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Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you today. This is a good episode. This is our last episode before we take a summer Sabbath break next week. We'll be off the week of July 4th and we are starting a series when we get back on July 8th that you are gonna love. You are gonna love it.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors. This show is sponsored by BetterHelp. Having intentional time on the calendar to rest and reset is so important. It's literally what we're about to talk about this entire show.

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Intro: Today on the show, I get to talk with my friend, one of our favorite pastors and leaders, and one of your favorite guests around here, John Eldredge. This is his fourth episode. He is very close to getting in the Hall of Fun. But every time he comes on the show, it just leaves us with so many wise nuggets to help us walk into the next season.

That is exactly why we invited him here today. As our summer Sabbath begins, and a lot of you are going to be taking trips in July and August, we just wanted some guardrails around that. Like, how do we do this really well? And we knew that John would be able to help usher us toward that, and he will today.

If you aren't already listening to his podcast, Wild at Heart, you know I don't like to "should" people around here, but you've got to check it out. It is so good. It really is one of my probably three that I've listened to every single week and I do not miss.

They even have an episode about summer soul care that would be great one to listen to. We'll link to it in the show notes. So before we go quiet for a week and take a little break on the podcast, here's my conversation with my friend, John Eldredge.

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Annie: John Eldredge, welcome back to That Sounds Fun.

John: Thank you.

Annie: Oh, it's such an honor to have you here.

John: I'm delighted to be here. And congratulations, by the way. You guys were nominated for Podcast of the Year. Should have won.

Annie: Isn't that wild? I know.

John: Congratulations.

Annie: Well, it's such an honor. Yeah, thank you. You know the amount of work... It feels to me... tell me some inside scoop. It feels to me like at Wild at Heart, y'all have really taken your podcast from conversations to discipleship.

John: Yeah, because we are realizing once you get people better, you know, they're healing, they're connecting with God, they're getting a more reasonable pace of life, then the next thing they need is, how do I sustain this? What is a sustainable life that is truly life? And so pretty quickly then you're into genuine discipleship, which is teaching people how to live life with God. Which is what you do, dear, and you do it marvelously.

Annie: You're very kind. But I mean, I've been really impressed as I have listened through, particularly this year, 2024, of hearing a couple of weeks where y'all went, Hey, we're going to actually stop giving you new content and we need to talk about what we have actually already talked about.

So talk to us a little bit about slowing our minds down like that, especially in the summer. Why do we need to slow our minds down on the intake of content?

John: Okay, so knowing that we were doing this today, I wanted to tell you a little story. So Stasi and I just got back from the Outer Hebrides, which are the islands off the coast of Scotland. Wild, beautiful.

Annie: The land of revival.

John: Come on. You know about that.

Annie: Yeah.

John: That's awesome. I had a four-hour window that I was going to go fly fishing, which is my little personal joy. And that's my soul care and connect with God and be in nature time. So I had four hours. Annie, I did not enjoy it until the last half hour.

Annie: Wow.

John: And I couldn't have told you why until the last half hour when I realized nothing was wrong. I wasn't being attacked. We weren't in family trauma. It was simply the condition of my soul that I was coming in with my hair on fire out of the world and ministry and pace and all that.

You can't just throw the switch and suddenly everything's restful and peaceful, right? And so it took me three and a half hours of doing something I enjoy immensely to then enjoy it.

Annie: Wow.

John: It's just a kindness to say, hey, everybody, your soul needs some care. So as we enter into summer and as you think about the things you're going to do for that, like, yeah, your soul is not going to bounce back in 30 minutes.

Annie: I think you taught me this. In 2021, I started... Instead of taking one or two days throughout the year and a week in the summer, I take two to three weeks back to back in the summer. And it changes me. I mean, if I do a week, by that Thursday, I am feeling my soul alive, and by Friday I'm thinking about going back to work on Monday.

John: Instead of enjoying now, now that your soul is alive, giving yourself that second week to then really drink in what God has for you. And I realize not everybody can get those two weeks together. But folks, you get the idea is that you need a little bit of room for your soul to just come out of detox. And also, if you're with your spouse, or you're with your family, so that those relationships can detox.

Annie: Right.

John: The first couple of days on our vacation, I was sort of irritated at Stasi most of the time. And I'm like, oh, this is because our marriage has been on warp speed, and now we're coming into that first period is Sabbath. And it's detox. And then you can enjoy the beach or the mountains or the music festival or whatever you're doing.

Annie: So, you know, four hours or two weeks or anything in the middle, what my brain is doing that I bet some of our friends listening are doing is going, well, if I've only got four hours, I've got to get through the detox in an hour so I get three. Or, okay, I need to make sure I'm hurrying through because I do only get a week of vacation and I want to feel good by Tuesday. How do we let go?

Even when I'm thinking about my couple of weeks, John, what if it takes me... it makes me teary to say to you, what if it takes me 10 days? Or what if it takes me 12 of my 14?

John: Yes. It probably will. Probably will. And that's okay because that's what you need. I know we want to get to the joy and we want to get water skiing or we want to get, you know, whatever it is we're doing. But you're giving yourself the time to get better. Well, that's a good use of that time. And it may not be fabulous restaurants, and it may not have everything you want it to have, but if you're giving your soul some space to get better, that is time very well spent.

Annie: Wow. So it's okay if between the healing and the joy different years and different seasons are going to allow for that slider to go back and forth?

John: Yes, it will, everybody. It will. And it won't be in the first 20 minutes. And I think if we come into it with the kindness towards that and say, it's going to take me a couple days, and I'm going to want to look at my phone every three minutes.

I mean, Annie, we are in this beautiful, beautiful place in the Outer Hebrides, and when we get to a wild place, we then go find the wildest part of the wild place. So we're on the West Coast, on the cliffs, and the ocean crashing, and it's just, I am constantly checking my phone. And it's just because we've been habituated to it, right? There is a way that we all have to do to operate in this world. No blame. No shame. There's just a way.

And it's a pace and it's technology and it has shaped us, right, it's disciplined us into a way of living. That's okay. That's okay. Just recognize as you begin to get a little bit of your joy, a little bit of your Sabbath, it's going to try and keep you into the technology addiction.

Annie: I think I've told Stasi this. I don't know if you know this but I'm living part-time in New York this year. That's where I'm coming at you from my apartment in New

York. So my Sabbath is up here this year. So I'll be off the internet for a month, but already what I'm hearing in my head is, well, if you don't check Instagram, you're not going to know what's going on in New York and you're going to miss events that you wish you could go to. And I've been like, who cares? You have to say who cares back.

John: Oh, good for you.

Annie: Because I know what the voice is. The voice is: don't let go of your addiction. You'll be fine. You can manage it. Just don't look on that account or just don't look on... No, no, no, John. I've heard you in my head too many times to know that there is a discipleship problem here that makes me afraid I'm going to be alone if I take a month off, particularly in this city.

John: Yeah, that's right. That's really good. That's really brave, Annie. That's very, very brave. Because I think people will experience some fear as they do that and some anxiety. Well, no, no, no, I got to be totally available to my kids. You don't understand. There's always a reason, right?

Annie: Yeah.

John: But what we're describing, folks, is that to live in this moment in time, we have all been conditioned to certain ways of operating in the world. One is just the pace of life, which is utter madness. I'm just coming fresh off Sabbath, so I can use these examples.

So we were with some friends, and we made a mutual agreement. We just said, We're not going to do anything until late morning. Every morning is built in nothing. And so if it's coffee in bed or if it's a walk that you need or you want to read, provide for that. Provide for the deceleration of your soul's pace, because you're going to need that. You're going to need just some breathing room. It was such a lovely decision.

And then we went out and we did stuff. Sure, we toured and we did the touristy things and stuff, but only after we got some just quiet.

Annie: What made y'all pick the Hebrides?

John: Oh, it's a sweet story. So last October was our 40th.

Annie: Oh, wow. Congratulations.

John: I know. We had to get a parade or something.

Annie: Now you're in the promised land.

John: Is that what this is?

Annie: After 40 years. Yeah, that's what the Bible tells me.

John: Actually, it's really beautiful, yeah. But we were both full tilt in a busy fall and so I said to Stasi... we kept trying to squeeze something in. Maybe we can get over to Hawaii, or maybe we could do something. It was like a three-day window. I said, "Babe, let's wait until May, and then let's do something you really want to do. So what do you really want to do?" And she picked it. She says, "I want to go to the Outer Hebrides." I'm like, "Okay, let's do that."

Annie: As our friends are listening, most of them have probably planned their summer. But even if you had a weekend, picking places that make you feel alive is part of doing summer in a way that is spiritually reviving. Correct?

John: Yes. Exactly. Exactly. Yeah. And not letting other people's expectations... Can I tread on the difficult terrain?

Annie: Yeah, go, go, go, go, go.

John: Well, it's the family reunions, and oh, no, we always go and see mom and dad. And it's the expectations. I would just encourage you to maybe ask God about that and see if the family reunion is what He has for you this year.

Again, it's bravery. It's going to take some courage for you to say, Yeah, Mom and Dad, we're going to come for Christmas, but we're not going to come this summer. Because if that's not what God has for you, it won't be nourishing.

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Okay, now back to our conversation with John.

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Annie: You are going to love this story. I'll tell you real quick. Last summer, I was deciding what to do last spring, and I got an invitation to go to Greece, and then I was going

to go to Edinburgh. I used to live in Edinburgh, so I was going to go visit my friends. So I was like, Oh, this is perfect. I'll go to Greece, I'll hop up at Edinburgh, and I'll come back.

And you did a podcast that said, "Ask God what to do with your summer." And I was hesitant. I didn't want him to mess up my plans. Then I was like, "Well, now you really have to ask, because clearly you're pushing back."

So I asked the Lord, And I felt there was a no. I couldn't suss out the no, but I felt there was a no and I was mad. And I was like, No, I want to see my friends in Edinburgh. I want to go on this trip to Greece. And so I fasted and I kept praying.

And the long and short of it, it was a yes to Greece and a no to Edinburgh. And I was like, oh, okay. When I'm in Greece, my body reveals that I have a cyst. I have this big growth in me while I'm in Greece. And I had surgery the week after I got home.

Had I gone to Edinburgh, I would have been worried the entire time. I would have possibly ended up in the hospital in Edinburgh. And it's like my fear of God taking good from me was actually God going, I'm going to give you what I can give you, and then you have a body thing coming you don't even know about.

John: Wow, that's so kind.

Annie: And I thought, What a gift of God! My fear was He was taking my fun and He was actually being very generous and informative to me so that I actually did the trip that was right before the surgery.

John: Gang, I hope everybody, you're hearing this story because when God does that to me, what comes up in me is my fear of deprivation. It's a no, no, no, things are being taken away. No, no, no. So most of us don't even ask God, right, can I buy the car? Should I date this person? Can I go to grad school? We just do it because we're afraid He's going to say no without understanding that the no is our rescue. The no was your rescue.

Annie: The no was my rescue.

John: It was. It was just pure kindness. So when I'm feeling that, I also have to say, Okay, come into my fear of deprivation because I do need to yield this to you.

Annie: Oh, wow. Come into my fear of deprivation. Wow.

John: Which for most of us... and we go way off into the woods on this. But for most of us it's childhood things, right, and things withheld or things not given or things lost. That's a very different set of soul things that need His care than what you should be doing with your summer. Okay?

Annie: Right.

John: So let Him speak. Let Him guide you. Let Him be the Good Shepherd. Then as this other stuff starts presenting itself, then you say, Oh, wow, God, I have a real deep mistrust of you. I don't think you're out for my best." You go, oh, okay, well, then let's talk about that. Because that has nothing to do with Edinburgh.

Annie: Right. Right.

John: Yeah, nothing.

Annie: Right. Man, I'm thinking of our friends who are single, like me, who want to have a child, want to have a baby, who do want the new car, and the fear of deprivation shows up in my life in a hundred places. So you saying, like, even the invitation to spend some time in these next two... I'm just taking notes of what I'm going to do over the next two weeks of my time. I'm like, Oh, I really need to talk to God about my fear of deprivation. I think I can provide for myself everything that will bring me joy. And that if I involve Him, it will remove joy. I don't want to admit that, but I feel like you're a counselor, and you're going to sniff it out of me either way.

John: He knows it anyway, friends, right? It would be better to be honest about it. Because this is the other thing. So this is kind of like you really ought to have Sabbath, and here's what to do with your Sabbath show. When you get into some form of Sabbath, whether you actually have a Sunday off, you're taking Sabbath, or you have a two-week vacation, God will use that time partly to nourish you, but partly to raise things that need His care.

And if you're okay with that, it can go pretty quickly, actually. So like... oh my gosh. So last summer, you and I haven't even talked about this, I did 16 days of solitude.

Annie: Wow.

John: Nobody, just alone in the wilderness.

Annie: Up in y'all's cabin?

John: Up in the cabin, yeah.

Annie: Wow, John.

John: And there's no internet there. God used that to get to some pretty deep places of loneliness in me that had nothing to do with the cabin in those 16 days. It's just that He'll take the opportunity of your undivided attention to say, Okay, now that you're not running crazy, can we just talk about your fear, your rage, your loneliness. And then let me in. Let me in. Let me meet you there.

Annie: I've told people a lot one of the reasons that I have embraced doing a Sabbath every week is I have to have a day to grieve. Because I can move so fast the rest of the week, and something hurts my feelings on a Tuesday, or I'm upset about something on a Thursday, and I will say, you need to cry about this. It's okay if you wait until Saturday.

John: Wow.

Annie: And man, my mornings, my between breakfast and lunch on my Sabbath Saturdays are teary. They're just always teary because I know that I have to get quiet to really access a lot of that sadness.

John: That's beautiful, Annie. That's really beautiful. Because what people don't know is it's the ungrieved grief in you that's actually producing anxiety now or rage, or other things. But if you just follow that in a little bit, you realize, no, I'm actually just sad. And it's okay. It's okay.

Annie: So talk to us. If someone's going on their vacation this summer and it is with their spouse and their three kids. You know, they're going to the beach and the kids are little and y'all live this with your boys, how do you find the opportunity in your summer vacations to have any of these moments? Is it a trade-off husband-wife? Is it a let go of that expectation? How do you do that with little ones?

John: Well, let's first say maybe the vacation isn't about your recovery at all. It could just be busy. Yeah, that's okay. That's okay. If you've got to go to the family thing or I mean, you got to go to the wedding, there's no way out of it, like, okay, it's just going to be chaos. Where is your Sabbath then?

Because for us, summer evenings on the porch, if we can get a couple of those a week, the crickets, the smells, the fragrance, I mean, come on, like, that is really good stuff. So I would just say some of you just need to look honestly at what you have planned and go, oh, yeah, that's not going to be very restful. Yeah. That's okay. Then budget something in your normal life, you know, three evenings a week where you get an hour, you know?

But for me, even on this last trip, budgeting in that morning and saying, I'm going to go for a walk every morning because that's what I need. And I'm not rejecting you. You may need to explain this to your family, right? Go, "I love you. I'm not mad. I just need this. Can I have 20 minutes?" I'm just going to take a walk every morning and I'm having my coffee and this is what I'm going to do. That may be good.

Annie: I'm in charge of our family... not all the way in charge, but I'm kind of the hosting committee for our big family vacation. There's 19 of us. And even as you're saying this, I'm hearing, I need to present the opportunity to everyone: Hey, you also are welcome to take your own time.

Like, I don't even know as the initiator if I've made space for that, for our big family vacation. So that's encouraging me. What you're saying is encouraging me to even say to... I'm thinking of how many of my cousins have little kids, and I'm like, should we trade-off? Could I step in one morning and do breakfast and let them go on a walk?

John: Yes, beautiful. Yeah, that's really good. Yeah, because we come in... what you're naming is, I didn't even think about that. We just come in with a set of assumptions, but you might want to just pause and go, wait a second, God, what are you saying about my assumptions, right?

Or, and this is a really big one, or there's a whole bunch of folks listening who have already made the agreement, I got nothing this summer. I got nothing. I can't afford it. I can't take the time off. And you actually haven't even asked God what He does have for you, right? So let's break the agreement that summer is already over.

Annie: Yeah, right. It's already full. It's already done.

John: It's already gone. It's gone. And I'm not going to get what I need. Let's break that agreement and then ask God, what do you have for me? And He might say, Buy a bicycle. Right? Just something really playful and fun where you go, oh my gosh, a 30-minute ride every evening would be so life-giving.

Annie: Will you talk a little bit...? Will you teach us...? I mean, I know we can go to the Wild at Heart website. You have a bunch of prayers there. Of course, the pause app. Teach us how to break an agreement. Is there magic words we need to say? What does it look like to break an agreement?

John: Okay, first, what you do, you either... you have to identify it. So it's probably already coming out of your mouth. You're saying, "I am so not looking forward to

this trip." Okay, that would be an agreement. Or, summer's the wash. You don't understand, summer's the wash. That would be an agreement.

Annie: "I don't have enough time to get what I need."

John: "I'm not going to get what I need." That would be an agreement.

Annie: Got it. Got it.

John: Sometimes it is helpful to ask Jesus, Lord, what are the agreements I'm making about summer? Because some of them you don't even know you're making. And we actually have. We have a couple of exciting things. We have some births in the family coming up.

Annie: I heard y'all say that, yeah.

John: But we have to kind of be on deck, you know, to watch dogs and little ones and that kind of thing and stuff. So I had already started making the agreement. I'm not going to have summer this year.

Annie: Oh, wow.

John: And I go, whoa, whoa, whoa, that's an assumption. But God didn't say that to me. So, "Jesus, what are the agreements I'm making about summer?" would be where I'd start. And then you're going to feel it. You're going to go, Oh, yeah, it's right there. I'm already discouraged or I'm already mad.

Then you just very simply say, you know what? I break the agreement that I can't afford that. I break the agreement that I can't take the time off. I break the agreement that I am not going to enjoy this trip. I break that agreement right now before I even leave on it. That's what you do. I mean, it's literally that simple. I renounce that agreement.

Annie: Right. Okay. I think that's a really helpful tool for us to just put in our back pocket, especially as we're planning and as we're thinking this through, or even toward the rest of the year, toward holidays. We gave our singles community, Single Purpose League, this challenge to go to one new event in June and July and meet one person you don't know at each event.

And I got a piece of feedback from someone who said, "I don't have any time. I don't have any time. I won't be able to do it." And I thought, "Wow, the agreements you're making already are saying... not like if you had time, you'd get married. Not

like that at all. But like you're kind of setting up your summer for what it's going to be based on the agreements you've made. Is that fair for singles or married people?

John: 100 percent.

Annie: Okay.

John: And they become the filter. You know it's an agreement if you do not see any other possibility.

Annie: Wow.

John: Okay, because it becomes the filters, the lens through which you see your family or your summer or your finances, you just don't even see another way, right? But to go, okay, I'm willing to let that go and see if maybe there is another way that I don't see yet.

Annie: Wow. And so is there positive affirmations? Is there other language we should start praying and saying of, is there an opposite that we should be saying?

John: 100%. Some of those things you should be saying every day when you wake up, okay? Some of those you literally need to say every day, I am loved. I am cared for. I am safe in the refuge of God. Things like that, okay? Because all that's getting assaulted all the time. And your confidence in it is, you know, being eroded.

So if you just say it out loud, and then as you go into the trip... I mean, it was unbelievable. I don't know how this got in, but we were headed to the Outer Hebrides... okay, it's a lot of work to get there, guys. It's two airplane trips and a long drive and a ferry, and then you're there. And I started saying things like, Oh man, this is just gonna be a lot of work. And that was going to cloud the trip. And the thing is, not just for me, but for Stasi.

Annie: Yeah, because it'll eventually come out of your mouth if it's happening in your head.

John: Oh, now I'm Eeyore, right? Now I'm bringing that vibe into the thing. I'm like, no, no, no, no, no. I'm going to say right now, before we start, God is with us. It's going to be great.

Annie: Wow.

John: God is with us. It's going to be great. He has all kinds of goodness for us.

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Annie: Okay, now back to finish up our conversation with John. S

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Annie: So help us with the... thing I'm thinking through is we want to have right expectations on our breaks and on our Sabbath. We don't want to go in... you say this a lot. We don't want to go in and ask a whole year of pain, work, and traveling to be solved in a weekend. We don't want to put that much pressure on our summers for a week or two weeks off, whatever you get.

So teach me the balance of having right expectations, but having the right agreements. Because we don't want to be like, this is going to be the most perfect vacation I've ever been on, and I'm going to speak it. And then you get in a fender bender, and suddenly your whole relationship with God is up in the air because you've spoken this thing over your trip. So how do we balance those things well?

John: That's really, really good, Annie. So friends, as you're hearing Annie and I talk, what's going on in the background is we're describing there is a way to do life with God. There is. And it's modeled for you in the Old and New Testament. There is a way to just do life with God.

That's the backdrop for this conversation because you're asking Him about everything. What do you have for me this summer? And then as you're heading into it, you're asking, am I making any agreements about this?

Annie: Got it.

John: And then as the disappointments hit. But I would say this, the question was good expectations. I would start with Papa, what is this trip about? What is this trip about? Because it might be about joy. It might be about rest. It might be about recovered relationship. And if I can kind of get on God's plan, if I can get on His wavelength and go, what is this trip about?

Because people will do this with like 25th-anniversary celebrations and stuff, and you go, you cannot heal a marriage with a birthday or a vacation, okay? But what you can ask is, what could this be? What is this about? I was so good to do that.

One of the things He said to me was, listen to Stasi. Listen to her on the trip. Be attentive to her desires. Very simple, kind of basic relational advice. But I needed Him to orient me to like, okay, right, right. Because I can plan to the point that there's no more choices.

Instead of saying, "Hey, babe, what do you want to do today? What do you feel like today? We have that boat tour planned, but we can cancel it. What do you need? What do you want to do? Just asking Papa, what's this trip about? What's this wedding about? What's this visit about?"

Annie: Yeah, why am I going here? Why am I the right...? Because you know one of the funny things about being in New York for my Sabbath break is about half of the friends I've made are out of town. And I was kind of like, Lord, part of me being here without work was going to be like, let's get coffee right now, which is the thing I can't do in my normal life.

So I have been circling back to him being like, a) am I supposed to be here? I'm supposed to be here, right? And b) what are you doing? So you giving us that question of what does this break about is really helpful for me even right now because my expectations are already not being met and I haven't started yet. So figuring that out matters really deeply.

Can you talk for a second...? You've been married for 40 years, but you serve so many of us who are not married yet. Talk to our unmarried friends for a minute about how do we do this alone? How do we find joy in going on a solo vacation or going somewhere by ourselves? If our friends all back out of the cruise we've been dreaming about going on, do we still go?

John: Yeah. Yeah. Well, ask God. Okay? Ask God because if He knows you're only going to be lonely, He'll say don't go.

Annie: That's right.

John: But the thing is, friends, you're not going alone. You're not going alone. I mean, just to be candid, one of the renewed realizations on this trip with Stasi is, she cannot fill me. Right? People can't fill you. Oswald Chambers, the only person that can fill the aching abyss of the human heart is Jesus Christ.

Annie: That's right.

John: And so those 16 days of solitude that I had were actually one of the most richest experiences of the last 10 years for me because I had God. So yeah, like single or choosing a single trip, right? Even if you are in a relationship, you may need some time away, actually. Allowing that to be true. And then saying, again, Lord, what are we doing? What are we doing together?

Annie: That's beautiful language. That feels so much better to think like, yeah, the Lord and I are doing... I literally said to Him about... I was looking at a house in Nashville and I said to the Lord, Well, I can't afford this on my own, can you? Are you buying this? Because I can't afford this on my own, but I know we can if this is what you, you know? And then the opportunity closed and I said, "Okay, Lord, this isn't our house. This isn't what you want us to do and where we're going next.

John: Exactly.

Annie: So that is so helpful to remind us that we're not going alone.

John: Friends, God is the great romancer. He is the one who invented these beautiful places. He's the one who created the human heart. If you let Him He will bring these delights every day of your trip or of your staycation. He will bring these little delights.

So I wanted to get an e-mountain bike, okay, because I love mountain biking. But I'm 64 and I needed a little boost. So it's a really fun story where I'm like, can I go get that bike? And Papa goes, No. I'm like, okay, and that felt like release, release, release.

Then one day in November, this is last November, He goes, "Go today." I'm like, "What?" He's like, "Yeah." I go down, they're on sale.

Annie: Oh my gosh, of course.

John: Of course. It was really at his prompting that I bought this e-bike. Every time I get on it, I start laughing because it is so stinking fun. And I just go around the neighborhood. I'm not going to the Mediterranean on a four-week bike tour. I'm going around the neighborhood laughing out loud.

Like He is the great romancer. He knows your heart. He knows what makes you come alive. He knows what you need this summer. Ask him.

Annie: What is it about this season that does invite us? Is it us responding to culture? Or do you think it's always been summer was different?

John: It's us responding to nature because all of nature is alive. All of nature is alive. The babies are being born. The flowers are blooming. Everything's going on. You can go barefoot. So we're responding to a season of abundance in nature.

Annie: Got it.

John: Yeah, beautiful evenings and lingering days or longer. It's all that, right? So I have a ritual that I can only observe in the summer. I get up at dawn and take the dogs to an open space near our house. The problem is in the winter, it is pitch dark and cold. And I'm like, "Well, I go in the summer. Nobody's there yet because it's at dawn, but it's already warm." So it's just me and the dogs. It's a 30-minute Sabbath that's just so life-giving. I think we're responding to life. Life is more apparent in summer.

Annie: I'm just such a natural sucker for nostalgia that sometimes I worry that my spiritual responses are because I remember going to Dairy Queen with my parents when I was like five, right? So you reminding us that, no, this is part of the cycle of life that in the summers you are... I don't like to "suppose to" and "should" people. But you are going to have a different response because the opportunity to be outside is more available everywhere in the northern hemisphere, everywhere that it's going to summer and not winter.

John: That's right. Yeah. So you look at vineyards. So vineyards need to go fallow over the winter. They need to drop their leaves. They need no grapes, no nothing. Like winter is a time for quiet and more of an inward focus. And that's why, you know, we build fires in the fireplace and we enjoy hot drinks, that kind of thing, books and stuff. But summer, that vineyard comes alive.

And I think the human soul responds to that cycle and the earth to say, I want to play. I want to play more in the summer.

Annie: As we come back out of summer breaks, we're going to walk into an election fall, a very loud fall. I find myself, when I get back on the internet on July 8th, my first two weeks, I'm like, I don't even care about this thing. Like, why did I spend so much time on that? Why was I not reading books? And then slowly I go back to it. I go back to it.

Can you give us some words on how do we come back from a summer that is restful in some ways and keep some of the rhythm so that we can stay as healthy as possible emotionally and spiritually into the rest of this year?

John: Yes. Let me give you one immediate thing and one long-term thing. Please allow yourself a day of transition. Do not come back from your Caribbean vacation on Sunday night at 10 p.m. and go to work the next morning. That is violent to the soul. And you will literally feel like, I've lost my vacation already. Well, yeah, because you threw yourself back in. Give yourself transition. It's going to need some space.

Annie: So coming back on a Saturday instead of a Sunday, so that you have Sunday to unpack and get groceries and have a day at home.

John: Yeah. Just be kind.

Annie: That's great.

John: Actually, you will see God doing this to the last day of your vacation. The last day of your vacation will tend to be not as wonderful. And He's just helping you let go and He's helping you come out of it. That's okay.

Annie: Wow. Wow.

John: The vacation or Sabbath or break or whatever you get is going to teach you a few things about yourself. I would say hold on to one lesson. Write it down. You're going to get some clarity. You're going to go, holy cow, I worry a lot. Or, holy cow, I can't keep up this pace anymore. You're going to get a piece of clarity. Write it down, because that's the thing you're taking with you into the fall.

Annie: Okay. Okay. That's really good, giving us one... Because you know me. I'm going to come out and be like, I've got 14 things I've got to remember to do with the Lord for the rest of this year. And you're like, no, Annie.

John: It's not sustainable.

Annie: It's not. I know. That's how I get tired too quick is I drain out because I'm trying to juggle all these things. I've got to make sure I'm learning everything I'm supposed to learn from God instead of like, here's the one that can just walk you.

I want to make sure our friends know about your Friday emails because they are so helpful. Just your little quick video you send out that is not for the internet. It's only for people who get those. I mean, you said in a podcast episode I just listened to, you also said, the father heart in me feels like we need to pray.

Talk for a second about that. When did you feel like you were fathering the internet? When did it feel like it switched to this... like your ministry isn't just your counseling ministry or even just Wild at Heart? But that email parents me every week. I mean, I hit reply two weeks ago because you gave us a video on how to pray over our homes. And now that I have a place in New York, I had never prayed the protections that you offered us to pray.

John: Oh, beautiful.

Annie: And so it changed when I got here. It changed what my plans are for even how I pray in this house. So talk to me about that. How are you coming up with what to parent us through every week?

John: Again, what Annie and I are describing is a way of doing life with God that is always in the background. So I have no lack of content out of my relationship with God. And then you mature into, you know, that... like, Eugene Peterson has passed away, Dallas Willard has passed away, Tim Keller's passed away. Like, we need fathers. We need fathering. And I find myself in that role now. And really enjoying it. Really enjoying it.

So the emails that she's talking, I send out a Friday video, but I only send it by email, because I don't want to just throw it out to the internet. That's not what it's about. It's for those who want it and who find it helpful. So you can get on our website at wildatheart.org, you can sign up for the daily, the weekly thing. That's how you do it.

Annie: It's really helpful. That and the Pause app. I mean, we've told you this before. We do the Pause app every Monday morning before our staff meeting. It is the first thing we do is pray into that and say back to Jesus, Okay, everyone and everything belongs to you. We're about to meet but it all belongs to you. So whatever you say.

Okay, what did we not say that you want to make sure we say? Is anything bubbling or are you thinking about anything that you want to make sure I don't miss?

John: Please take the pressure off your summer, folks. Pressure kills everything it touches. It kills your life with God. There's all kinds of pressure there. It kills friendships if there's pressure. It kills vacations if there's pressure. Take the pressure off. Let it be. Let it be what Jesus is guiding you into. Because if you can get the pressure off, you'll have a whole lot more joy.

Annie: Would you mind to close us out, especially since my team will be listening to this episode last before they go on their summer Sabbath as well? Would you just pray for us and pray for our listeners, pray for my team that we would all Sabbath well, or go into this and get what God has for us out of it?

John: Let's pray together, everybody. Let's pray together. The first thing we say is, I want what you have for me. So, Papa, Jesus, Holy Spirit, would You show me what You have for me? Show me what You have for me and give me an openness to being able to receive that. You might tell me to take a trip I didn't think I was taking. You might tell me to stay home from a trip I thought I was taking. Show me what you have because that's the path of life.

Would you show me any agreements that I am making about my summer or people or even myself? Would you show me those agreements now? Because I do want to break them with You. And then Lord, we are asking, be the romancer of our hearts. You know what my heart comes alive to. I pray that You would show me Your gifts that You have for me and give me eyes to see and ears to hear them as they come so that I don't miss these sweet gifts from You.

We consecrate our summer to You. We make it Yours. We bring it into You, Jesus. Now shepherd it. In your name, we pray. Amen.

[00:47:48] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, isn't he the best? Doesn't it just feel like... I mean, it's what he said. It just feels like we're being fathered in our spiritual life with God. I love how he kept saying, okay, remember in the backdrop of all of this is life with God, life with God. Oh, I just enjoyed it so much.

Make sure you're subscribed to the Wild at Heart podcast. I don't want you to miss what he has to offer there as well. He and his team are discipling and leading so beautifully over there. And of course, if you've never read one of John's books, this summer is your chance. You know, he talks about God being a great romancer.

He has a book called *Sacred Romance* that is really beautiful. But then also *his Get Your Life Back*, I mean, all the most recent ones have just been so helpful. So make sure you grab one of those or grab the audiobook. He does a beautiful job reading the audiobook. He also has a book about Jesus called *The Beautiful Outlaw* that is... the audiobook is incredible. So check all those out.

Make sure you're following him over the Wild at Heart Instagram on social media. Tell him thanks so much for being on the show. And as well, if you want to sign up for those Friday emails that I find really helpful, wildatheart.org.

If you like this episode, I bet you're also going to love Episode 476 with his partner in crime, Alan Arnold. He works with John and is on the podcast a lot and really helped usher us into last summer. And I think you're going to love the nuggets from that. Or Episode 180 with our good friend John Mark Comer.

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

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm normally embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, wherever you want to find me, I will be there. Well, I will be there starting July 8th.

But I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you and I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me is knowing that our team at AFD Inc. is getting some rest right now. So if you need any of them this next week, also not available. Everybody is out of the office, so save your questions. We'll get back to you as soon as we get back.

Have a great weekend. Happy 4th of July for those who are celebrating here in the US. We'll see you back here on Monday, July 8th. Remember, no episodes next week, the week of July 4th, but we'll be back in the office, back to the podcast on Monday, July 8th, where we kick off a brand new series.

Y'all have a great week. Have a great July 4th week. Get some rest. Have some Sabbath. Let your soul heal. We'll see you back here on July 8th.