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Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun in our Let's Read the Gospels series. Oh my gosh, I'm loving this so much. I'm your host Annie F. Dowds. I'm so glad to be with you here today.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors, [AG1](#). Now, you know I'm traveling back and forth between New York and Nashville a lot these days, so trying to keep up with a bunch of vitamins and minerals to take with me is one of the tougher things. But I still care when I'm putting it in my body.

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Intro: Today, we are diving into the book of Matthew with Dr. Scot McKnight. This is the last of the gospel books we'll be covering before we talk about the book of Acts. And I'm already sad that we're getting close to the end of this series. I've just loved it. I've loved it. Y'all have loved it. We have loved it.

Now, Dr. Scot McKnight, y'all know and love him. He's already been on the show. He was on Episode 494. We have that linked in the show notes. He's a professor of New Testament and a recognized authority on the New Testament, particularly the book of Matthew. He's also an expert in early Christianity and the historical Jesus. He is just brilliant, you guys. The nuggets he knows about the book of Matthew just absolutely sent me over the edge. It was the most fun.

Before we jump into the conversation, though, I want to do what I've been able to do with you for every book, is take my Quest Study Bible and read you the little introduction that they write for every book, because I feel like it gives us a real

good basis for going into this conversation. So here is the questions and answers about the book of Matthew.

Why read this book? Have you ever read a sequel to a novel without having read the original story? Trying to pick up the storyline without a transition can be difficult. The Gospel of Matthew serves as such a transition. It connects the story of the Old Testament with the story of the New Testament, helping us understand how the life and teaching of Jesus was built upon what had come before.

Who wrote this book? Matthew, a tax collector who became one of Christ's twelve disciples.

Why was it written? To offer irrefutable proof that the long-awaited Jewish Messiah had come to inaugurate God's kingdom on earth.

When and to whom was it written? Matthew possibly wrote this book in the AD 70s, though some believe he may have written it in the 50s or 60s, primarily for Jewish readers. He offered a persuasive account of the good news of Jesus, citing Old Testament evidence that supported the claims believers had been making about Jesus.

What to look for in Matthew? Notice Matthew's frequent use of the Old Testament and how his Jewish bias flavors his descriptions. For example, he uses son of David instead of Son of God as in the Gospel of John. One of Matthew's major themes is the kingdom of heaven. Note Jesus' teachings about what it means to be a citizen of that kingdom.

Oh, I cannot wait for y'all to hear this conversation about the Book of Matthew with one of the actual experts on Matthew, Dr. Scot McKnight.

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Annie: Dr. Scot McKnight, welcome back to That Sounds Fun. I'm so glad you're here.

Dr. McKnight: Well, Annie, good to be with you again.

Annie: Thank you.

Annie: What a treat. You cannot know how excited I've been. We're recording this on a Wednesday, and all day long I've been like... but the last part of my day is getting to talk to Dr. Scot about the Book of Matthew. So I am so thrilled.

Dr. McKnight: The last part of my day, I get to talk to you.

Annie: Okay, let me lead with we have a couple of questions that got submitted by our audience. One of them is specifically for you. I'm not even sure we said you were coming on, but the question is, after reading the Gospels every month, you know, we've been reading it once a month for the last year since January of '23. They said, if someone wants to go deeper, which of the four Gospels, or would there be another book that you would say, okay, every person should go really deep reading into this book? Is there a book of the Bible that you're like, run there? Is it one of the gospels? Is it something else?

Dr. McKnight: Well, Annie, for me, yes, it is the gospels. I am a lover of Matthew, Mark, and Luke called the synoptic gospels. They're alike. It's been basically my 40 years of teaching and Bible study has been devoted to studying the gospels. So, yes, to go deeper... I think it's just staring longer at one of the Gospels. I think all four Gospels will take you where you need to go.

No one will ever exhaust all that's in these Gospels. Matthew and Luke are longer than Mark and John, so maybe they are the ones to go deeper in because you can go longer with them. Luke has the advantage of having the book of Acts that follows it, so there are connections there that become very special. But I love the Gospel of Matthew. I did my doctoral work on the Gospel of Matthew. I've taught the Gospel of Matthew dozens of times, and I just love to be there.

Annie: I mean, when we were planning this out, I was like, Oh, what I would give if we got to talk to Dr. Scot about the book of Matthew. So I'm so thrilled. Start us off by telling us about Matthew as a person. What do we know about him? Is there extra text? Like, is he in other texts besides the Gospels? What do we know about him?

Dr. McKnight: We don't know about him in any other text. We have just a little bit. I can say there's a basic story of his conversion or his decision to follow Jesus that is found in Matthew 9. It has a parallel in Mark where he's called Levi.

Annie: Yeah, why is that?

Dr. McKnight: No one really knows. I think we can make up stuff. Maybe he had two names. But we don't know. But Matthew was a tax collector or a toll booth collector. I always think it's fun that the fact that he got up and followed Jesus allowed everybody else to get into Capernaum. Free. It's like somebody at Disneyland or Disney World deciding to abandon the pay booth you get to walk in.

But I think one of the secrets to Matthew is to understand that he used the gospel of Mark and in many ways copied it. But we learn a lot about his personality. Now, here's some things that most people will not see. Matthew can be broken into

basically 17 verses from the beginning to the end. About every 17 verses or so is probably a page of his papyrus.

Annie: Wow.

Dr. McKnight: And so about every 17 verses, we have a little bit of a new section or at least a transition. And I at one time did way too much work on this. I had a lot of fun doing this. I was counting letters, basically, all the way through.

Of course, once you get to the passion narrative, it's a little different. But I think that he gets sometimes so fascinated by getting it all done on one page that at the end of the passage, he starts to abbreviate a little bit and make things shorter.

The other thing is, Matthew has—my wife's a therapist, a psychologist—I think he has a little bit of OCD in him. He loves things to be tidy. Mark is the opposite. Luke is more sophisticated, but Matthew likes things to be tidy. If Mark says kingdom of God, Matthew says kingdom of heaven. And he does this all but one time. And I think, what happened to you, Matthew? You never vary from this. Our Father's in heavens. He's got to add in the heavens.

So there's a lot of things that show Matthew's personality. But beyond that, I think we're sort of guessing, and even my suggestion that he has a little bit of OCD in him is probably saying more than we really ought to say, but let's have a little bit of fun with this. Matthew's more sophisticated than Mark, but not as sophisticated as Luke.

Annie: Mark is believed to be one of the first texts, right? So you think Matthew really read Mark and then kind of went like, Okay, well, that was true. And then here's the other detail that I saw right there, too." Is that kind of how it went, you think?

Dr. McKnight: Yes, I think Matthew had the gospel of Mark at hand when he wrote his gospel, and at times is copying. There is a passage in Mark 2 in Matthew 8 where Matthew copies an incomplete sentence from Mark.

Annie: What?

Dr. McKnight: That's a pretty good clue. And there are passages where he just goes on and on. One of the great scholars of the previous generation said that Matthew basically had creativity in using Mark in chapters one through 14. He kind of redesigned how Mark did things.

But at chapter 14, this guy said, fatigue set in. And now Matthew is just going to walk hand in hand with Mark all the way to the end of the gospel. And there's

something about that. This shows this is not plagiarism, this is not copying in that sense. But Mark was seen as connected to the apostle Peter, and Matthew believed... and Matthew's one of the apostles, you know. He believed that that was an authoritative text, and so he used it in a way that respected it, but edited it.

That's also very Jewish to take a text and edit it a little bit, because these texts, for the early Christians, were alive and well, and it was... If you respected Mark, that didn't mean you had to copy everything he said. You could adapt and adjust, and you could extemporaneously speak a little bit more, thinking of your audience. That's how I think Matthew used the Gospel of Mark.

Annie: Who is Matthew's audience? Who was he particularly writing to?

Dr. McKnight: It's pretty standard to say that it was to a Jewish audience. But it's a Jewish audience that read Greek. So it's pretty difficult to know. I'm skeptical of our ability to know answers with any kind of high probability that would allow us to use it when we interpret it.

The audience would be followers of Jesus who understood the Jewish world, probably Jewish, Jewish followers of Jesus, but they read Greek. This is not written in Hebrew or Aramaic, although some people think it was and it's a translation. That's harder to prove. So I would say followers of Jesus who clearly loved their Bibles because they wanted to hear these statements that Matthew made that connected Jesus to the Old Testament.

Annie: What made you pick Matthew of all the books? I mean, I don't know a lot of people, you probably do because this is more your field, but I don't know a lot of people who say I've given my entire professional career to studying this one thing. I mean, I know you're a New Testament scholar, but you've really put your life toward the book of Matthew. Why was that the one you picked?

Dr. McKnight: This is really a good question, Annie. 745, 1976, I took my first class in seminary with a professor named Walter Liefeld. And he began to lecture on the Synoptic Gospels. It was a course on the Synoptic Gospels. And within the first week, and I think within the first day, I said, "That's what I want to do with my life."

I don't remember him focusing so much on Matthew, but I was drawn to the gospel of Matthew because of things that he said in class, things that captured my attention, books that I read. I don't know, I think maybe Matthew's gospel, which has the reputation in the early church, the number one gospel for many people, was the teacher's gospel.

It's organized for teachers in ways that other Gospels aren't quite so organized. It just fell in my lap, and I chose to do my dissertation on it, and it's been a part of my life ever since.

Annie: I love it. Will you define for us Synoptic Gospels versus... because that's Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but not John. So does John have a different title?

Dr. McKnight: Oh yeah. He's the gospel of John. They're called the synoptics because the Greek word "sunopsis" the English word "synoptic" comes from the Greek word "that you can see them together". Matthew, Mark, and Luke largely are interdependent, telling many of the same stories. 90 plus percent of the Gospel of Mark can be found in Matthew or Luke. I'm not saying we want to do this. If we lost the Gospel of Mark, we'd basically have it.

Annie: It's in everybody else, yeah.

Dr. McKnight: I often tell audiences that when you're reading Matthew, Mark, or Luke, make sure you look at your cross-references at the beginning of the passage, or in your study Bibles, or in your cross-references. Somewhere you will see that there's a passage like this, in most cases, in the other two Gospels, and read them together. That's synopsis. That's synoptically reading them. You read them and you compare them.

Over time, Annie, if you do this frequently enough, over and over, you will begin to see patterns that Matthew adjusts Mark in a certain way, Luke adjusts Mark in another way. Matthew and Luke both use, quote, things that are identical. And we call this another source, the saying source, or people call it "Q" because the German word is "quelle".

But when we compare these, we see how they're connected to one another, and we see, let's say, how Matthew edits, and we begin to see some of his distinctive emphases. And then we get to know Matthew's life a little bit more, Matthew's pastoral skills in addressing his audience.

Annie: What is your favorite thing about the book of Matthew?

Dr. McKnight: Now, that is an unfair question. My favorite thing is 1:1-28:20. Here's one thing I love. This is largely missed by English readers and it's fascinating to me. Matthew 4:23 tell us-

Annie: ...my Bible.

Dr. McKnight: Yeah. Jesus went throughout Galilee and it says He was doing three things: teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom using the NIV, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. Three things characterize the ministry of Jesus in Galilee—teaching, preaching, healing.

Okay, now, if you go to chapter 9, verse 35, you're going to see the same thing. And it's the same in Greek. Jesus went through all the towns and villages—it doesn't say Galilee, same thing—teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness. Now, every disease and sickness in Greek is *pasan noson kai pasan malakian*. This is going to be repeated in the next chapter.

But here's the key thing. Three things that Jesus did. He taught, he preached, he healed. Now, where do we see Jesus teaching and preaching? Matthew 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount.

Annie: Oh right.

Dr. McKnight: And where do we see Jesus healing? Chapters 8 and 9. Ten miracle stories. So Matthew says this, "I'm going to tell you what Jesus does And now I'm going to tell you that He did those things. And now that I'm done telling you that He did those things, I'm going to tell you what He did."

Annie: Wow.

Dr. McKnight: He begins and ends this section all with this framing network. Now, here's the big download for this for you and me. Matthew 4:23 through 9:35, etc., is evangelistic in that it says, "Here's Jesus. This is what He teaches. This is what He preaches. This is how He heals. If you want to follow Jesus, this is the Jesus you have to follow. The one who taught the Sermon on the Mount and preached the Sermon on the Mount, the one who was in their synagogues, the one who healed."

So in a sense, this is a presentation of Jesus to His audience. This is what He's like. This is what He did. This is what He taught. This is how you can see His redemptive work in the kingdom of God. Follow Him, please.

[00:18:42] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Reel Paper](#). Listen, I love making some swaps that mean better things for our planet. So let's talk about paper towels for a second.

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Sponsor: I've gotten to talk to a lot of amazing people on this podcast. And if you're like me, once I learn a little something new from one of our friends, then I want to go deeper. I mean, that is so true in these podcasts, right?

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And now back to our conversation with Dr. Scot McKnight.

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Dr. McKnight: Now, Annie, there's something really cool about this. I told you. I know, I quoted that in Greek for you. Pasan noson kai pasan malakian.

Annie: I love it.

Dr. McKnight: All right, now, look at chapter 10, verse 1. Called His 12 disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. That's the same expression in Greek—Pasan noson kai pasan malakian.

So the disciples now are given a mission, and their mission is to do nothing but extend the mission of Jesus into other cities and villages. So they don't get to have their own mission. It's the mission of Jesus. That they are only doing one thing, extending Jesus to other people. They watched Jesus. He taught them. He showed them. And now it's their opportunity to try this stuff out.

Annie: I'm living for all of this. But the fact that he said he was going to teach and preach and heal diseases, and then when he sends them... You're right. I've never seen this before until you're pointing it out. When He sends them, he doesn't say, go teach, go preach, he says, go heal.

Dr. McKnight: Yes, he tells them to heal. But now here's the interesting thing. In verse 5, he says, don't go to the Gentiles, go to the lost sheep of Israel, preach this message, kingdom of heaven has come to you—That's His message—heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the leper, drive out demons, freely receive, freely give. He never tells them to teach until chapter 28, verses 16 to 20 at the end.

They can announce things, but they won't have the authority to teach until He's been raised from the dead.

Annie: Oh my gosh, that's so cool. I have never seen that before. He doesn't have them teach until He's raised from the dead and until He is going to leave. So as long as He's there, He is the teacher and He is the preacher. They are the spreaders. Wow.

Dr. McKnight: The agents of the kingdom for Jesus, yes.

Annie: Wow, that is so cool. So one of our listeners pointed this out to me. When Peter is walking on water, it's only recorded in Matthew that he walks on water, not the other accounts of Jesus walking on water.

Dr. McKnight: That's right.

Annie: Which I would like to say to Hannah, who noticed that, very well done. I've never noticed that before. Why do you think that is? What's that about?

Dr. McKnight: All right, now we have to guess, but Matthew has a special interest in Peter. There are things about Peter in this gospel that aren't found elsewhere, in spite of the fact that Mark is connected to Peter.

Here's something that's a little personal. Okay, why would Peter tell the story of himself failing on the water? Matthew says, "I was there, I saw this, and I'm going to tell you about this story." But this is something that is characteristic of Matthew.

Matthew knows that disciples at times are characterized by what he calls little faith (oligopistoi). Now, there are three levels of faith in the Gospel of Matthew. There's unfaith (apostia), or anti-faith, there's pistis (faith), and there's oligopistoi. And oligopistoi (little faith) is disciples of Jesus learning to follow Jesus by faith, but not always doing it well. So it's their growth phase of oligopistoi.

I think this is why Matthew tells this story about Peter, because it's an illustration of his faith, but not quite total faith. He needed to grow in his faith.

Annie: Yeah, because I was interested... when we've been talking about the other books, I've been looking, and in all of them, Peter's denial is there, correct?

Dr. McKnight: Yeah.

Annie: So when Peter was sitting with Mark supposedly and telling Mark his story, he included that. He didn't leave out his denial, but he left out his sinking.

Dr. McKnight: Well, Mark doesn't tell that. Maybe Mark was kind to his... There's something else about that story about walking on the water. Because when Mark tells that same story, when Jesus gets back in the boat, he says, the disciples did not understand, for their hearts were hardened.

When Jesus gets in the boat in Matthew, it's very interesting. He says, those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God." And here's Matthew's... it's not a correction because he thinks Mark is wrong. I think he says, "Yes, Mark. We did not understand, but we understood a lot more than anybody else. At that moment, we experienced Jesus as the true Son of God. And yes, we didn't have words for it. It would take Peter to begin that confession in chapter 16. But we did perceive more than anyone else.

Here's something else about Matthew that a lot of people, I think, will miss. You know, we tend to read two passages at a time. And if we read the whole Gospel at a time, there's something about Matthew's Gospel that you don't find with anything else in the other three Gospels. Matthew alternates between narratives and discourse.

Now, he has two narratives to open the Gospels, chapters 1-2 and chapters 3-4. That's narrative. Then there's a discourse, the Sermon on the Mount. Then there's a narrative, 8-9. Then there's another discourse, Matthew's missionary discourse. Then chapters 11 and 12, it's a narrative about life with Jesus, exploring the King. Chapter 13 is a discourse on parables. 14, 15, 16, 17 are a narrative. 18 is a discourse. 19-22 is a narrative. 23-25 is a discourse. 26-28.

That's the tidiness of Matthew. So we sort of, don't do this, but this is not Thomas Jefferson. You can cut out the discourses, and it's a straight narrative. And you can pour those discourses into five discipleship lessons: One about discipleship, one about mission, one about parables, one about forgiveness in the community, and one about judgment if people don't turn to Jesus.

Those are early Christian needs and discourses, teaching blocks. And it's wonderful to see how Matthew organized his gospel.

Annie: It's unbelievable because I think, especially growing up, I thought the gospels just read like Matthew... the book of Matthew would just read from when Jesus was born till Jesus resurrected, like straight through. But then when you read the four Gospels in chronological order, that is not how it works out.

You're teaching us more about how Matthew shaped the book of Matthew to remind us that this is not chronological, this is shaped as a book on purpose. There was an arc that Matthew was doing on purpose.

Dr. McKnight: Yes. But he cares about the church so much. He wants to provide for churches a story about Jesus, the biography of Jesus, and at the same time he wants to gather the teachings of Jesus into sections so that people can keep it... It's a beautiful manual on how to live in the kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount. It's beautiful.

Chapter 10 is a wonderful set of teachings about mission. Chapter 13's got all those parables in there. They're wonderful. Mark and Luke have them in different places. Chapter 18's famous stories about forgiveness. How many times do I forgive someone? It's a beautiful section. 23 through 25 is pretty strong critique of the temple establishment in Jerusalem for its response, let's say, to the poor, its response to Jesus. So, yeah.

Annie: So in Chapter 13 where it is all the parables together, I think I have always read that like Jesus just stood there and said all those. Do you think he said them all at the same time or is this Matthew pulling together, okay, over here He said this, over here He said this, versus like Jesus doing a 30-minute parable talk, which is I think what I've assumed all this time?

Dr. McKnight: I think you can only answer this question by comparing Matthew and Mark and Luke again and seeing how they put different things in different places. The gospel writers were not compulsively driven to determine the exact chronological order of everything that happened. John can put the temple display in John 2, and Matthew, Mark, and Luke all have it right at the end, the last week. So they can move things around.

I think Matthew's pattern shows that there was a core. Let's say Jesus gave some parables, but we've added a few more because this is a good place to put them. The Sermon on the Mount is a good place to put all these teachings of Jesus about righteousness.

So I think in many ways, Matthew famously should be applauded for how he has glued things together to give us teaching by Jesus. I don't want to be critical of

Matthew for suspending chronological order. It's us who need to be corrected on demanding that everything be.

Now, of course, when we read it, that's how you read it. I read it the same way. I figured this is all said at the same time. Well, the Sermon on the Mount wouldn't take very long to read out loud, but I'm guessing that even the Beatitudes took quite a bit of time. There would be questions and answers of people saying, hey, you didn't talk about me. I'm not one of those who are blessed. What's going on here?

And so everything could have had question and answer. I'm guessing those took a long time. But I do think that the genius of Matthew is to gather these things together for us around, let's say, a common something that happened there. And then, let's just say, it grew some whiskers and mustache.

Annie: Gosh, I love that. I love the idea of Matthew collecting up, since he was always with Jesus, collecting up preaching moments that Jesus had. I can picture myself when I had a five-section notebook when I was in school, and I put Spanish in this section, and I put social studies in this section. And so it just feels like he is filing things for us.

Dr. McKnight: That's a great way of saying it.

Annie: That's cool.

Dr. McKnight: He's filed things. No, let's just say he knows that Jesus was on some kind of location up near Capernaum, and He taught. But while we're at it, let's add this. See, like the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer is beautiful, but it's found in a different context in the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of Luke says that people came to Jesus and said, "Are you going to teach us to pray the way John taught his disciples?" Matthew uses it as an illustration of how to pray succinctly and briefly and get to the point.

Annie: And I would do the same. If I was listening to a pastor teach on prayer, and then I was regurgitating it, everything he said on prayer I would put together.

Dr. McKnight: Yes, I can remember.

Annie: That's so cool. That is so cool, Dr. Scot. Oh my gosh, I love it. Okay, one of our friends is asking, can you tell us more from Matthew 27 about Joseph of Arimathea?

Dr. McKnight: Oh, not really.

Annie: Yeah, that's all there is to him, huh?

Dr. McKnight: Yeah. Well, you know, he shows up one other time in the Gospels. But we don't know a whole lot about him. I mean, first of all, he's a rich man. Jesus is pretty strong about riches. You know, He's pretty critical of the rich people because they tended to oppress the poor. And he has the courage to go to Pilate and ask for the body of Jesus. And it says he had become a disciple of Jesus. He was following Jesus.

Rich man in Jerusalem with a tomb who asked for access to His body. He was putting his life on the line. And Pilate gives it to him. And that's pretty remarkable.

Annie: I never realized what danger he put himself in. That is really interesting. I didn't realize... I don't think we talked about this last time you were on the show. Forgive me if I did ask you, but the couple of times I've been to Jerusalem, I've visited both the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Garden Tomb. Do you have thoughts on those? I mean, the Garden Tomb is so new, right? There's just no way, right?

Dr. McKnight: Okay, Church of the Holy Sepulchre. I think that's probably where Jesus was crucified and buried. I think that's probable. Okay. The Garden Tomb is really a good experience.

Annie: It's beautiful.

Dr. McKnight: I love to go there. It's cool. They've done a great job. They help us all as followers of Jesus to worship the Lord. We always take communion there. My students can sing, you know, okay. But we know that the tomb that was there was an 8th-century AD tomb.

I mean, I've had people that I'm leading on tour there in tears in there, you know, and I'm going, okay, fine. I'm not going to be the one who spoils those tears. I hope you find it on the internet or something at some point, but I'm not going to say anything.

Annie: I still love taking a picture by the door that says, he has risen. I loved it, too. I loved it, too.

Dr. McKnight: It is beautiful. And the Holy Sepulchre Church is just so... there's so many people. And the last time we were there, it was just as COVID started and so it was really pretty shaky. That's one of the places that I say, that's a pretty good chance that's... I would say that's where it occurred.

Annie: This is what I like to tell friends. I'm like, the experience, just like you described, the experience at the Garden Tomb is so fun. The science of it probably doesn't hold up, but the experience is great.

[00:38:09] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation again to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [ZocDoc](#). We all know there are things in life you have to compromise on, that's good. But when it comes to your health, there should not be a compromise. So don't go back to that one doctor you didn't love. Instead, check out ZocDoc, the place where you can find and book doctors who will make you feel comfortable, listen to you, and prioritize your health. You can search by location, availability, and insurance. So literally no compromises here because with ZocDoc, you've got more options than you know.

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Go to [Zocdoc.com/thatoundsfun](https://zocdoc.com/thatoundsfun) and download the ZocDoc app for free, then find and book a top-rated doctor today. That's zocdoc.com/thatoundsfun.
[Zocdoc.com/thatoundsfun](https://zocdoc.com/thatoundsfun).

And just a reminder, that link and pretty much every other link you could ever dream of are in the show notes below, including the last episode that Dr. Scot McKnight was on as well. And you can also get those links sent right to your inbox in Friday's AFD Week in Review. You can sign up for that in the show notes below.

Sponsor: And I have another amazing partner to tell you about, Earth Breeze. Y'all, [Earth Breeze](#) is top of the line. I have Earth Breeze in my Nashville apartment. I have Earth Breeze in my New York apartment. It is truly the best. It has changed my laundry game.

Earth Breeze eco sheets look just like a dryer sheet, so you have to be paying attention, but it's an ultra-concentrated, liquidless laundry detergent. It's the best of all the worlds. It's tough on stains and odors while being kind to the planet and to your skin.

No more heavy lifting or measuring sticky blue goo from a massive plastic jug. Earth Breeze's lightweight cardboard packaging takes up a fraction of the space in your laundry room versus traditional detergent. These tiny sheets can stop millions

of detergent jugs from entering our ecosystem. In fact, 500 million detergent jugs end up in landfills and oceans every year. You guys, every year.

So making a positive impact in the world doesn't have to come at a cost to you. My clothes are clean, they smell great, and I feel like I actually did something good just by doing my laundry.

Right now my friends, get 40% off of Earth Breeze just by going to earthbreeze.com/thatsoundsfun. That's earthbreeze.com/thatsoundsfun to cut out single-use plastic in your laundry room and claim 40% off your subscription. Earthbreeze.com/thatsoundsfun.

Sponsor: Okay, y'all, listen to this. A recent survey found that seven out of 10 parents lose an average of three hours of sleep a night in their baby's first year. Three hours a night, you guys? How are you doing this? How are you doing this?

Listen, based on my stories and my friends, I am hearing from the moms of littles here in the office, that totally tracks. The moms I'm friends with, my sister, it tracks. Moms and non-moms alike, you deserve quality sleep. And I know just how. Listen, [Cozy Earth](#).

Discover the secret to better sleep with Cozy Earth's luxurious bedding products. And here is an exclusive Mother's Day offer just for our friends. If you use the code TSF you get 35% off at cozyearth.com. Send that link to your husband, send that link to your friend, say, this is what you should get me at 35% off. Oh my gracious.

Cozy Earth bedding products have this temperature-regulating technology, you guys. It adapts to your body's needs and it keeps you comfy no matter what might be keeping you awake. Those same moms of littles here in the office absolutely rave about their Cozy Earth sheets.

You can also take comfort in the fact that Cozy Earth stands for the quality and longevity of their products. You can enjoy a 100-night sleep trial, 100 nights, you guys, and a 10-year warranty on all your purchases. Treat yourself or any of the moms on your list to the ultimate comfort with Cozy Earth bedding and sleepwear, and prioritize that self-care and sleep health.

Head over to cozyearth.com and use the promo code TSF for an exclusive 35% off the luxury she deserves, you guys, Cozy Earth.

And now back to finish up our brilliant conversation with Dr. McKnight.

[00:42:55] <music>

Annie: Okay, every time I've gotten to read Matthew for Let's Read the Gospels, I stumble on the same story. One of our friends brought it up too, but the story of the parable of the wedding banquet in Matthew 22, it's a tough one for me.

The king calls all these people in and then when they actually show up, one of them isn't dressed right and he kicks him out and has him thrown where they'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Dr. Scot, some of Matthew's stories, there's a couple of them that read this way to me where I go like, "Wait, what? What are we supposed to do with that? That doesn't make any sense to me." Can you help me make a little more sense of how I'm supposed to use that parable or what I'm supposed to take from that parable?

Dr. McKnight: Okay, let's remember what a parable is. A parable is a short story. And in Nashville, you had a great teacher, a Jewish teacher named Amy-Jill Levine. She has a wonderful book on the parables of Jesus called *The Short Stories of Jesus*.

All right, I think we should see this as fiction at some level. A short story, like a fable. It's a little story. I'm reading some short stories by Tolstoy right now, and some of them are for children, and they just read like the parables of Jesus.

What Jesus wants them to understand is that just because you have been invited to the wedding doesn't mean that you're going to get to participate in all the celebration involved unless you are properly attired. Okay, it seems a little arbitrary.

Well, that's just the wrinkle in the story. It's the wrinkle of Jesus trying to say to people who, let's say, are His fellow Jewish contemporaries, who think because they are connected to the Torah, that they are connected to the kingdom of God, and Jesus says, no, the kingdom of God is made for those people who are dressed properly and who are willing to put on the garments of righteousness that we call people to.

So it's a critique of people who don't respond properly to the kingdom of God. I mean, Jesus does this all the time in His parables. It's a surprise. This story's going along and you go, what? He just didn't wear the right thing and that's... what's the problem with that? Well, it's not like he's picking on people who don't know how to dress and they need to wear a coat and tie or even better, a tuxedo or a dress that they got at Marshall Fields and paid \$750 for. He's not saying that.

What He's saying is, look, I've invited everybody. We want all these people to come into the banquet. But the kingdom of God is designed for people who want to follow the king and who treat Jesus as the king. And if you don't want to do that, then you're not properly attired for the kingdom of God.

Wasn't it C.S. Lewis who said there's two kinds of people? Those who say "thy will be done" and those who say "my will be done". And that the kingdom of God or heaven, he said, hell is locked from the inside, is not locked from the outside, is that he's calling people to follow him.

This is a characteristic of the Gospel of Matthew, this theme of righteousness, of following Jesus, doing what is right as Jesus has taught. That's a righteous person.

Annie: That helps me. Thank you. That helps me a lot. So what do we do? What do we do when we bump into stories in Matthew or elsewhere in the Gospels, in the Bible, and it ties us in knots like that? I mean, Jesus' teaching on divorce can feel really complicated for some people. What do we do when we bump into scripture that causes us to feel away, to kind of feel sideways, to disagree? What's the pattern we're supposed to do with that?

Dr. McKnight: I think that the more familiar we are with the Gospels, the more often we're going to have that experience.

Annie: Really?

Dr. McKnight: I mean, nobody reads the Sermon on the Mount for encouragement.

Annie: It's not telling me what I'm doing right, that's for sure.

Dr. McKnight: Oh boy, this is a tough one. In a sense, I think it's a mistake to say these are rigid rules by Jesus, laws, that if you don't obey we're going to put you in prison. These are instead snapshots, moments of insight where you get to see what kingdom living is really like for Jesus.

And He's challenging us to turn our hearts and our faces and our hands and our feet toward that kingdom of God, knowing, look, the disciples... How often did the disciples fail? How often did Jesus say, you can't follow me anymore? Zero. He said, "You know what, Peter, that was bad. Repent and follow me. Do you love me?" No, that's in John, but that's okay. It's a good story.

All right, so the disciples fail frequently, they exhibit little faith, but Jesus says, You were wrong. Now get back on the path and follow me.

So when we read the Sermon on the Mount, and when we read passages that push us, and we go, Ooh, that's hard. I'm pretty sure Jesus intended that to be hard, and He wants us to be challenged, to pick it up, pick up our game, step up our pace, and

start following Him at a little bit more intense level. And over time we'll encounter these, and over time we'll follow Him a little bit better.

Annie: Yeah, that is really helpful. Sometimes, especially probably the first three months that we read for Let's Read the Gospels, we would finish some days, and Craig, who sits in the room with us, and Ashley, the three of us are always in the room when we're reading because they're keeping me saying it all correctly. We would stop and just be like, man, it is hard to follow Jesus. It's actually really hard to do this.

Dr. McKnight: In Matthew, in chapter 11, He says, my yoke is easy and my burden is light. And I think, Jesus, I just finished studying the Sermon on the Mount, and I'm not sure I'd agree with you. But it's because if we're connected to Him, He's carrying us along. He's walking with us. He's ahead of us. He's behind us. He's next to us. He's below us. He's above us. He's there. He's helping us. And when we don't follow Him perfectly, He reminds us that we're called to follow Him, and He forgives us and puts us back on the path. So it's hard. Yes. The Gospels are hard.

Annie: And yet I find myself falling more and more in love with them every time. You're right, it's gotten more complicated the longer we've read them every month. One of the things about reading it all the time is I feel like it accidentally comes up in conversation all the time, where I'm like, well, it makes me think of this story. It's the first time that I've ever had seen scripture do that in me, where it just is like... because we're reading it so much.

Dr. McKnight: Annie you've nailed it. That's what evangelism is right there, is that by getting to know Jesus, by reading the Gospels, we get a new imagination, we got a reformation of our imagination. It's renewed. And now when we are in conversations, we think of Jesus. And I'd say that's what we should call sanctification, right there, to think about Jesus.

Annie: I want to keep running toward that. Okay, give us two or three... As we're reading the book of Matthew, can you give us a couple of ways...? We've asked everybody who's helping us with these books do this. What are the goggles we should put on when we're reading Matthew? What are two or three things we should be thinking about differently when we're reading Matthew than the other Gospels?

Dr. McKnight: Well, one, I did talk about the narrative and the discourses and stuff like that and how to see 4:22.

Annie: That's so cool. Oh my gosh, we'll never see it the same anymore.

Dr. McKnight: Two expressions. Matthew likes the word "righteousness". And he uses it more than any of the other writers. The only beatitude, the only one that has the same word, is blessed are those, verse 6, who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Verse 10, blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness.

Annie: Oh, right.

Dr. McKnight: This is an important word for Matthew. And he's going to use it in Matthew 5:17-20, unless your righteousness greatly surpasses. And in chapter 6, verse 1, he's going to say, be careful not to practice your righteousness. This is his favorite term. It describes someone whose life conforms to the will of God as taught by Jesus. So look for righteousness. That's the first one.

Annie: That's cool.

Dr. McKnight: The second one is pay attention to how often Matthew connects his readers to an Old Testament passage. When you read chapters 1 and 2, he just does it, and chapter 3 and some in 4. He does it all the time. But if you pay attention to your cross-references, Matthew is connecting us to the Old Testament over and over and over. Because he says in Matthew 5.17, "Do not think that I came to destroy the law and the prophets. I did not come to destroy. I came to fulfill the law and the prophets."

And so he's calling his disciples to follow him as he's taught the Old Testament law and the prophets in the Sermon on the Mount. And he wants us to join the saints of Israel in the Old Testament as our family, as we follow Jesus, who is the Messiah of that family.

Annie: Wow. Oh, I love that. Little nuggets like that make, as we read through, so interesting. So do you imagine when Matthew's writing on each of his pages, every chapter fits on one of Matthew's pages of papyrus, does he have a copy of the Torah sitting next to him or a copy of Isaiah where he can go, "Oh, wait, the reason Jesus did this, hold on, that's back here in Isaiah. I should write this in." Is that kind of how you picture him doing it?

Dr. McKnight: My guess is that Matthew had access, in the synagogue, to what we would call the Tanakh, the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. But he had it right here in his head.

Annie: Wow. Yeah.

Dr. McKnight: They had these things memorized, and those texts were his favorites. And he could not talk about certain things without going, "Oh, that's just like Isaiah."

How would that go? I'll quote Isaiah." And he'd say, "I got to check this first. Let me make sure I got the words right." But I think he had it in his head, because they didn't have cell phones and iPads and computers and TVs and distractions. They had their Bible stories that they learned, and they had their friends, and they sat around and talked. And whenever you brought up something about how to live, people knew the Scriptures. They knew the principles of interpretation on how to follow the law of God as taught by Jesus.

Annie: Wow. Okay. Oh, we could just do this for so long. Is there anything we didn't get to say about Matthew that you would really want people to know or any other curiosities or things that will be hidden from normal readers like me?

Dr. McKnight: If we read the Gospels and we spend our time talking about Matthew, we have failed the Gospels. As you said, the more you read these Gospels, the more you love Jesus. That's what it's about. Read the Gospels and say, What was Jesus like? You know, I've translated the New Testament. It's called the Second Testament.

Annie: Yes, I own one. It's amazing.

Dr. McKnight: Every paragraph in the Gospels begins with Jesus. That's the title. Every passage in the Gospels is about Him, not about us. It's about us only because it's about Him. So the secret to reading the Gospels is to just say, what's Jesus like here? Give me more Jesus.

Annie: That's really good. The work you did on the translating is just... It is incredibly fun to read it knowing that we know you. I'm like, Wait, I know Dr. Scot and he is the one who turned this into English. It is a really fun resource to have.

Dr. McKnight: Thank you.

Annie: Thank you for doing that. I really enjoy it. Dr. Scot, as we finish Matthew, we are going to now go into the Book of Acts. Do you have any thoughts on the Book of Acts?

Dr. McKnight: Well, the book of Acts begins with this... First of all, it begins with this amazing ascension. Mary shows up in this text, and she's often ignored. She's right there in the middle of these followers. And then Pentecost comes.

Pentecost propels the followers of Jesus who lacked courage, who were exhibited by little... who showed little faith at times in the Gospels. And here's Peter who's been transformed following his total failure in the last week of Jesus, following his restoration with Jesus, all of a sudden Peter now has the courage of a prophet to

stand up and tell people that this is the fulfillment of Amos. And here we are, the Spirit has come down on these people.

It's anticipated in some ways in Matthew's gospel. Now, I know Luke is the one who wrote the gospel. But when Jesus died, an amazing scene in Matthew chapter 27, saints raised from the dead. It's like when Jesus enters into the world of death, He just ransacks and takes captive the people of God, and they come up. And I don't know whatever happened to them. I guess they had to die again. I don't know.

Annie: They must have had to die. That is a wild part of the gospel stories. It's everybody else resurrecting.

Dr. McKnight: In a way, this sort of anticipates the power of the Spirit of God that comes in Acts chapter 2 and propels these disciples to go out and live the resurrection, the new creation life that occurred because of Jesus' death and resurrection. And now they have the Spirit, they get to live that mission of Jesus.

Furthermore, as Jesus lived and taught His followers to follow Him, the early disciples had to learn in a new way how to follow Jesus without Him around. And we see those adaptations in the book of Acts over and over and over—lessons in mission—as they begin to explore what it means for this gospel to start spreading out through the Roman Empire.

Annie: Yes. They're picking up the teaching and preaching.

Dr. McKnight: That's right. And a little bit of healing as well.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. Silver and gold, I do not have, but what I have I'll give you.

Dr. McKnight: That's right.

Annie: Oh, that's beautiful. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Will you pray for us as we jump in this week to read Matthew, as Matthew's kind of the book we're focused on? Would you just pray for us as we read it?

Dr. McKnight: Yeah. Father, we are grateful for this time together, for the joy that Annie exudes to us and to all her listeners. Today we are especially thankful again for Jesus, for who He is, for what He taught, for what He did, and for how He calls us to follow Him, and that we know that in walking behind Him, we learn the meaning of life and how you want us to live. May you give us the courage to walk in His steps this day. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Annie: Amen. Thank you, Dr. Scot. Thank you. Thank you.

[00:59:13] <music>

Outro: You guys, I know. I know. He is the best. Oh my gosh. Does that just make you want to take a seminary class from him for forever? I just want to take classes from... maybe he'll still be teaching when we all get to the new heaven and the new earth. For all eternity we get to learn from Dr. Scot McKnight. Oh, he's brilliant.

Hey, make sure you're following him on social media, tell him thanks so much for being on the show. He has a lot of incredible resources that you can purchase and download. I recommend all of them. His two books on leading and being a part of a healthy church, *A Church called Tov* and *Pivot* are beautiful, so helpful, absolutely worth the read. As a person in leadership in a church, as a person who attends a church, is just those two. Grab those, those two.

Listen, it's not too late to jump in and read the Gospels with us, even if you just want to do the Book of Matthew with us now after listening to Dr. McKnight. I get it. So don't forget, you can jump in with us now, or we've got a year and a half worth of Gospel readings that you can go back on the Let's Read the Gospels feed and choose from.

You can do the guided journal along with your Bible at your own pace. You don't have to do it alongside a podcast. So grab a copy of the Let's Read the Gospels guided journal wherever you love to buy books, at your local Target, at your local bookstore, and then you can jump in on your own and go through the four books of the Gospels at your own pace. Don't forget, we're getting ready at the beginning of May to start the book of Acts on Let's Read the Gospel.

So go ahead and subscribe over there today, listen to Matthew with us, and then jump straight into Acts as we finish up this Let's Read the Gospel project for now.

If you have any questions from this episode, just drop them in the Q&A box on the Spotify app if you're a Spotify listener like me, or you can send them straight to us on Instagram @ThatSoundsFunPodcast. We love getting to answer any questions you may have.

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 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, well, we're recording this while I'm in New York, even though I'm just getting home

when you're listening. So what sounds fun to me is I get to go see Mary Kate and Wicked tomorrow. So, you know that sounds fun to me.

Y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday as we recap 2017 and a pretty big surprise that y'all don't know about yet and that I've barely told Eddie about. We're going to talk about it Thursday on the That Sounds Fun podcast with Eddie Kaufholz. We'll see y'all then.