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Sponsor: Shout out to Claritin for supporting this episode and providing us with some samples. So if you have read That Sounds Fun, you probably remember the story of me trying to get a dog and then realizing I was allergic. Sad day. This is why I'm glad I found Claritin D because an allergy attack is literally the worst. So I am thankful to have it on hand around my friends, pets, and other things.

Luckily for those of us who live with the symptoms of allergies, we can live Claritin-clear with Claritin D. It's designed for serious allergy sufferers. Claritin D has two powerful ingredients in just one pill. This double-action combination of prescription-strength allergy medicine and the best decongestant available relieves sneezing, a runny nose, itchy and watery eyes, and itchy nose and throat, and sinus congestion and pressure with ease. Amen to that.

There are also a lot of seasonal allergy sufferers over here at AFD Inc. and at the That Sounds Fun Network. So Claritin D really works for this crew.

Ready to live life as if you don't have allergies? It is time to live Claritin-clear. Fast and powerful relief is just a quick trip away. So you can find Claritin D at your pharmacy counter. Just ask a pharmacist for Claritin D at the pharmacy counter. And you don't even need a prescription. Just go to Claritin.com right now and you can get a discount so you can live Claritin-clear. Use as directed.

[00:01:17] <music>

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.

Before we dive into this conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors. This show is sponsored by [BetterHelp](#). We all carry around different stressors, big or small. And I know y'all are feeling all of the stress of May right now. So many events, so much to do, and for some of you, so many end-of-school-year things. But when we keep all that stress bottled up, things can start to go sideways.

Therapy is a safe space to get things off your chest and to figure out how to work through whatever's weighing you down. Give BetterHelp a try. It's entirely online, designed to be convenient, flexible, suited to your schedule. And it's so simple to get started. Your session can be done right from home. All you do is fill out this brief questionnaire — y'all know we love a quiz — and you get matched with a licensed therapist. You can switch therapists anytime for no additional charge, because finding the right match for you is really important.

So get it off your chest, release some of that stress with BetterHelp. Visit betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun today and you'll get 10% off your first month. That's betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun.

Intro: Today on the show, I get to talk with my friend Jennie Allen. You know Jennie. She is the founder and visionary of IF:Gathering and Gather25, which we're going to talk about today. She's a New York Times bestselling author of some of your favorite books and mine, like *Get Out of Your Head*, *Find Your People*, and her latest, *Untangle Your Emotions*.

We're talking today about what she's seeing with Gen Z and college students, how we can all be a part of Gather25, and why untangling our emotions really matters.

Single Purpose League friends, get ready because we are starting a book club next week. We're gonna go through *Untangle Your Emotions* together. We already have all the details up at the Single Purpose League. That's patreon.com/anniefdowns. We'll tell you more about it at the end of this episode, but y'all, this is gonna be so good to unpack together.

If you're single and you're not in Single Purpose League, this is when you want to join. So make sure you head to patreon.com/anniefdowns. But first, here is my conversation that you're going to love with my friend, Jennie Allen.

[00:02:16] <music>

Annie: Jennie Allen, welcome back to That Sounds Fun.

Jennie: Hi, I love being here.

Annie: I love having you here.

Jennie: I'm having so much fun.

Annie: Listen, this is your fourth episode, and when you get to the fifth episode, you join the Hall of Fun, so let's get ready. I need you on that Hall of Fun with your friends-

Jennie: I cannot wait.

Annie: ...like John Mark Comer, Dave Barnes, Santa Claus, all the celebs are on there.

Jennie: Wow, I've been waiting to join the ranks of Santa Claus all my life.

Annie: I know. So here comes your opportunity for a Hall of Fun. Okay, we got to jump in. I mean, this is, for everyone listening, you need to know that Jennie and I go at 100 miles an hour all the time. Private life, public life, Jennie and I only... small talk is something we don't understand.

Jennie: Ever.

Annie: Ever.

Jennie: Never.

Annie: Jennie, tell me what is going on with college students.

Jennie: What is going on?

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Jennie: Well, first of all, you were supposed to be there.

Annie: I know. Can you believe I had a migraine? I haven't had a migraine in so long, and I could not get out of my bed on the day that y'all were at Georgia. I was so frustrated.

Jennie: Girl, she sent me like the 17 things she's tried that morning.

Annie: I know. You like how prayer was like the sixth thing on the list? I was like, meds, ice, shower, prayer.

Jennie: You named everything and the kitchen sink and [inaudible 00:03:30]

Annie: I know. I tried. I mean, I couldn't believe it. You were at West... I mean, when you went and filmed that video, that's the room of my life. Like the worship center you were in is the one that was the most deciding room of my spiritual life.

Jennie: You were supposed to be there, and I feel sad. I feel sad even talking about it. I'm bragging about a cool trip I went on I'm about to do with you.

Annie: I know.

Jennie: But it was so good. Annie, I will say we are all bragging on God here because it really is an act of God. If you're in the room, there's no possible way you could be like, oh, it's that. They did this. It's so raw and simple and dumbed down. They're planning these events in like four weeks. I don't know how all these kids end up

coming. There were 7,000. We had the biggest event we've had yet there. There were 7,000 UGA students on a random night.

Annie: Wow.

Jennie: It's just too good. So yeah, it is the Lord and we can't believe we're on for the ride. So yeah, we've been going to these campuses that started in Auburn. We had no plans of going anywhere else. It was just...

Annie: Oh really? It was just like, "Let's serve Auburn because that's where Unite started."

Jennie: Not even that. I said no 15 times before I finally said yes because Tonya Prewett, who is the visionary of Unite, she had this vision for Auburn. She said, you know, there was a hunch of maybe we could do it at other campuses, but she never said that to me or to JP. But she really felt like JP was supposed to open and talk about sexual sin, and that I was supposed to close and talk about confession. And that was her vision, and we came and executed that. I mean, it was just wild.

If you know the story, the first time we did it, we do an altar call, I come off stage and the pastor next to me shows me that a girl wants to be baptized tonight. And he said, "Isn't that sweet?" I said, "Are you going to do it somewhere?" He goes, "Yeah, we'll go to our friend's house that has a pool." And I said, "Could we do it somewhere bigger?" And he said, "Well, there's a pool."

Annie: Of course you did. Here's the sentence of Jennie Allen: Could we do it somewhere bigger? Can't we just do it somewhere bigger?"

Jennie: Why not invite everyone, you know? Then I run back out of the Passion band singing, and I run back up and just say, "Hey, somebody wanted to be baptized. Would anybody else want to be baptized tonight?" And all these hands go up. And I said, "Okay, well, we're going to go down to this pond." And then we were in the pond with, I mean, it was surrounded by 2,000 plus students till midnight.

Annie: Unbelievable.

Jennie: Then campuses started reaching out and saying, "Will you come here? Will you come here?" So that's what we've done. But it really is such a miracle. They are so hungry. Every person I baptize, I'll ask the question, "Why are you here? Why are you doing this tonight?" And it's the most sincere, beautiful answers. "I want to be clean." "I want to be right with God." "I want Jesus." "I need to change my life." "I need to give up the way I've been living." They want God, and they want grace, and they want the gospel. So beautiful.

Annie: As we're recording this, y'all are getting ready to go to University of Tennessee as well, and then pretty much the school year ends. So what vision do you see of what God is doing in college students that may not be stuck to the school year? Does that make sense?

Jennie: Yeah. I mean, here's what I feel. What we're seeing is there's a hunger. And what I would say to everybody listening is get in the game. This is going to take all of us. We leave, and praise God for the organization that Tonya and the teams bring, because they have churches. They are taking names. They're getting followed up with.

But at the end of the day, they need people to disciple them. Michelle Bost sat in my college life, and I would go to her living room floor, she would cook slice and bake chocolate chip cookies, and she would pull out *Master Plan of Evangelism*, I am who I am because she sat on the living room floor with me, and she made God make sense. She taught me how to have a quiet time and to read my Bible. She encouraged me to share my faith with everybody that I was around. She taught me how to do that.

So all of that is in me, and I'm doing it today because of Michelle. So all of these students, it's so exciting that the Lord is awakening their heart, but they need a Michelle Bost. They need somebody to walk beside them. And I know that is your passion, deep passion as well.

Annie: Yeah. I mean, literally, I taught at church on Sunday, and on Monday morning, I'm texting our discipleship pastor, and I'm like, "How do we help them do it now?" Like, I'm like, this cannot be... John Mark Comer said this in a talk recently I listened to about fasting when he said, "We offer you concept, you make the choices of your life." And I'm like, man, I want to offer concepts on Sundays or through podcasts or whatever, and then immediately have, Here's what you can do with it. Here's how you let it shape your life.

An interesting thing, Jennie, and you can talk about this as much as you want to or not. The talk you do, after you did your talk at Georgia, I got a text from students and leaders who were like, "This was so impactful. She was tied up, untied..." And it's all about confessing and how confessing changes your life. You did a version of it at IF:Gathering, and there was a resistance. What's the difference? Why are grown-up women resisting? Did I feel that wrong? You can also say there wasn't.

Jennie: No. I mean, yes and no, because we also saw crazy things confessed. I mean, so yes and no. But is it the same? Absolutely not. And I knew it wouldn't be. I knew it wouldn't be. But also I had to try. I mean, it was our year 10. I had done that talk... Now, a version of that talk, I'd done it at Passion, very different, but leading to

Confession. I'd never done Confession at IF, and I'd been doing it with college students since 2018-

Annie: For years, yes, I remember.

Jennie: ...at Texas A&M. Again, totally different message, but leading to the same place. So I was like, I've got to do it. I've got to just do it and be obedient to that. And it was brave. I even started out by saying, does it stop with them? Why do they do it so easily and so readily? Why are they waiting for it? That's so different.

I think there's a lot of reasons for that. I think they live very in touch with their sin for a lot of reasons. I think at this age many of us have learned to quit thinking about that and want to quit thinking about that. So I think it takes a minute. I don't think they were resistant. I don't think that's the right word. I think it takes a minute to get there.

Annie: It's just a slower-moving train.

Jennie: Yeah.

Annie: Love it.

Jennie: But is there something unique about Gen Z? I've felt it since the second I showed up in the room with them. And that was 2018. And I left and they weren't named. Nobody was calling them Gen Z yet. And I walked out and I came home and told my team, I said, "Something just changed in the room. Like this isn't the same people I've been talking to." And it's just true. They aren't cynical.

Annie: And are they listening? Is that Gen Z listening to your podcast? Because in your episode last week with Aundi Kolber, you said, "Okay, for the 22-year-old who is listening..." Are they listening to your podcast?

Jennie: Oh yeah. I mean, a lot of people walk up to me and hug me and they're like, "I love your podcast." So yeah, y'all are out there with Aundi too, I know.

Annie: Because I think they're drawn to your "just come and be who you really are, and let's get it right so we can get going."

Jennie: Write down my people. I mean, there's a reality that I found my people. There's no doubt. And I knew it the first time I ever spoke to them. And I think it was because, you know, they aren't cynical. They aren't deconstructing. They are hungry. They are broken. And they want God. And I'm good at that. And I'm good at bull crap. Like, I'm not going to try to... I don't warm everybody up with great story. I'm like,

walk out in ropes. I'm like, yeah, we're all screwed up. Like, I'm going to be as real and raw. And I think they appreciate that. And that's worked for us, our relationship.

I joke with JP, I'm like, you're the dad and I'm the mom. I do think there's a little bit of just spiritual craving of parents. Many of them do have parents, but maybe they don't have spiritual parents. And so I do think that too, that I'm their mom. I will tell them the truth, and I will say this is where you go when you need help. And they want help and they want to follow and they want to go.

Annie: Yeah. It is so interesting... The percentage of people under 30 that listen to my show is pretty small. So for you to be publicly speaking to them directly on your podcast and having Aundi really speak to the emotions of a 22-year-old, I was like, Oh, they are coming to Jennie as well after these events because everyone actually feels safer with someone who gives them the actual rules than who tells them there aren't really that many rules.

Jennie: Yeah. We talk about this a lot, me and JP, afterwards. Because all of us in the room are trying to understand what's happening. And it's really hard to break it down, because it is a movement of God, and so you can't walk out with a formula or what works. But we notice things, right? You do notice things.

I think what I notice is they want to be found. They want to be seen, and they want to be believed in. They say that to me all the time. I get thank you notes from them all the time, and almost always it leads with, thank you for believing in us.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Jennie: Thank you for seeing the best in us.

Annie: Wow.

Jennie: There's this sense of "You haven't given up on us. You're for us." And I think that's an important message for everybody to hear, that they are listening. They're listening to everybody talk about their generation and they are looking around and they see it. And it's not untrue. There's a lot of brokenness. But it's brokenness that we largely raised them in and handed to them. So we need to take responsibility for our part.

Then we need to really see the best and believe in them. There's a simplicity and a hunger and a desire in them that I don't see other places in the same way.

Annie: What's the bottom age of Gen Z? Do you know? Are all college students right now Gen Z?

Jennie: I want to say they're around 11 or 12.

Annie: Oh, got it. Okay.

Jennie: Then it moves to alpha after that. I'm pretty sure 10-year-olds are alpha.

Annie: So literally every child you have raised is Gen Z?

Jennie: Is Gen Z.

Annie: Really interesting.

Jennie: I live with them and I live with all their friends. I've been doing what I do in that room for them for a lot of time.

Annie: That's right. That's exactly right. I think it'll be interesting for people to hear, if you don't mind me saying this, part of the relationship with Tonya Prewett is you were discipling her child.

Jennie: That's right.

Annie: So even these events coming together were birthed out of discipleship. M

Jennie: I'm mothering her child in my living room.

Annie: That's right. That's right. And you never did it, I assume, because I know you, you never did it with the "I hope this turns into speaking events".

Jennie: I never could imagine this. I mean, it's all wild.

Annie: It's wild. Yeah.

[00:15:11] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Ritual](#). Okay, you've heard me mention this before, but I still think it's a crazy fact. Did you know women were excluded from clinical research policy by federal law until 1993? That is wild.

Women belong in scientific research. Ritual knows this too because they conducted a university-led human clinical trial for their Essential for Women 18+ Multivitamin. The results? It increased vitamin D levels by 43% and omega-3 DHA levels by 41% in just 12 weeks. That is awesome.

I love their multivitamin for women. It has high quality traceable key ingredients and clean bioavailable forms. The multivitamin includes omega-3 DHA to support brain health, vitamin D, magnesium, and boron to help maintain bone health, and iron and methylated folate to promote red blood cell formation.

You just take two capsules a day, which include nine key nutrients. The capsules feature a delayed release designed to dissolve later, which helps make it gentle on your empty stomach. It also has a minty essence that you know I love. It's in every bottle. It keeps things fresh, helps make taking your multivitamins every day actually enjoyable.

Plus, Ritual multivitamins are vegan, non-GMO, gluten, and major allergen-free. And they're a female-founded B Corp, meaning they are holding themselves accountable to not just their company's financial health, but also the health of people and our planet. No more shady business. Ritual Essential for Women 18+ is a multivitamin you can actually trust.

Get 25% off your first month at ritual.com/thatsoundsfun. Start ritual or add Essential for Women 18+ to your subscription today. That's ritual.com/thatsoundsfun for 25% off.

That link, remember, and pretty much every other link you could ever hope for are down in the show notes below or we'll send it to you every Friday in an email at the AFD Week in Review. You can sign up for that in the show notes below as well.

Sponsor: And another incredible partner that I love, and I love telling you about, [Liquid I.V.](#) Listen, I love when it's hot. I grew up in Georgia, so being hot is just in my bones. But I know summer requires extraordinary hydration, and that is where Liquid I.V. comes in. You know I am a fan.

Liquid IV hydrates you with benefits like electrolytes, essential vitamins, and clinically tested nutrients. With three times the electrolytes of the leading sports drink, plus eight vitamins and nutrients in a single stick, it is clear why Liquid I.V. is the number one powdered hydration brand in America.

There are so many flavors to choose from, too. We love the sugar-free flavors around here. White peach, green grape, raspberry, melon, and lemon-lime. You just tear open one pack, put it in your water bottle, and you are good to go. My current

favorite is probably the white peach. I literally have a water bottle every morning sitting on my desk, thanks to Lillian, with water and Liquid IV, and I love when it is a peach day.

Turn your ordinary water into extraordinary hydration with Liquid I.V. Get 20% off your first order of Liquid I.V. when you go to liquidiv.com and use the code THATSOUNDSFUN at checkout. That's 20% off your first order when you shop better hydration today using the promo code THATSOUNDSFUN at liquidiv.com.

Okay, now back to our conversation with Jennie.

[00:18:23] <music>

Annie: In the midst of this, you're also building Gather25 that I'm like... you know this, I'm level 100 excited about. I tell you all the time, when I talk about Gather25, it's a "we". I'm always like, oh, what we're doing. Oh, what we're doing. So you're stuck with me.

Jennie: All of you need to say we too, because it's going to take all of us.

Annie: So what's God doing? That is happening in Gen Z and also Gather25 is coming next March. What's the big story here?

Jennie: Man, you better believe it. We have lots of talks about it, me and him. I don't know. I did not plan Unite. Unite came out of nowhere for all of us. Again, it was just one event. It was just supposed to be one event and then now we're on our fifth and with about 20 in requests for, you know, for next year.

Annie: Wow. I'm sure. I'm sure.

Jennie: It's not going anywhere. So I didn't see that coming the same year as Gather, the same year as I released a book. I mean, goodness.

Annie: The 10th anniversary of IF.

Jennie: Oh my gosh. I wrote a book. And let me add to the whole mix, Track Captain's mom, which might be the hardest job of them all.

Annie: Oh my gosh. For which kid?

Jennie: Caroline. I come home and like... it's hysterical. I come home from preaching Jesus and baptizing people and I'm like throwing on my sweats and running up to the school to pass out chicken.

Annie: Right. Totally.

Jennie: It keeps me very grounded.

Annie: That's right.

Jennie: I've asked the Lord even as recently as last night, is there anything You want me to let go of? Is there anything I'm doing that is just not of You? And I'm mostly open to the answer. But whenever I ask that, I really feel like No, you're doing what you're supposed to do. And I'm not tired. There's a sense of just He's providing and he's doing something in this moment. And I really believe it won't be every year for the rest of my life like this. I think we're in a moment and I believe it's all going to work together. And I've had that sense from the beginning.

I remember when we realized, oh gosh, this might become something and it's going to need... I mean, I was moving events to try to get to these college campuses and changing plans and my sweet team was having to negotiate and navigate all that. And they were like, "You are supposed to do this. We don't know why, but we know you're supposed to do it." And I feel that way too. And they're not sitting there going, but what about Gather? You need to be fundraising and you need to be... And it's true. I need to be doing all of that. I just came from a fundraising lunch.

But I just think for this moment, and Chris Caine always says this, like I have a special anointing, like to speak at 783 events a year.

Annie: If anyone does two a day, it is Chris.

Jennie: And I do feel that right now on my life. Now, I don't know how it all goes together yet, but I'm trusting and I'm starting to see glimpses, but I know at least as of last night, I'm where I'm supposed to be and I believe it will all work together. The people who don't know what Gather is, I feel like you should tell them.

Annie: That's what I was going to say, is will you tell us what Gather25 is. It's gather25.com, and so everybody can go there.

Jennie: Every single one of you listening needs to go to gather25.com and click "I'm in". That's all you need to do right now, because then we can tell you what to do next. But basically, it's the entire church gathering around the world for the first time in history is what it is.

Annie: I quote you all the time of like, this is the first time the whole church has been able to gather since Pentecost.

Jennie: Technologically, it's never been possible.

Annie: It's crazy.

Jennie: AI is the reason it's even possible. But I didn't know that when I felt called to do it. I just knew it made sense to do it. I had a dream. I woke up and I had dreamed that Jesus had come back or was coming back in 10 years. I was like, what would we do if that were true? And I knew we just needed to all have a big meeting, like a big old church meeting. And everybody needs to come and we need to get on the same mission and the same plan. And we need to reach the ends of the earth and we need to love people to Jesus. And we need to simplify it and we need to worship God together. And we need to hear what God's doing in the church because it's incredible and everywhere. He's doing some of the most incredible work that's ever been done and we aren't telling those stories.

We are gonna gather on every continent live together, and we're gonna go live from stadiums, I think there's seven currently, stadiums around the world. And each part of the world is gonna host the whole world for 25 hours.

Annie: On March 1st of 2025.

Jennie: March 1st, 2025.

Annie: For us, does that start on February 28th?

Jennie: Yeah, for us. We start February 28th in the U.S. and we'll go live here. We're the only one that doesn't have our exact location yet. We put a hold on AT&T in Dallas, so we'll see if that's where we end up. Every other continent and place is in the works. But yeah, it's wild.

It's the craziest, most fun thing.

Annie: It is crazy.

Jennie: Like stories of pastors that are in Romania that we come to them and say, this is what we're doing, and we want you to host the world, and they start crying. And they have been meeting across denominational lines, and they have been praying. They're like, This is what we've been praying for. "We've known something is coming and we didn't know what." And these pastors who meet together and pray

and cross all these lines are going to help for a little while host the whole wide world.

So it's pretty wild. I mean, it hurts your brain in the meetings because you can't believe all the moving parts to gather 2.5 billion people. But if you're listening and you love Jesus, we want you there.

Annie: And the good news is you don't have to travel. The hope is that churches all over the place will host their own livestream and keep it in their community, right?

Jennie: We want you to host in your church. It's just IF:Gathering. You host wherever you are. We hope there's hundreds of thousands of churches participating. And we're going to drop into all of those as well. It'll be so fun.

And we'll really see the church. Like you got a picture worship in South Korea and Kari Jobe —who I'm asking you officially right now, Keri Jobe, haven't gotten to you yet — sitting there worshipping with South Korean worship. There's so much we can do that is just... we will be so moved by... it's a small world happening in real life on our phones and in our screens.

There's this pastor in Uganda named Pastor Wandera who I've become friends with over the years. He moved back to the slums after going to college and getting married. He moved back to the slums of Uganda where he had become a Christian to pastor the church there. So what I've pictured from the beginning, I've already asked him, I'm like, Will you host the entire world from your church? And I've pictured, we drone shot down, you see the slums, you see the little church, you go into his church, and then they lead a worship song for the world.

And when I asked him, he just started crying and he said, "I will host the world. We will host the world."

Annie: Bless his heart.

Jennie: I know. So those are the little moments. Like we've got to keep everybody's attention for 25 hours. So it will not be boring. We will work really hard to make it exciting.

Annie: Are you not going to sleep for the whole time?

Jennie: Oh, I won't. No way. I bet you a lot of people don't.

Annie: I bet we won't. All the other countries are like, Oh yeah, why is it only 25 hours? Why don't we do it for 78?

Annie: I've never done a sleeping fast. This is going to be the biggest lock-in I've ever gone to.

Jennie: It's true. By the way, every church can host for the totally same amount of hours you want to do. You can host for three, you can host for the night, the morning, whatever you want. But I will say at Asbury, you know, how they kept going, because I was there in the night. I got there at like 2 a.m. and they ended up bringing their pillows and sleeping bags.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Jennie: That's how it went.

Annie: I did not know that. Oh, that is hilarious.

Jennie: Everybody was just at 2 a.m., 3 a.m., just taking naps around the building.

Annie: I can't wait for Gather25 because it feels like in order to go into the next thing we all need to do, we have to have a meeting, like you said. It feels like there's this new thing coming, and maybe it's Jesus. But it feels like there's this new thing coming, and we're like, okay, in order for that to be true, then we need to do this. So we all need to be here so that we can then go and like get our notes. It's like we need to come take notes is how I feel.

Jennie: Yeah, that's the sweetest.

Annie: Because you're not trying to do a rah-rah thing, right? Like you're not trying to just get everybody hyped. You're bringing everybody together to give some specific-

Jennie: Oh, there's a very clear mission. We are doing this for a reason. It is to gather the 2.5 billion people that say that they are believers in Jesus Christ to love and to reach the 5.5 million that do not know Him yet.

Annie: Billions. The 5.5 billion, right?

Jennie: I mean billions, sorry. I often speak in numbers like billion. I can't believe I messed that up.

Annie: You've really moved from the M's to the B's in all of this, ma'am.

Jennie: To reach the 5.5 billion. It just makes sense. It was the plan of Jesus. And who knows that He's not coming back in our lifetime. And if He is, then let's be as

intentional and strategic as we can to love people to Him. And I think that the greatest way to do that is to mobilize the church. We're bigger than any country. We're bigger than any movement. There's no larger thing than-

Annie: People of faith.

Jennie: ...church spread out across the world.

Annie: Wow. Jennie, so explain to me, in the ecosystem of Jennie Allen and in the puzzle that is what you release, when you release it, what you build, how does *Untangle Your Emotions* fit in the middle of all of this?

Jennie: I mean, even before *Unite*, I was doing college revival stuff. So there was a sense of this already happening and people were like, Gosh, why write a book about emotions, write about revival? I remember Bianca, she was interviewing me recently and she was like, You're a revivalist. You always have been. And I'm in this tension of, yeah, I just want to talk about Jesus. I want to see people come to know Him. I want to give him away. I want to preach Jesus.

But there was a lot of barriers to this. And we could analyze it all day, but a major one is, of course, emotional health. I believe what I was going after in this book was the demonizing of emotions because until we quit demonizing them, we can't heal in them and we can't be free.

So I'm looking for freedom. I pulled out this old mission statement I wrote. You know, I first started public ministry. It was the first time I ever did something like that. And it was: I want to be free and set free. That was my mission statement.

Annie: Oh my gosh. Jennie, like in like 2005 or something?

Jennie: Well, yeah, it was early 2012, 2011, yeah.

Annie: Oh my gosh. "I want to be free and set free." You have been doing that.

Jennie: It works. We didn't change the mission statement when we were refreshing. I was like, you know, that's exactly still true. And that's what I want to give my life to. So for me, freedom is not just at salvation, although that is the most important part of freedom. It is also freedom from the schemes of the devil. There are things that he has for us. And one scheme I believe for the church has been to demonize emotions so that we never heal from them. And we suppress them and we control them and we cope with them but we never actually get free of them, free of the bondage that they bring. Because there is a stronghold element when you repress your emotions and you never deal with them that you can't be healthy and whole.

Annie: Yeah, talk about why that matters. I mean, I'm not arguing with you. I have learned better. I know better. I am on Team Jennie.

Jennie: We like to fight sometimes. Please argue sometimes, Annie. It's my favorite thing.

Annie: Right, exactly. That's why I'm like, I'm good. So pretend like I'm like, hey, Jennie, I have had really painful stuff happen in my childhood, I had tough stuff happen in college, and I've had hard emotions around it, but I'm successful. I'm a teacher. I'm a nurse. I'm a doctor. I'm a lawyer. I'm successful in my life. I have the relationships that I want. Why dig up all that stuff?

Jennie: Are you happy and free?

Annie: Yeah.

Jennie: Are you happy and free?

Annie: Like, are you really happy and are you really free? Yeah.

Jennie: And would the people around you say that you're emotionally healthy?

Annie: Oh, right.

Jennie: That might be your real test.

Annie: Are you willing to ask people?

Jennie: I'm happy and free. And then are you willing to talk to the people closest to you and say, do you think I'm an emotionally healthy person? See what your kids say. See what your friends say. See.

I would say everybody is emotional because we are made in the image of God and God is emotional. And He feels every emotion. You see even fear which I thought how could God feel fear? But Gethsemane, the translation of the Greek word that he felt was anguish, like anxiety. It was the same.

Annie: Wow.

Jennie: So there was fear. It's most often translated as fear and anxiety. So you see a God who feels all the emotion regularly throughout Scripture. So we know that they're not sin. We know that they are given to us because we are image bearers of God, and they're gifts to help us navigate a very broken world, as they are for God, right?

Annie: Right.

Jennie: I mean, He's processing a very broken world and feeling emotion as He leads and processes it. I think what we've missed, and what I would say to people is you are an emotional person and it's going somewhere. So you may feel like I'm not an emotional person. And I would say well, you're putting it somewhere. It has to go somewhere.

So you may be able to pull that off for a while, but you'll be irritable, you'll be short with people, you'll be anxious. There's a lot of ways it can come out, but suppressed emotion will come out in some form. So why do we have an anxiety crisis? Because people don't know how to connect over emotion.

The goal of emotion... There's a purpose bigger than just processing the world, is connection. That mourning with those who mourn, which scripture calls us to, actually provides what our brain needs most, which is to not be alone in our pain. And when we're not alone in our pain, when we're actually connected to people in our pain, then we begin to heal.

It's a physical thing. You can see it. I showed that at IF:Gathering. You can see it. The healing happen in the brain. And so it's a real thing. Like when scripture says, mourn with those who mourn, when Jesus did it, when Jesus mourned with Mary, there's something happening that is bigger than fixing a problem, that is more substantial and that is more needed, I would argue.

90% of what we're dealing with isn't the problems we're facing. It's what we feel about the problems we're facing and the isolation that we feel facing the problems we're facing. So why does it matter? I think it is so core to the connection we have with God and the relationships we have with other people.

So until that gets healthy and well and whole and right, which only happens through connecting with our emotions and with other people in our emotions, then it's really hard to just beat people over the head with the gospel. Because what I actually talk about at the colleges is actually not about confession as much as it is about being stuck and how we got there, you know-

Annie: Oh, wow.

Jennie: ...and those stories of what leads us there. The reason I start there is because I think we think we're fine. You know, we walk through life, everybody says, I'm fine. I'm fine. I'm good. I'm good. I'm okay. Whatever your word is, you say it all the time.

And we're just not. And if we can see that and we can feel that, then that feeling can cause us and call us to reach out to God.

[00:35:09] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Hiya Health](#). Okay, I just saw my nephew recently, and as his aunt, I think it is my job to say yes to whatever that cute redhead wants, right? Ice cream for breakfast, absolutely. Skip the green beans at dinner, fine with me. But you know, I do want him to live to be 100 as well. So I get he needs some vitamins in his life.

Listen, this is where Hiya Health comes in. And they are the best. They're the children's vitamins you can trust because a lot of them out there are filled with sugar and other gummy junk kids don't need. But that's exactly why Hiya was created. It's pediatrician-approved, super-powered, chewable vitamin.

Hiya is pressed with a blend of 12 organic fruits and vegetables and has 15 essential vitamins and minerals. It's shipped right to your door and you can also get these really cute stickers with your first shipment so your kids can decorate their bottles. It's so cute.

We've worked out a special deal with Hiya for their best-selling children's vitamins. You get 50% off your first order. So to claim this deal, just go to hiyahealth.com/thatsoundsfun. Again, that's hiyahealth.com/thatsoundsfun, and get your kids the full body nourishment they need to grow into healthy adults.

And now back to finish our conversation with Jennie.

[00:36:29] <music>

Annie: You talk in the book about the three C's around how we attempt to handle our own emotions versus let them be healed, like how we kind of run from them. And it's control, cope and conceal. I'll tell you, I sat at dinner last night with two girlfriends and I said, one of the reasons I am seeing a counselor right now... I have a lot of reasons. I think you should always have a counselor in your phone. But one of the reasons I'm seeing a counselor right now is I can feel myself concealing my emotions just because we're doing a lot and there's not a lot of places I can talk about all the things.

And I said to my friends at dinner last night, I was like, I'm going to become Elsa. If I'm not careful, I'm going to be an ice queen who never shares her feelings with anybody.

Jennie: And accidentally hurts a lot of people.

Annie: Yeah, right. That actually freezes people. Precisely. Precisely.

Jennie: I was talking to somebody this morning about it and, and she was like, I just need to know why it's worth it. And I said, because I am at peace. Like I'm at ease. I'm at ease with my pain. I'll tell you about it. I'll tell you what I'm worried about. I'll tell you what I was praying last night and what I felt and what I needed and what hurts and where we're kind of feeling hopeless right now? I'll tell you all that.

And I'm okay with it because there's not this sense of me needing to fix it. I've gotten more comfortable in pain and that has brought less anxiety and more peace in my life. And then I'm more comfortable with other people's pain. Like, I can hear, I want to hear... I'm like, Annie, tell me about it. I wish I was at dinner last night with y'all.

Annie: I know.

Jennie: You didn't ask me what sounds fun, but dinner with you sounds fun. That's what I want to do.

Annie: Oh, I didn't because we just jumped in. I totally forgot.

Jennie: I was waiting for it. I was like, I want to just be with you on a beach. That's what I was going to say. But I take dinner.

Annie: Oh, that would be so fun.

Jennie: I take City House Gnocchi.

Annie: Oh, I know. That's right.

Jennie: So I just feel like there's this desire we have for peace and we want our hearts not to be so anxious, but the road to that is by getting more comfortable with what we feel in a given day. Because when you share that, when you go to dinner and you say, oh, this is what I'm worried about, there's a release. There's something that happened that's supposed to happen. God built it to happen when you share that with someone else. But you have to first be able to notice it and to name it and to be aware of it so you can even do that. That was a muscle I had to grow. I wasn't good at this. I wasn't good at this.

Annie: Yeah, it's probably the most significant work I've done in counseling is just calling my feelings what they are. I mean, your process you walk us through in the book, it's why I want everyone to read it. And for our friends listening, our Single Purpose League, this is our summer book club book is this because... and we're going to you and I after this are going to have a quick conversation just for our Single Purpose League friends.

But when you talk about untangling your emotions, the notice, name, feel, share, choose... I mean, I've been in therapy since 2013, and I bet it took four years to get through notice and name.

Jennie: Right. And still, I'm working at it.

Annie: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Same, same, same, same.

Jennie: I mean, I think the noticing is a lot of work. I have to notice my body. I have to notice my shoulders are tight. This week I haven't been sleeping as much and my jaw has been tight and I'm really... because I'm so sensitive to this now, I'm really noticing it and I'm talking about it with my friends and they're making the greatest observations. They're like, what if you got a work phone in a home? You know, they're trying to help me.

Annie: Ma'am.

Jennie: And none of that would be possible. I know.

Annie: What if you got a work phone and a non-work phone?

Jennie: I dropped that detail because I wanted to talk to you about it.

Annie: Life-changing.

Jennie: I'm open. And they're able to get in my life and you're able to get in my life and now we'll talk offline about it. Oh, why? Because I noticed that I felt anxious this week. Where if you told me, it would have been like, I'm not sleeping, it's probably hormonal, it's this, it's that, my jaw's tight, I probably need to get a massage, old me would have been trying to fix the physical problem rather than what is the physical problem saying about how my heart is doing and what I need to pay attention to.

Annie: What does untangling our emotions do for our spiritual life with God?

Jennie: Well, it was such a great conversation. For my podcast this morning, I interviewed Pete Scazzero, who wrote *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. This premise of the

book is you will only ever be as spiritually mature as you are emotionally mature. It was radical years ago when he released the book.

Annie: Yes, I remember.

Jennie: It's still practical. I mean, there's still a lot of pushback to this idea that-

Annie: I was going to say, I don't think everybody loves that concept.

Jennie: Right. But he's like, how many people do you know that know the Bible, but cannot relate to other humans? They don't have good marriages, they aren't loved by their kids. How often do you see people that know the truth, but they don't.. What is that breakdown? And he would say, oftentimes that breakdown is emotional health. And because we've demonized those emotions, or we never matured in them, we never learned how to deal with them.

So the cost, I believe, to our spiritual lives is a disconnection from God. The gift of emotions is connection with God and connection with other people. We all know this. And you know this. Even if you're disagreeing with me in your heart still, you know this is true. Because if you think, why do I love God, not, why do I believe in God, why do I love God, you will go to a valley, you will go to a dark moment in your life, you will go to a season of doubt or fear or anxiety or anger or hurt or resentment, you will go to a feeling moment in your life and you will say, because God rescued me from (blank).

The reason you remember that is because you were desperate, because you were desperate. You were on a bathroom floor crying because you were in a broken situation that there was no hope. So we know emotions connect us to God. But why does that somewhat sound heretical when I say it? These things are not in opposition.

The way the church has spoken about emotions is as if there are emotions or there is following God. There's not both. When that is just out, that is heretical. It has to be heretical because Jesus was so emotional and so was Father God and so was Holy Spirit. So it has to be heretical.

So just in the very essence of who they are, we cannot demonize emotions. We have to believe they're good. And they're gifts. Now we can abuse emotions, we can let them rule our lives, they can become our God instead of God himself. So there's all kinds of broken things. Just like with sex or money or any other thing that is good that God can use, it is possible to make it the ultimate thing and never heal. And that is certainly not what I'm talking about.

But the gift of it for our spiritual lives is that He draws near to the brokenhearted. That blessed are those who mourn because they will be comforted by Him ultimately, and hopefully by others too.

Annie: I love at the beginning of the book where you talk about, I mean, the very first scripture in the book is that God will give us a heart of flesh instead of a heart of stone. And I was like, man, that's it, right? Like, that's it. It is very easy to ask a self-identifying question of, do I think my heart is more like stone or more like flesh today? And then go, and why? And why?

I mean, when I was reading that, I thought, oh, that's the center question is: have I received a heart of flesh, or am I operating out of a heart of stone today?

Jennie: Yeah. I mean, there's just not a doubt it's easier to operate out of a heart of stone.

Annie: Yeah, right. I thought you were gonna say heart of flesh and I was gonna disagree with you. But no, it is so much easier to put your head down, for a lot of us to put your head down. And then there are other people, possibly Jennie, that I am not built like, who would say it's a lot easier to have a heart of flesh because I feel everything. Nobody would.

Jennie: I'm good friends with them and they would say it's harder to have a relationship.

Annie: Okay, great.

Jennie: I think we all can agree it's easier. Now, is it better? Is it living?

Annie: Yeah, right.

Jennie: Do you become a jerk with a heart of stone? Yes. So, you know, it's not the better way. We're not suggesting that. But it certainly is easier. But when is easier ever better anyway? I think this is the call is to live wholehearted lives that infuse God and relationship into every part of our lives. And we can't do that if we are walking around with hearts of stone. So yeah, it is the better way. It is the harder way. It's the messier way.

Then in other ways, it's such a sweeter way. Like I think about coming home and when I was working on this book and I was anxious and walking in the front door and noticing it and naming it and feeling it and giving it to Jesus in the car, and I walk in and everybody else is anxious too. So rather than react and all of it turn into a big fight, I was able to go, man, I had a bad day too.

What happened for you? And I was able to just be there instead of being short and irritable. I was able to be fully present with my kid. So it's worth it. Such a more real... you know, I think of the Velveteen Rabbit. It's better. You can get hurt, you can bleed. There's a lot more in the line, but it is the better way.

Annie: It is the better way. So not only are we going to read *Untangle Your Emotions* in Single Purpose League for May and June, but also... I mean, the made for this podcast, Jennie, it is truly... it's a don't miss for me. I mean, I'm like listening to the-

Jennie: Sure.

Annie: Oh yeah. I think your interviews are so good.

Jennie: You're my hero in podcasting. Are you even kidding me right now? Stop it. I cannot.

Annie: No, I love it. I just think you have really important conversations that I think all of us should... I don't like to 'should' people, but I think all of us should be listening to and making sure. So the amount of work you do is just really... I know you and I both are very blessed and lucky to have teams around us to help us get everything out that we can talk about. I mean, I talked all day yesterday and then I walked away and everybody else has to figure out how to get that out to the people to hear.

Jennie: We definitely have the easier part in that story.

Annie: Oh yeah, I'm like, I'm done. And they're all like, we are just beginning. We now have the files. We now have to make this work.

Jennie: Social media company and all of it.

Annie: Okay, what do we not talk about you want to make sure we talk about?

Jennie: Man, I mean, you know me, I'm like, how are you? What did we not talk about?

Annie: Listen, you and I are going to keep chopping it up for a few minutes for Single Purpose League. Particularly, I have one really particular question for you about how singles handle emotions, but we'll do that over for Single Purpose League. But I just love running with you.

Jennie: I do too, Annie.

Annie: It's one of the best things.

Jennie: You know what's so great and why you're listening to her right now is because she is probably one of the most encouraging people on the planet. You see the good in people and you believe God for people. You've done that for me in my personal life. I think that's what you do for everybody. I think that's why everybody is drawn to you is you have hope and you give it away to all of us. And I'm just so grateful. You are such a dear and important friend in my life.

Annie: Same.

Jennie: I just want you to be my friend forever.

Annie: Well, listen, I say to people behind your back all the time. If my phone rings at 10 o'clock, the only person I answer are my parents and Jennie Allen. I was like, everybody else I don't even look at. But you and I get an idea... [inaudible 00:48:32] I know I've done it to you too. If I have an idea, I'm like, I could text Jennie or I could call her and we just like knock it out.

Thanks for doing this. I love you. I appreciate you so much.

[00:48:46] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, isn't she the best? I know. Go get your copy of *Untangle Your Emotions*. Go follow Jennie on social media. And if you aren't already, just tell her thank you for being on the show. And make sure you're following Gather25 as well. It is going to be such a special 24 hours. Well, 25 hours.

If you're in Single Purpose League, remember Jennie is joining us over there on Tuesday. We're kicking off a book club with *Untangle Your Emotions*. It is going to be so fun. Now, if you aren't in Single Purpose League, but you want to be, listen, now is the time.

Single Purpose League summer is going to be the best, and we are starting it off with this book club. Your invitation to join is only open until Friday, May 10th. And then we are spending the summer really going to go deep with this current crew. We're going to do the book club. We're going to talk about where to meet people besides the dating apps these days. And in July, Single Purpose League is going to talk about the Enneagram.

So jump in before May 10th. Remember, you want to be in by May 10th for Single Purpose League summer. You want to go to patreon.com/anniefdowns. You do not want to miss this summer with Single Purpose League.

All the book club details, including a special discount code to purchase the book are over on Patreon already. So again, patreon.com/anniefdowns. You have until May 10th to join us for the summer.

If you have any questions from this episode, just drop them in the Q&A box in your Spotify app, and we will try to answer those or send them straight to us on Instagram @ThatSoundsFunPodcast. Make sure you're following over there as well.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. Anywhere you need me, that's where 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 is flying to the state of Washington. I cannot wait. I have not been on the West Coast in so long. I'm so pumped to get to speak out there this weekend. So y'all have a great weekend. Get some rest. We'll see you back here on Monday.

Listen to this. You know, we've done a gospel series. We did John, Luke, Mark, Matthew, and Acts. And we're just going to keep on rolling because y'all are loving it and me too. And we are going to be here on Monday with Pastor Matt Chandler talking all about the book of Revelation. We skipped all the way to the end.

So we'll see you back here on Monday as our series of Digging Deep on Books of the Bible continues with Pastor Matt Chandler.