more in love with Jesus. I'm coming away with that, with some lifelong lessons that I'm going to be able to share. It's not all bad. It's not all good. It is a mixture of all of the above.

**Annie:** Is there a practice to sorting out which Bible character you're the most like? Is that helpful? I've never thought about that before.

**Terry:** I don't know.

**Annie:** That's so interesting.

**Terry:** Yeah, it's telling.

**Annie:** Daniel, the reason I think everything you said about Daniel seems so true to how you and Judith live, you write about this in *Loving Samaritans*. Will you talk about y'all moving into the apartment?

**Terry:** Sure.

**Annie:** I think that is such an interesting... I mean, that's a Daniel move. So will you talk about that decision? I mean, because y'all's house was, if I may say so, massive,



with lots of heads of deer and all the hunting you've done, and you gave that up to live in the city.

**Terry:** Yes. Our house was in a gated community where everyone around us was translucent white, as translucent as we are. That's sort of the character of that neighborhood. We made a move from the suburbs into the urban core for a number of reasons. I've spent the past 20 years serving four governors in Arizona. Served two Democrat governors and two Republican governors.

**Annie:** That's amazing. What does that mean? What does that look like?

**Terry:** Well, I've led task forces. I'm currently seated on a council for child safety and family well-being. I serve in different roles and on different committees. So there's the Daniel part right there. But what we saw happening within our own lives was as God was kind to us and as our church began to grow, it's just so easy to assign people to do things. And there's nothing wrong with that because as we grow and as resources are multiplied, together we can be more effective.

**Annie:** That's what I have to do here too. I can't do everything.

**Terry:** Can't do it all. You need to get people around you that are smarter than you and more equipped in areas that you may be lacking in and be strategic in your leadership. But I think there's also the risk inherent within that of outsourcing your compassion.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Terry:** So you finally move into the role where you're no longer a pastor, but you're a CEO. Nothing wrong with being a CEO. I'm called to be a pastor. So we reached this point in time where we said, Look, we have always been about living on mission, loving people in very real and tangible, up close and personal ways. And now we're living in this house where we drive into this neighborhood, into our garage, get out, do our thing, back into the car, in the garage, out the neighborhood, through the gates, and we don't know our neighbors. And we're not really living on mission. We have a mission, but we're not living in the day-to-day of that mission.

So we said, what if we sold it all, and what if we bought a unit in a high-rise building, downtown Phoenix? And so we did. And that's where we live, in a high-rise building, surrounded by people, people unlike us, every sort of individual you might imagine, every sort of smell emanating down the hall of the building.

It has been an extraordinary joy for us because we've got our shirt sleeves rolled back up. Our hands are in the dirt helping people rebuild their lives and build their futures and come to know the grace and kindness of Jesus.

**Annie:** Because all three of y'all's boys are grown and married kids, so y'all are empty nesters. Is this an advantage of empty nesting that you can go, Okay, now everybody's out, let's get me and Judith back on mission outside of our home because you have to turn inward when you're raising kids. Or can a family do this if they have three little ones at home?

**Terry:** I think it's important to make that distinction that you can live missionally in the suburbs. We can live missionally anywhere. It's an orientation of the heart. It's an awareness of what God is doing in a community. It's seeking to join Him in that work, walking through your day-to-day with your eyes wide open and your heart wide open.

And I don't think that relates to geography. I don't think that's restricted to a certain part of a city. In our case, we had just done it so long that we had sort of gone blind to the environment and needed something bracing, needed a wake-up call in a gritty environment that puts a demand on us day in and day out. I'm not sure if we'll always live there. I'm not sure if the mission... we follow a leader who is notoriously unpredictable and we're willing to go wherever and do whatever He assigns us to do, but it's this season for us and we're enjoying it.

**Annie:** Will you tell the story... When we were in Greece you were talking about the elevator being broken.

**Terry:** Yes.

**Annie:** I mean, and y'all have to walk up how many... to 15?

**Terry:** 15. We live on the 14th floor. We park one floor beneath grade, so 15 stories. So what's ironic is that I opened the book talking about my experiences in the elevator and then one elevator went down, then the subsequent elevator went down, both were down, and we began making the journey up 15 flights. And you really get to know your neighbors when you're walking up and down 15 flights of stairs.

**Annie:** Oh, I bet.

**Terry:** I've learned creative words I didn't know existed in that stairwell. Now one elevator is fixed and we're crowded in there together and it's inconvenient. I was late for a city hall meeting the other night. I'd been called to receive an anti-trafficking

proclamation in light of a big event that's coming up. I was 15 minutes late because I was stuck in my own stinking elevator.

**Annie:** Oh no.

**Terry:** And I couldn't get off my elevator. But that's the reality of life. It's doing something for me because I'm the kind of guy that can just walk through his day with his head down, eyes glazed over, not really dialed into the people around me. And it is forcing a mindfulness that hopefully will make me a better human being at the end of the day.

**Annie:** That's what New York is doing for me too.

**Terry:** Is it?

**Annie:** Because everything's hard. A friend of mine says, the things that are good in your life, New York makes better; the things that are hard, New York makes harder. And that is, I mean, like getting groceries or my place I'm staying is only four flights up but without an elevator. So it's just like, okay, if I have to take the garbage out, I'm making a choice to go all the way down.

And you run into neighbors all the time. There's nowhere you go that there aren't people. And most times in New York, I'm not going anywhere that you can't see someone who is in need. And it is shaping me like you're talking about y'all's apartment shaping you. The life I've built here does not require that.

**Terry:** Sure. And there's something about those consistent interactions that allow you to see people in all of their conditions. And when we see them in their conditions and we're with them. This is about presence. This is about witness. It's something I'm really passionate about because I think oftentimes our witness is compromised by our lack of witness.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Terry:** But being with people gives us an opportunity. We all know, you know, John 1:14 in The Message, Eugene Peterson made it beautiful and compelling for all of us. And the word became flesh and moved into the neighborhood. But sometimes we just drive through the neighborhood. We domicile in the neighborhood but we don't really live in the neighborhood. We sleep in the neighborhood but we don't do life in the neighborhood.

There's something about being with people in their joys and in their sorrows that over time creates curiosity on their behalf. And that curiosity leads to conversations

about who you are, why you are the way you are, and who is at the center of your story. And of course, we know that's Jesus. So the gospel-centered conversations that I have on a daily basis, just because I'm in proximity to people, are beautiful.

[00:24:11] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Thrive Causemetics](#). Okay, when I find makeup that I love, I cannot help but tell you about it because I seriously know that you're going to love it too. And you already know what I'm going to say. I love my mascara. You love my mascara.

Whether you like a fresh-faced, full glam, or somewhere in between, you have probably seen Thrive Causemetics' viral tubing mascara on the internet. You know, the one with the turquoise tube that is all over your socials.

Their Liquid Lash Extensions mascara is my favorite. I talk about it all the time, but it's because it truly makes my lashes longer and fuller without smudging all over the place. You guys, you guys always compliment me on my eyelashes. Thank you very much. And I'm telling you, it is because of Thrive Causemetics.

It's also super easy to remove their mascara. It slides right off with warm water and a washcloth. No soap required, but it doesn't come off when you cry, which is helpful. The ingredients in it are super nourishing. So they support longer, stronger, and healthier-looking lashes over time. And their flake-free tubing formula dramatically lengthens and defines your lashes from root to tip.

Thrive Causemetics is certified 100% vegan and cruelty-free and their products are made with clean skin-loving ingredients. And with thousands of five-star reviews, it is no wonder the turquoise tubes of makeup you see all over Instagram are trending.

Here's what I love as well. For every product that we purchase, Thrive Causemetics donates products and funds to help communities thrive. Thrive Causemetics is luxury beauty that gives back. Right now you can get an exclusive 20% off your first order at [thrivecausemetics.com/TSF](https://thrivecausemetics.com/TSF). That's [thrivecausemetics.com/TSF](https://thrivecausemetics.com/TSF) for 20% off your first order.

That link and pretty much every other link that you could ever hope for are in the show notes below or we'll send them to you every Friday in the AFD Week in Review. So you can sign up for that below as well.

**Sponsor:** Most of you have probably heard me sing the praises of [Prose](#) and their truly custom made to order hair care. But switching to a custom routine was one of the best things I have done for my hair. And the results just keep getting better.

Prose has given over 1 million consultations with their in-depth hair quiz, which is how I got started because you know we love a quiz. You just answer questions on everything from the climate where you live to the issues you're having with your hair, your hair type and texture, your eating habits. And then they analyze 85 personal factors and handpick clean ingredients that get you closer to your hair goals with every single wash.

Their made-to-order hair care is the absolute best. They've got a "review and refine" tool that you can use if any of your answers change along the way. And if you're not 100% positive that Prose is the best hair care you've tried, they will take the products back, no questions asked. Custom-made-to-order hair care from Prose has your name all over it.

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**Sponsor:** So I'm traveling between Nashville and New York a lot this year, as you know, but I'm trying to keep both places stocked with the basic grocery essentials that I always wanna have on hand. And [Thrive Market](#) for real is my go-to for getting all of my favorite things.

Plus I just can't beat the convenience of picking out everything online than my order showing up on my doorstep. I do my best to keep healthy options around. So I really love that Thrive Market carries brands with the highest quality ingredients and their online filtering system allows me to sort based on what I'm looking for. Whether I'm searching for organic snacks or low sugar alternatives or gluten-free options, I can curate my own shopping experience really easily.

They also have a deals page to look through and as a Thrive Market member, I save money on every single grocery order, like an average of 30% each time, you guys. Plus when you join Thrive Market, you're also helping a family in need with their one-for-one membership matching program, which I love.

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Okay, now back to our conversation with Terry.

[00:28:34] <music>

**Annie:** Okay, so but I'm thinking about our friends who married, they both work, they've got two kids, they get home from work at six, pick the kids up from after school, they make... I mean, there is no time. They wanna go home and rest. They don't wanna go home and go take soup to the neighbor and ask them if they know Jesus.

So talk to me about why in 2024, why does it matter that we pay attention to the witness, even though our lives are very busy and we are already working, we already aren't home a ton right now? Why does it matter to prioritize this?

**Terry:** It matters for a number of reasons. First of all, it matters for our own soul. If we're not living fully human, fully engaged as empathic, compassionate, caring individuals, then we've diminished a part of our essential identity, we're not living out our full story, and there's a part of our soul that's atrophy, there's a part of our soul that isn't fully alive.

We all know what it feels like when we do what you've described and we take a meal to a neighbor or we take a little care packet, throw it in the car and give it to someone who is without space and place on the street. It brings a part of us alive. I believe we can live in the consistent awakening, the consistent aliveness.

It also matters because the gospel flows along relational lines. Could it be in our generation that maybe people aren't hearing the gospel because ours is a show-and-tell gospel? And the telling is hard when the showing is absent. So it's engaging with people.

And I get it. I get it. I pastor a large, flourishing church and people have big, full, and flourishing lives. I don't know that every person has to go home and get the kids back in the car seats and go out. But just think about our ordinary days. Think about the moment we have with the barista at a coffee counter, the opportunity to ask the second question, and the third question, the opportunity to listen deeply.

I think the gospel presents opportunities to us every single day that we can take advantage of even if we go home and hibernate from 6 p.m. till 8 a.m. the following morning.

**Annie:** So why did you title your book, *Loving Samaritans*, instead of *Loving Neighbors*?

**Terry:** *Loving Samaritans*. I've long been fascinated with the story that Jesus shows us in the gospel of John of his interaction with a woman at the well.

**Annie:** I love her too. That's one of the reasons I loved this book. I just loved it.

**Terry:** It is the longest recorded conversation that we have of Jesus with any person in the scriptures.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Terry:** That tells us something because we know He talked to a lot of people, but he sat with this woman at a well and not just a well, but at a place of great pain. When you think about Jacob's well in this place called Shechem, Sychar as it's often called, it has this history of both God affirming His promise and fulfilling His work there and also the brokenness of humanity.

So this well is a picture of the best of God and the worst of us. And it's here that Jesus sits with a woman. By all accounts, He shouldn't have been there.

**Annie:** I love that when the disciples get back, they're like, "We didn't even ask what He was doing."

**Terry:** We didn't even ask.

**Annie:** But they knew He shouldn't have been doing it, but they didn't ask.

**Terry:** And this one conversation embodies the most provocative topics of the day. I mean, topics that we discuss daily over coffees and tea and conversations. You know, there's a nod to cultural identity and to ethnicity, race, you might say. He talks about sexuality. There's a reference to that when He asked about her husband. Politics is embedded in the conversation.

So He's having all of these conversations that we were told to never have with polite society. And yet He's doing it in a way that doesn't rebuff her but instead invites her deeper and deeper into the conversation. He makes like two statements and she unloads. I mean, she just completely comes out with all of these questions, these thoughts. She's interacting with Him. And clearly it's because she sensed a safety about Him. She sensed that there was something more to him.

But I love that because I think it's a model for cultural engagement. And it sets this lifelong love affair between Jesus and the Samaritans so that when we finally get to the place in the story where that she receives living water from Him, she goes back

to her village, brings all of her villagers, He interacts with them, He goes back to their village, and then He spends two days in this little village.

We don't know what happened during those two days. I often wonder if that's where He heard the story of the good Samaritan or conceived of it. What we do know is that from this point forward, He loves the Samaritans. They represent the other.

**Annie:** That's cool, Terry.

**Terry:** At one point, His disciples want to call down fire on a Samaritan village and He rebukes them. And He carries this right to the point of the ascension. His final words as He's ascending into heaven is to the followers, to the disciples, "I want you to go to Jerusalem, Judea. And by the way, don't forget my friends, the Samaritans."

I think they represent the "other" in the world and not just "others" because we're all surrounded by others. Our family members are others. People like us are others. But the "other" is a completely different issue. The "other" is the individual unlike us, the individual that we struggle to connect with and make room for in our lives, let alone in our own hearts.

And so Jesus is showing us the picture of what it means to love across dividing lines. And He shows us a couple of things that are really important to me. Number one, all people are worthy of respect. All people are worthy of respect.

**Annie:** That is easy to say, that is hard to do.

**Terry:** It is.

**Annie:** Because I can respect people publicly on the internet, but that doesn't mean my heart is respecting them.

**Terry:** But they're worthy.

**Annie:** But they're worthy of it, right.

**Terry:** All people are worthy of being heard. All people are worthy of hearing the truth without insult. And this is a big one in our day. Because we, we being many people, find it difficult to decouple truth and tone.

**Annie:** Oh, that was my favorite sentence of your whole book. You said, love holds the tension between grace and truth.



**Terry:** It does. It does. And then we see the importance of loving people unconditionally. And this is a big issue. I think there's so much ground for us to take as people of faith. We're called to live in that tension of grace and truth. And I often imagine it as a rubber band that's stretched really, really tight and we want to give on one end, we want to yield on the grace end of that tension or on the truth end of that tension.

But we have to maintain that tension and communicate God's love and grace in a tone that's helpful. And I think a lot of people reject the gospel not because of the offense inherent within the gospel, but because of the tone in which we present the gospel.

**Annie:** I think that's right. Here's the problem, Terry, is so many of our friends, faith friends, when they say truth and grace, there are camps about what is true. Because then they go, well, I have to tell you this because I have to tell you what is true. And the person listening goes, Well, I don't think that's true. I think this big political thing everyone's voting on, I think Christians cannot vote yes on that. And the other person goes, what is true is Christians must vote yes on that. What do we do? What do we do with the truth when there's confusion about what is true?

**Terry:** I think one thing we need to do is we need to reassess why is it that we have made everything about winning and winning in this moment.

**Annie:** Say that, right.

**Terry:** So Jesus is not about winning. And when He is about winning, He's winning using another means. He's winning through laying down His life. He's winning through servanthood and humility and gentleness and kindness. But for us, whether it's in politics or in personal conversations with people, the world is divided between winners and losers. And we've all been told that you win by out-talking people, by domineering people, by just breaking them down. And if you, at any point, feel that you're not accomplishing that, then you label them, you define them, you dehumanize them, you demonize them, and you move on.

So I think we need to reframe what our role is as an ambassador of the kingdom of God. Jesus didn't dump all truth on anyone. I just think how easy it would have been for Jesus just to have dumped it all on the woman at the well or the woman caught in the act of adultery. There's another one. He just writes in the dirt, says, "Go your way, sin no more."

We feel the need to crowd into every conversation, every bit of truth. And if we end up in a conversation where someone disagrees with us, we feel that we've got to win that conversation. We've got to conquer. And I think it's because, in so many ways, we are looking at other models for life and leadership.

**Annie:** Oh, yeah. I love when you talk, like, we look at society instead of-

**Terry:** Politics. We look at business. We're not looking at the nature of Jesus as to the way life is to be lived.

**Annie:** When Michael Wear was on a couple of weeks ago, and he just had a book release about politics, and one of the things he talks about so much in the book is the fruit of gentleness. That resonates throughout your book of, like, do you look gentle or not? Because that is actually a fruit that should go along with sharing truth. But there are some of our friends listening who are Enneagram eights who would say to us, I have to say what I believe is true, and it is not going to feel gentle, but it is right.

**Terry:** And I would say you don't have to say what is true unless you are led by the Spirit., I'm holding that with some weight here, at that moment in time to say it. And even then, if it's led by the Spirit, it's going to express the fruit of the Spirit. And I think that's a big thing because, again, we have to recognize the timelessness of truth and the timeliness of truth.

So all truth is timeless, but all truth is not relevant in this moment, at this spot in this conversation. And even then, once I've established what is eternal, what is timeless, and what is timely and important for this moment, then how do I communicate that?

Paul talked about one group of Christians who were preaching Christ in contention. Right spirit, wrong message. And when you think about it, that's mind-blowing to me that you could preach Jesus through the wrong spirit. You can weaponize the Son of God? You can weaponize the Lamb? And yet people were doing that. They were weaponizing Jesus for their own purposes. And Paul said, that's not the way.

So we have to reevaluate that. You know, there is a time to speak the truth, but we need to be sensitive. The ground is not always ready to receive the seed.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Terry:** And if we're trying to plant seeds when it's not seed planting time, we're scattering-

**Annie:** That's right. Wrong season.

**Terry:** ...wasting seed, and hardening hearts.

**Annie:** Wasting seed and hardening hearts. That's exactly right.

**Terry:** So what if we keep showing up? What if we just build friendships? What if we just said, okay, I hear where you're coming from, and maybe we'll talk about that someday, but let's just ride the elevator together. Let's walk the block together. Let's take our kids to soccer practice together. Let's go shopping, or let's go try out a new restaurant, and we'll get to that other stuff at some point in time. What could happen if we allowed our faith to flow along the lines of relationships?

**Annie:** My inclination is not to be too much truth. My inclination for sure is to go, "Oh, we don't talk about that. No, we're gonna be fine. We'll just be friends forever. It's fine." We don't need to talk about how we're voting. We don't need to talk about how we believe about this. If it's a rubber band, I am very good at releasing the tension of truth in hopes that grace feels more loving.

**Terry:** Sure.

**Annie:** And that's not true either. But that's what I want to be true. Where there are friends of ours listening who are going like, no, you have to release the grace and tighten the truth, right? So talk to us-

**Terry:** I would say knowing you... if I could just quickly interject-

**Annie:** Yeah, of course.

**Terry:** Knowing you as little as I do, I don't think the tendency to let up the tension on the truth side is because of any lack of clarity on the truth side. I think it's because you've seen so many people that have been hurt by truth as a weapon, not by truth as a means of liberation. And so you're feeling that. I think we can have courageous conversations that aren't contentious.

**Annie:** Yes. That's what I want you to teach me. Toughen me up.

**Terry:** It's up to us to take the contention out of them.

**Annie:** Ah, okay.

**Terry:** It's not up to the world to take the hostility out of these things. It's up to us. You know, we as ambassadors of the kingdom of God have embraced a gospel in which Jesus disarmed principality and powers and took the hostility out of those things. So we've got to be the ones who set the tone for these conversations.

If we're letting the world set the tone for the conversation, we might as well let the world set the tone for the truth because they're going to get at this wrong with the

tone as they do with the truth. But we have to set both, both the truth and the tone. And of course, we see this in Jesus. So we're not without a model. We're not without a clear picture of how to do this.

**Annie:** This is why I can't wait for people to read it. It released yesterday, so people can read it. You lean so much on just the practice of pursuing humility. Yeah. And that is true, no matter what your inclination is, whether it's easier to talk about truth or easier to talk about grace, we can either show up from a prideful seat or a humble seat.

[00:43:22] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [KiwiCo](#). This one is for my MiniBFFs. Okay, parents, if you haven't tried KiwiCo crates for your kids, you are seriously missing out on some really fun, hands-on projects that they will love, especially because we're all stuck inside a little bit more in the winter.

KiwiCo delivers super fun learning for kids of all ages. Each month, my MiniBFFs receive crates packed with engaging hands-on activities that are designed to introduce them to science, technology, and art concepts. There's always something new for kids to discover, like engineering robots or learning about the science of ice cream. Let's go.

There's nine monthly programs to choose from. So KiwiCo really does have something for kids of all ages, ranging from infants and preschoolers to teens and beyond. This would make a great gift idea too. It is so much more than gifting a box of toys. It's the gift of discovery as they get to build and learn about a new topic and walk away proud of what they've made.

That moment of pride and accomplishment at the end of a KiwiCo project sparks creative confidence. So they want to keep playing and trying new things. Plus it can be hard to find creative ways to keep kids engaged and challenged and off their screens. Me too.

So these projects are fun and stress-free too. So you can enjoy quality time with your kids while tackling projects together. The day the KiwiCo box arrives will be your kid's favorite day of the month. Kids can discover everything from the science of magic to engineering a domino machine and more. There's no commitment so you can pause or cancel anytime.

Redefine learning with play. Explore projects that build confidence and problem-solving skills with KiwiCo. Get 50% off your first month on any crate line

at [kiwico.com](http://kiwico.com) with the promo code, THATSOUNDSFUN. That's 50% off your first month at kiwico.com, promo code, THATSOUNDSFUN.

**Annie:** 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, Zonderkidz 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](http://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](http://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.

**Sponsor:** Okay, what's something new you're trying this year or something you want to keep learning? Maybe you're wanting to pick up tennis again, or you've been researching how to start your own garden. [Masterclass](https://www.masterclass.com/) is such an easy way to help you try something you've always wanted to do. You can seriously find classes on everything from tennis to gardening to starting a business.

Masterclass is your opportunity to learn from the best. There are over 200 classes to choose from and they're adding new ones every month. I've tried a cooking class with Gordon Ramsey that I loved, and these are world-class instructors. So whether you want to learn from Sarah Blakely, the founder of Spanx, I can't wait to take her classes, or get writing tips from James Patterson, learn tennis from Serena Williams, or work on songwriting with John Legend, you got so many options to choose from.

I mean, private classes from these kind of leaders would cost thousands of dollars and maybe not even be an option, but with a Masterclass annual membership, it's just \$10 a month. Plus, every new membership comes with a 30-day money-back guarantee, so there is 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 Pastor Terry.

[00:47:33] <music>

**Annie:** I'm thinking about June, which is Pride Month. That is such a divisive month in the faith space because there are people who go, yes, all in, and people who go, no, absolutely not. And it is hard to have conversations in June around LGBTQ and Pride Month.

So what's the posture we go into those conversations? Is it asking questions? Is it tell me your story? Is it let me tell you where I'm coming from? What's the posture? That's one example. In an election year, we could have a lot of examples. But when I think about where I feel the most tension, it's June.

**Terry:** So a couple of things. I want to come to the humility thing and then pick back up on the question. I think maybe I lean so strongly into humility because it doesn't come naturally to me on any level. I'm the truth guy. That's where I hold the tension.

I remember being a young pastor and having an older female minister sit down with me one day in a conversation and say to me, "Terry, you want to be in ministry. You're clearly called to be in ministry. You come from generations of ministry, but you don't really love people. You love preaching, you love leading, but you don't love people." And I hated hearing that, but I knew it was true.

And she said, "Here's what I want to challenge you to do. I want you to pray daily. Lord, give me a love for people." I was like, okay, I've got all these prayers now that I pray daily. Lord, give me wisdom. Lord, increase the anointing on my life. Lord, help me to love people. And I still pray those other prayers, but as I continue to pray the prayer, Lord, help me to love people, it comes a lot more naturally now at this point in my life.

And it has nothing to do with age. It has everything to do with the fact that I lean into that. And whatever we lean into, if we lean into hostility, we become angry and hostile. If we lean into humility, we find the way forward in humility. If we lean into people, we find the way of love.

When it comes to this conversation that often centers in June, I get it. And I think everything you just listed there about how do we have that conversation is probably true depending on who you're talking with.

One of the things I seek to do in the book is to change the stereotypical image that people of faith, I even hate putting it that way, but fundamentalists would put on the

LGBTQIA plus community. Right? Because we, being a fundamentalist, again, this is so hard, we draw these lines here. And I don't feel this way at all, but I'm going to use this as a point of distinction.

We reduce people down to a monolith. And we say, All gay people are this way. All gay people are that way. I grew up in that kind of a culture where that if you were gay, you weren't gay and celibate, you were gay and engaged in practicing homosexual sex, and you were promiscuous. And you were dangerous around children. And... So we end up with this whole profile of what a gay individual looks like.

Then, of course, as things evolved in America, some may not use that word, but as things changed in America, suddenly we have same-sex marriages. They're in our communities. They're in our churches. We're dedicating their children. Even those of us who've reevaluated the scripture and are still clear on what we once saw as being the truth have learned that we can't reduce everyone down to a monolith.

**Annie:** Well, that's true for you and me, too. I don't want to just be Annie is single, and therefore she's this, this, this, this, this. I don't want that either.

**Terry:** And Terry, white, straight, married guy.

**Annie:** Right, right, totally.

**Terry:** Exactly. So I think we owe people the respect of seeing them individually. Now, when it comes to that conversation... and the reason I'm going this approach is because in having the conversation, you've got all sorts of people that would fit within Pride Month. You have those who just want to live and let live, those who are activists, those who seek the reindoctrination of our families and children.

So as a parent, I look at this whole spectrum, this whole continuum, and I realize that when it starts out here, and gets over here, and here would be the place where this would be the place where someone is gay, gay by orientation, if not in practice by orientation. And they may be, as we know, Christians who are living celibate. Out here would be someone who is actively engaged and seeking to reindoctrinate children.

I think somewhere along that journey, as a parent, I'm going to say, okay, here's a line that you don't have that right to reindoctrinate my children or other children. But I find that those people are few and far in between. I think this is messy.

And even in this moment, I can't give you clear soundbites. I just simply say, we have to sit in the conversation because the conversation's not going away. And if

the church doesn't get clearer on how to connect with people and love people and make room for people to belong, even though they may not believe or may not even behave as we choose to behave out of our belief in the scripture, we still have to see people fundamentally as bearers of the image of God and as our fellow neighbors.

So what if we stopped seeing people as the other and just started seeing them as our neighbors? Having conversations with them. I wonder sometimes-

**Annie:** It would be less scary, I think.

**Terry:** So the people who are entrenched in fear, who have seen a soundbite of this is what LGBTQTIA people think, do, believe, and behave, I wonder how many of them have just sat down and had a conversation with someone?

**Annie:** True about how we vote. Have we sat down with someone who voted totally opposite of us or someone who doesn't believe any of the gifts of the Spirit are still alive? Or someone who believes that children should absolutely not be in public school, but our kids are all in public school? Like, when's the last time I sat down with someone who had deeply disagreed with me on something, but we both claimed Christ?

**Terry:** Absolutely.

**Annie:** Right.

**Terry:** And if you live in this small confine of people who only believe like you on every single issue, it's only a matter of time before you're alone in that circle. I'm not advocating for a reworking of the scriptures. I'm advocating for the church improving the tone in which we communicate that. I think we need to get back in the long-term game, the long game.

We've somehow over the last few years just got in the short game, and it's all about conquering, it's all about winning, it's all about prevailing. But what have we said in the long game? I think there are a lot of people that will come to know the Savior over the length of a relationship more than coming to know the Savior over the strength of a relationship.

**Annie:** Oh, that's it, Terry.

**Terry:** That's what I think we need to engage in.

**Annie:** Length of the relationship over the strength of the relationship, meaning this one conversation where you say everything because you got to get it all out. Instead,



live with people who don't agree with you or who are living a different lifestyle, or who are voting differently. And you can do that by moving into a building.

**Terry:** And I come back to this idea here just to get this back into the conversation three or four minutes ago. Has our approach worked?

**Annie:** Right.

**Terry:** Has it worked?

**Annie:** No, sir, it has not.

**Terry:** Pointed fingers and furrowed brows and angry disposition and our turn-or-burn placards, has it worked? We're in a generation defined by nuns and duns, young people who say, I want nothing to do with your church and therefore I want nothing to do with your Jesus because of the way I perceive your church or those who say I am done with your church and your Jesus.

I feel like if we stay entrenched in these culture wars, if we stay combative, if we stay angry and militant, we'll look back one day and realize that we contributed to so many losses. When God's grace is sufficient for the world, I believe this is the finest hour of the church. And if we can get back to loving people, showing kindness and compassion and empathy and living out the way of Jesus, which all isn't a to-do list, it comes out of the formation, comes out of our interior lives.

Maybe we're living angry because we're unformed in our interior world. Maybe we're living judgmental because we've not been loved ourself into a place of wholeness. Maybe we're trying to give away what we don't have. So maybe we start this whole journey by coming back and letting Jesus love us. And then out of the overflow of that love, we begin to love people. And I think a loving church is the answer to the world. I don't think we can go wrong with that. And I think that in taking that position and allowing that to flow from us, we can see our generation breached.

**Annie:** People get stressed when we're a loving church. They feel like we are not drawing enough lines. They feel like we're not doing enough truth if we're a loving church. But I am so with you, Terry. You can tell me this isn't right. What I think, I could just cry saying this to you, is I want every single person to think, Annie would like me. Annie would be my friend. Annie, even if she knew this, she'd be my friend.

**Terry:** I love that. And I think that they feel that because of who Annie is surrendered to, who has formed and is forming Annie. You know, none of this is an exercise in humanitarianism. At the end of the day, our best efforts to be perfect human beings

doesn't work. It's not working on the far left. It's not working on the far right. It's all broken.

There is one who isn't broken. He was broken, His body was broken, His blood was shed, His life poured out so that we could be formed as His people, redeemed from sin and shame, redeemed from guilt, redeemed from a life separated from God, and then go on to be the ongoing incarnation of Christ. He's the head, we are the body connected in separately to Him. We are called to live out His life. What if we get back to living out the life of Christ in us?

**Annie:** That's what you've outlined so beautifully for us in *Loving Samaritans*. So I cannot wait for people to get to read this. I mean, this is like the weekend reading for us this weekend. Like, get the book today, read it this weekend. Talk to your neighbors. Make soup for somebody.

**Terry:** I shared with our church a little bit about the book because as is the case, you would know, in any book, you have a few stories you preached and a few points that you've shared. And then when you sit down to write, so much more comes into it. So even our church hasn't heard probably 75%, 80% of this book.

I told them on Sunday, I said, You're not going to like every bit of it. I'm sharing from my point of view. And what I often endeavor to do as a pastor when I stand in the pulpit is to keep my opinions in as much as is possible out of that. And we see that with Paul. There's an occasion where Paul says, This I tell you by the Lord, and this I tell you by permission.

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

**Terry:** So, you know, he distinguished between the two. So I told the church, I said, there's some of that that I'm telling you by the Lord in here, but I've got some positions. I've got some opinions. I've got some stories. I share some of my own pain and some of the difficult days that we walk through as a global church.

I talk about some of my feelings and experiences when I was invited to the White House to meet with President Trump and the response that that triggered. And standing in the streets and marching as a chaplain in the BLM rallies and the response that triggered. So I said, You're not gonna love every part of this. But at the end of the day—and I said just what you've said—I want you to know that I love you. My opinions aren't perfect, my positions aren't perfect, but I love you deeply.

And if we can connect on the basis of that, we have the basis to learn some things about each other, but even more to learn some things about God.

**Annie:** Yeah, that's it. That's who I want to be. I'm trying. Will you tell us the church that you pastor so our friends can look it up online, they can come if they're in Phoenix. Y'all have multiple campuses, right?

**Terry:** Yes, we do. It is called City of Grace and we have a campus in Mesa, Arizona in the greater Phoenix area. We have a cathedral downtown Phoenix, which is a very, very cool place to be. It is sort of the microcosm of all these things that we're discussing here. And then we have a location in Las Vegas, Nevada.

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Terry:** So I love being in those locations there.

**Annie:** I didn't know that. Y'all have a campus there as well.

**Terry:** Launched in 2019. That campus is actually led by my youngest son and his wife, who are two of the wisest, most loving, kind and compassionate young leaders that I've ever had the privilege of working with. So City of Grace.

**Annie:** City of Grace. Okay, we'll look it up. And the book is *Loving Samaritans*. Terry, thank you for making time for this.

**Terry:** Thank you.

**Annie:** I love learning from you. You're one of my favorite pastors to learn from. So thank you for your generous teaching. I'm really grateful. I'm grateful for people to get to read *Loving Samaritans*.

**Terry:** It's awesome to be in the fun house today.

**Annie:** I know, you're here.

**Terry:** Come on.

**Annie:** We did it. That was fun for me.

**[01:01:39] <music>**

**Outro:** Y'all, isn't he the best? I know. Listen, I'm so grateful that he was willing to go there with us to really talk through some of the parts of culture and life and relationships that can seem really challenging for all of us. No matter where you are

on topics of politics and gender and race, I mean, it is going to be messy. It is going to be hard.

It is hard to have the full conversation in 50 minutes on a podcast. But my hope is that this starts a conversation for you, that you send this episode to a neighbor or a friend or your small group and go, hey, can we talk about this? Like, how are we going to do this with gentleness?

Continue the conversation. Let Pastor Terry and I's conversation be the start to what you're actually going to continue in your own life. Whether you agree or disagree with us, at least let it be what starts a conversation of what gentleness looks like when we're trying to live with truth and grace.

Make sure you get your copy of *Loving Samaritans*, another great resource that you can have that you center your conversations around. It'd be a great book club book for early in this year. Go follow Pastor Terry on social media, tell him thank you so much for being on the show. You are so generous to our guests with your words. I really appreciate that.

If you have any questions from this episode, you can drop them in the Q&A box on Spotify, if that is where you're listening, or just send them to us on Instagram. Just DM them @thatsoundsfunpodcast, and we'll do our best to answer those over there.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that's how you can find me. I'm not really on Twitter, but you know, Instagram and Facebook for suresies.

I think that's it for me today. Go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you, and I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me is getting on a plane and heading to New York. So I get to be up there for a couple of weeks, starting today. So I will see you in New York.

Y'all have a great weekend. We'll see you back here on Monday with my dear friend, Laney Rene. See y'all then.