

[00:00:00] <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 today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors, [AG1](#). My mornings are very important to me. I want to set my mind and my body and my spirit, set them up well for the day. And drinking AG1 in the morning helps me check off my nutritional basis and feel really great too.

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Intro: Today on the show, I get to talk with my new friends Chuck Mingo and Troy Jackson. Over the years, there have been so many friends of the show that have graciously helped us to navigate real issues in our culture, especially in our churches. And today I get to introduce you to those kind of friends.

We know racial division is a prevalent issue in the church and the world today. This isn't new information for us yet. God has promised us a unified future.

Seeking to provide a path forward, Chuck Mingo and Troy Jackson founded Undivided. It's an organization built to unite and ignite people for racial healing. Today we get to talk about it in their new book, *Living Undivided*. Chuck and Troy invite readers to take action in the story of reconciliation that God is writing.

Y'all, this book is a really helpful roadmap for reconciliation and healing. It might be easy to say, yeah, there's a problem, but it's often hard to figure out what steps to take to fix it. Chuck and Troy have been generous enough to help us with a plan.

So we get to talk about that today. We get to talk about Juneteenth, how we'll be celebrating that this week. And I'm really grateful for these two men, and I think you will be too. So here is my conversation with Chuck and Troy.

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Annie: Gentlemen, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

Chuck: Glad to be here.

Troy: Yeah, thanks for having us.

Annie: Listen, this is a fun conversation we're going to have.

Chuck: Yes.

Annie: Okay, will y'all introduce yourselves? Kind of tell us what you do, and then we will talk about *Living Undivided*.

Chuck: Yeah, I'll start. I'm Chuck Mingo, and I'm a father of three, married to my wife Maria. I'm a pastor in Cincinnati who in 2015 really got a calling from God. And it was a calling to lead a movement for racial healing and justice. So now I am a co-founder with Troy and have been for the last several years of Undivided, which is a movement for racial healing, solidarity, and justice.

Annie: Hey, nice job. Good sentence. Well done. Okay, Troy.

Troy: And Troy Jackson. I get to hang out with Chuck and be part of this amazing adventure, this fun adventure, challenging adventure of wrestling with race and racism in the church and in our society in the 2020s.

Annie: Do y'all mind telling us how old you are?

Chuck: Not at all. I'm 48.

Troy: I'm 55. Yeah.

Annie: So I'm 43.

Chuck: Okay.

Annie: So we're all above 40. This conversation, sometimes to me, the racial justice conversation feels more challenging for older people. Because those of us in our 40s, 50s, 60s, grew up in a different world than people in their 20s and 30s grew up in and are growing up in now for the younger 20s. Do you find that true in your work? Are you seeing...? Who's coming to you? What age people are coming to you to do this work?

Chuck: I think the older person should start first, Troy.

Troy: Thank you so much. It's interesting because I think when it comes to the church in general and those who are hungry, see in the scriptures and in their walk with God and in Jesus a concern about bridging, a concern about justice. We see a lot of folks, even up into their 70s all the way through, who are becoming convicted as we've had this reckoning on race, all the way back to, I'd say, Trayvon Martin in 2012, I think it was.

We've been in a period where a lot of people are feeling the dissonance between what we grew up in and what is real now. And we're being confronted in a different way. I think COVID exacerbated that. But I think there's a lot of older people who are wrestling.

Now, the wrestling looks very different. when you're in your 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, as opposed to a teenager or someone in their 20s. There's a lot to reimagine. There's a lot to unlearn along the path.

Chuck: I mean, I would agree with that. The word that came to mind for me was that conviction. I think that, you know, if you're in your 40s, you've lived long enough to see the brokenness when it comes to how race plays out in our nation, in our communities, and even in our families.

And I think that if you're in your 40s, you've probably gotten a vision that you don't want the younger generation, the Generation Alpha, Gen Z, you don't want them experiencing all that we've experienced. And so I do think that that conviction actually motivates people to step into this conversation, not really for their own sake only, but for how can we make this different for the next generation?

Annie: Yeah, I feel that too. 2012, I remember Trayvon Martin because it was so in the news. 2020 felt like we couldn't catch our breath before there was another story of injustice. Does that feel true to y'all too?

Chuck: Absolutely. And obviously some of that has been influenced by social media and the ability to get stories like that to go viral.

Annie: Sure.

Chuck: But I do think that, statistically speaking, there's just been more of those officer-involved shootings with unarmed African-American males. Those kinds of things have been happening with a frequency that's concerning.

Troy: Yeah. And I think we could go back all the way. We're just on the verge of the 10th anniversary of Ferguson in August 2014. There was a litany of names between 2014 and 2020. What was, I won't say completely unique, but different about George Floyd and his murder was, one, it was a long video. There was no trying to explain away, we weren't there, we didn't see it, we don't know what happened. It was also during COVID when it was hard to turn away.

I did see an elevation of courage when it came to race by pastors and leaders, including white pastors and Christian leaders like myself. And it was very momentary. Because the backlash hit and the weaponization hit, I'd say by the fall. We were hearing everything we did was diversity, equity, inclusion, or we were being woke, but the first one was critical race theory. There began to be a weaponization of race to prevent the racial healing and solidarity and justice we know we need.

Annie: Yeah, so for our friends listening, I didn't. We probably should clarify this. I am White, Troy.

Troy: Yes, I am White.

Annie: And Chuck?

Chuck: And I am Black.

Annie: Okay, good.

Troy: Good call.

Annie: That is good for us. I'm like, people watching will know, people listening will not know. I will tell you a little piece of my story. Two things happened around the

same time. One, one of our listeners very kindly reached out to me on Twitter and said, "I think it really matters to you, but your guests are not a diverse list. And I just want to say to you, as a Black woman, I would love to see more people who look like me on the show." And it was kind, and it was truthful, which y'all talk about in the book. I mean, it gives me goosebumps to tell you about it. It was kind, and it was truthful, and it changed us.

Now, the rest of the internet got loud around it, and not all of them were kind or truthful. She was. KB was kind and truthful when she asked us. So that's one thing that changed me. And then Ahmaud Arbery happened in Georgia. I grew up in Georgia.

Troy: Oh, wow.

Annie: It happened in a place I know very well. So something changed for me as well when I could picture... I mean, not the murder, but I could picture the neighborhood.

Chuck: Picture the place.

Annie: And I could picture the neighbors. And I had pastors I called and said, That is where you live. Like, what is going on? You're there. And so those two things kind of collided for me. I wonder if y'all experience that too in your work. Do you feel like when people have a personal experience, when it isn't just on TV, when it's something they know they're more inclined to be changed by it?

Chuck: I think that's human nature. And it's certainly the nature of our faith that we need to have an encounter. One of the things that we focus on in Undivided is giving people an opportunity to build relationships and share stories with people so that they can have that personal encounter. I think that is so critical for change to happen.

I have got to be able to sit across the table from someone that I've gotten a level of relationship with and hear their story and believe that it's true. And when that happens, then I can begin to... and we talk about this a lot in our work around empathy. Empathy isn't I have the same story as you, Annie, but it is I've had the same emotional experience that you've had. And I can get curious about what did I need or want during that emotional experience. And that allows me to enter into your experience with love, with grace, with curiosity, a healthy curiosity. And I think that's where change starts.

Annie: I can't think of the phrase, but there's a phrase, like a contact thing of if you're sitting across from someone you understand. I mean, we have a ministry with God Behind Bars at Crosspoint, and I went to the prison and preached live to the

women's prison. It changes everything when you have a conversation with one of them.

That is true for people of different races, people in the LGBTQ community, people who have been abused, people who are prisoners, people who have gone to public school and private school. Right?

Chuck: Yes.

Troy: And homeschool.

Annie: And homeschool. If you are sitting across from a person who has a different experience than you, you suddenly are far more compassionate than you were with your thumbs on Instagram or on Twitter the day before.

Troy: I think one thing that it's at least true in my journey, too, is as a White person, my heart needed to be broken around racism. It needed to go from an intellectual understanding that enslavement and slavery were part of our story. It needed to move beyond an understanding there were once separate water fountains back in the for far too many decades into this breaks God's heart and this breaks my heart and I feel convicted about my complicity.

Annie: I'm trying to look up a quote, but the truth is I don't need to look it up because I memorized it when I read it in your book. Your book is *Living Undivided*. One of your white pastor friends... I think this is so profound, and I would love for y'all to talk about it, because I bet 80% of the people listening feel this.

The quote was, "I can't win, I can lose, and I can't give up." Like, I'm not allowed to not talk about this. I will not win, I will never do enough, I will never say enough, and I for sure can say the wrong thing. So how do y'all help people in Undivided and help us right now, like help all of us listening go, I'm not going to stop this podcast, I'm going to stay engaged, even though that sentence feels profoundly true.

Chuck: That's exactly right. Troy and I have launched something called the Undivided Fellowship as a response to pastors who feel that way. Because you can feel that way if you're a White pastor. You can also feel that way if you're a pastor of color in a majority white context. And so what we've recognized is...

Annie: Or if you're a White mom in the PTA.

Chuck: Or if you're a White mom in the PTA. I mean, there's many ways that we can feel that sense. But what we've realized is what we need to continue to press into those

kingdom opportunities, and I think that's part of it, is not seeing it as a problem, but seeing it as a kingdom opportunity. But you need three things.

Number one, you need community. You need other people who, again, have that understanding of what it's like to be that pastor trying to wrestle through how do I disciple my people well on race without avoiding, or maybe you can't avoid, but trying not to avoid the landmines of ideology extremes.

But that community also has to give you a second thing, which is you need skills. Again, the whole growth mindset versus performance mindset. If the performance mindset is I can get it wrong, I'm probably not going to engage it. But if the growth mindset is I can grow to be better at leading well on race, that changes everything. So you need skills to help you do that.

Then thirdly, you need someone who will call you to courage. I can tell you one of the things that Troy did for me and continues to do for me as a Black man in this space is he calls me in and he calls me up to my best leadership. I think we all need someone... and I would hope that he would say, I've done the same for him, that we call each other in and up so when it feels like a losing proposition, we don't have to buy into that narrative. There's actually a way forward in community with skills and with people who call you in and up to continue to lead well.

Troy: Yeah. I think, and Chuck, you and I have laughed about this, that quote was from a White leader of a major movement in 2020, during the summer of 2020.

Annie: Oh, gosh.

Troy: I think what we would say is by 2021, it began to be "I can't win, I can lose, and I am quitting." So people are leaving ministry, pastoring, or they've... I think it's a delusion to say that you can just avoid race and avoid the political toxicity of our culture. What we saw was a lot of folks just said it's not worth engaging in '21 and '22, and it got worse every year '23.

And sometime around October, November of 2023, a lot of pastors woke up and said, kind of like in Game of Thrones, winter is coming, November 2024 is coming. There is a date on the calendar. The circus is coming to America in 2024, and we're in the midst of it right now, and there is no way to avoid it. So how do I lean in and lead well and shepherd and guide whoever I'm responsible for as a leader through these times?

Annie: Pastor Mike Kelsey taught me a very profound thing. He was on the show and I said, "This is a great time for us to talk because there's not an emergency, a race

emergency right now." He said, "Annie, there always is." He said, you may not experience it as a White woman, but we are never not without a concern.

That was so eye-opening to me because, as a White woman, it can feel like a tsunami comes and then it leaves. And then you go, Okay, okay, that happened. But now..." But what Mike said to me, what Pastor Mike says, he was like, No, it's always here.

Talk to us with November 2024 coming, with the volume of what people are saying online already, what is our role? What is ours to do?

Troy: Yeah, it's interesting, even when you were talking about what do we need to actually have breakthroughs. We just launched... in fact, Chuck and I were just in Lansing, Michigan Saturday to do a training with Christian leaders throughout the state on a different kind of civic engagement project.

So civic engagement is like voting work. It's the less polarizing way of saying voting work. There's an amazing Black woman who goes to a very large church, multiracial church, but predominantly White church in Michigan named Stephanie. She's leading this movement, and it is to build what we're calling redemptive non-partisan, non-persuasion conversations with friends, family, folks you go to church with, your neighbors, your co-workers.

So go to people you know. Most of what we experience in an election season is push phone calls or text messages or getting bombarded on social media or even the more established media. It's almost all toxic, polarizing, othering. Not redemptive.

And so what we're training people to do is, one, be able to share a little bit of one's own story and identify some values they bring to the public arena and civic engagement, and then listen well, with curiosity. Not to try to convince someone of something, but to hear one another's heart. We have a deficit of that and we've become more isolated and more... we've gone to our own echo chambers.

There's an excitement when we talk to pastors and leaders in Michigan and even around the country, train our people on some skills. It's one thing to do the sermon series or one sermon on politics and there's lots of different frames for that, but their ultimate identity is as followers of Jesus. We rarely go the next step to say, how do we equip our people with a skill set to have a different kind of political conversation that's rooted in Jesus, rooted in respect and the dignity of one another?

Annie: Chuck, do we have to talk about it? Do we have to be on social media taking a stand?

Chuck: Oh man, what a great question. What a great question. I actually think that in some ways being on social media taking a stand is so performative. That if it's all that you're doing, not only is it not enough, I think it's actually detrimental. There has to be... again, where are you rooted? We talk about this in the book. You have to be rooted in a context of relationships where you are living this out.

Now, many of us go to churches that are monocultural or not very diverse.

Annie: Monocultural, is that what you said?

Chuck: Yeah, monocultural.

Annie: I'm undereducated. I've never heard that word. That's great.

Chuck: I don't even know what that is. I think I might... I didn't make that up.

Annie: Well, let's give it to you. You did in this room.

Chuck: That's a word.

Annie: In the That Sounds Fun-verse, you made up with monocultural.

Troy: Chuck had that word as the challenge of the day to work it into the podcast.

Chuck: That's right. That's right.

Annie: Oh, good.

Chuck: Mission accomplished.

Annie: I wonder how much people do that. I wonder how much people do that. That's funny.

Chuck: But what I was going to say is... so your context could be a city. So, you know, in Nashville, I'm sure that there are churches that are mostly White, there are churches that are mostly Black, Hispanic, Asian, all kinds of different makeups of people. But a shared context is the city of Nashville, right?

Annie: Yes.

Chuck: And so what does it look like to say, I'm going to be in relationship with people who look different from me for the sake of my city. That could be your shared context. I just think if you have that, it gets you out of trying to give the right

platitudes, have the perfect tweet, always performatively have to give voice to something. You actually have something you can talk about.

So when everybody else is talking about the big picture thing, you can say, let me tell you how that's playing out in my city. Let me tell you about a relationship I had with KB who said to me, "Because I value what you do, Annie, I want this show to have people who reflect my lived experience." That's a powerful way to live this out. So I do think like, yeah, post if you want to post, tweet if you want to tweet, well, X if you want to X, whatever you call it.

Annie: Listen, I left there two years ago. I'm not going back. That place is garbage.

Chuck: You know, whatever it is. But I would say if that's all you do, then there's a discipling opportunity being left on the table for your own spiritual formation, and quite frankly, for your own fun. I mean, I can tell you, my relationship with Troy, which is now approaching 10 years, has been one of the most fun relationships I've had. We do hard work together. We challenge each other, but we laugh a lot. We play a lot.

We were doing some work in New York and on the Brooklyn Bridge for five bucks, 10 bucks. You can do this video where they kind of do a revolving selfie to the New York State of Mind song.

Annie: That's right. You're standing in the middle on like a platform and it goes around you.

Chuck: And man, we posted that and people just loved it because Troy and I couldn't be more different probably in terms of our background. I'm a hip-hop kid from the 80s and 90s. Not so much hip-hop guy. But we love each other, and our relationship is such a life-giving commitment to this work. To not just do it out there in the world, but to do it in our relationship and to do it in our own hearts.

Annie: Yeah, will you back up and tell us how y'all met? How did this even start?

Troy: Yeah. I was leading this group in Cincinnati, so I was a pastor for almost 20 years, and gosh, around 15 years ago or so, just got a sense of a call in my life to get involved in the work of racial justice. Didn't know exactly what that would look like. But got involved in a local group. Loved it. We were able to change some laws around opportunities for people coming out of prison.

I was part of a group that stopped a deportation of a young Guatemalan who came at the age of three to this country. I said, Okay, this is what I want to do with my life. I'm in my 40s. So I dove into community organizing, led a group called Amos.

We were about six months into it, and I said, Okay, let me have the audacity to go to the largest church in the city, the largest church, probably you could add any of their five churches together, and it would be smaller than Crossroads. And met with them, and their lead pastor, Brian Tome, or senior pastor said, "Go talk to Chuck".

Annie: Okay. And you were at Crossroads at the time.

Troy: Yes, full-time at Crossroads. So I went into this... it's an atrium.

Annie: It's massive.

Troy: There is massive atrium in Oakley community in Cincinnati. And met this guy by a little fireplace in December.

Annie: So you're really looking for him. You're like, I'm going there to meet Chuck.

Troy: I'm going to meet Chuck. It was a scheduled one-to-one. But I had no idea who this guy was. So if, Annie, you ever come to Cincinnati and go out in public with Chuck, you will get people stopping you.

Annie: He's like a mayor.

Troy: And they'll want a selfie, they'll want an autograph.

Annie: Chuck.

Troy: It's hard to walk from point A to B in the city because Chuck is... Yeah, he's on billboards for their Super Bowl stuff. So this is a big time guy I'm meeting.

Annie: Wait, for their Super Bowl stuff? What do you mean?

Chuck: Oh.

Troy: Super Bowl preaching.

Chuck: Yes, Super Bowl preaching. So we realized that Super Bowl weekend was the least attended service. Yeah. So to make it the highest attended service, we completely flipped it on his head. So we literally do a live preach off. There's halftime show, original commercials.

Annie: Hilarious.

Chuck: It is a blast. We do it every year. It's one of the biggest events in our city.

Annie: Oh, that's great. Okay, so you're like, He's on bulletin boards.

Troy: I mean, not bullets. Billboards. But we started having a conversation. I'd been to Ferguson the week before, it was right after Officer Wilson, who was the one who had shot and killed Michael Brown. They found no... basically didn't indict him. And I was there for a little bit of the protest around that. Get back and I'm... I mean, this is December 2014. So I'm asking some pretty intense questions, and Chuck doesn't know me-

Annie: Yeah. What were you thinking, Chuck? Were you like...? Because Latasha Morrison often says, not every one of your Black friends signed up to be your teacher.

Chuck: That's right.

Annie: I mean, it's one of her most helpful things to teach us is like, just because someone is a different race does not mean they want to teach you what that is like. Just like I don't always want to teach people what it's like to be a female leader. I'm like, I'm not here to teach y'all. But it is what people need sometimes. Were you already in a place to be a leader and a teacher on this or was that a surprising conversation?

Chuck: So here's what was surprising about the conversation. Troy's honesty and his directness. At first, I didn't know him and I started giving him kind of safe answers.

Annie: Yeah, you write about that in the book.

Chuck: I've been in majority White spaces most of my life. I know how to code switch. And so I know there's a level of vulnerability that I start with.

Annie: Wow.

Chuck: But at some point, his heart was on display. His earnestness, his honesty was on display and I felt like I could take a risk with him. So our conversation, even that conversation, got deep, it got honest. I told him I felt like we're in the 1960s. I told him how concerned I was at what I saw as the church's either inability or unwillingness to really lead in this conversation, to maybe call out things that are not just and name them very clearly. And that conversation led to an invitation to relationship.

Troy was leading an organization at the time that was doing faith-based community organizing for racial and economic justice in our city. And it was a big campaign

that was kind of forming around providing access to quality preschool. We talk about that in the book.

Troy invited me to be on the board of that. I began to learn about community organizing. And I would say Troy was a catalyst at a time that I needed for how to put my faith on display in the public square.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Chuck: That's really the journey that led to Undivided and the creation of Undivided.

Troy: And to be clear, I don't think I was coming for you to teach me. Because I do think as White folks, we need to do work. I was coming with a seeing, hey, is this someone that I'd want to partner with?

Annie: Got it.

Troy: And it was 20 minutes into the conversation and it was yes, I would love to be in a deeper relationship with Chuck. I think it was about a month or two later that Chuck came to one of our meetings with Amos. The one thing I remember about it, it was in a Catholic parish, and the heat wasn't working, and it was negative degrees outside.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Troy: So everybody was in like four layers. There were like 50 people in this room.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Troy: But Chuck came back after that. That was a good sign. But then Chuck said, Hey, God, I feel like God's stirring to do something at Crossroads on Race. And it was pretty ill-formed at that time. Would you come in and partner?

So I think that's the spark and the invitation for me to follow and be part of what Chuck was doing was great. And I committed a lot of time over that next year to build what became Undivided. And it's the best investment of a project I've ever been a part of.

[00:27:38] <music>

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Okay, now back to our conversation with Chuck and Troy.

[00:30:05] <music>

Annie: I think y'all are modeling a million good things, but one of the beautiful things you're modeling is y'all just were thinking about your city. Yeah. I think one of the... problems with the internet is we think, well, by putting this on Facebook, I'm going to change the world.

Chuck: I've just solved it.

Annie: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Or by asking this influencer, why haven't you said this? Because "we need you to say something" sometimes can feel like you're doing something big when the big thing could be, how do you help preschoolers in your town?

Chuck: That's exactly right.

Annie: And do you know people in your city who are not like you?

Chuck: I mean, Jeremiah 29 as a verse that even if you have a cursory familiarity with the Bible, we love Jeremiah 29:11, right?

Annie: Oh, everybody loves it.

Chuck: "For I know the plans I have for you." And I love it too. I love it.

Annie: Me too.

Chuck: But the whole context of that is about seeking the peace and the welfare of the city where I've sent you. And for the Israelites at that time, it wasn't their city.

Annie: That's right.

Chuck: It was Babylon. It wasn't a city that they wanted to necessarily seek the peace and the welfare for. But God said, you're here, and while you're present here, you should be a blessing here. And so I think there is absolutely a call for all of us to recognize wherever we are, whether we love it or hate it, as followers of Jesus, for your listeners who are followers of Jesus, we're always called to seek the peace and the welfare of the city where we live.

Troy: The farther one gets from local relationships, local context, local rootedness, the more the hyper-polarized, toxic, red-blue pill, red-blue party dynamic begins to dominate. I think the place to start as a remedy to that is to... we've been saying, vote local, go local. You may not be excited about who's running for president, but there's probably a school board issue on the ballot. There may be a ballot initiative that you care about.

Who are some people you can vote for? Meaning I'm voting for... I mean it's one of the things in 2016 we did this big preschool ballot initiative. People were excited to vote in Cincinnati, not because who was at the top of the ticket in November 2016.

Annie: Sure.

Troy: They were excited to vote for children. The more we can get local, and we're doing this with groups around affordable and attainable housing, and it's... you go to a place like Cincinnati, or I suspect Nashville, or almost any city in the country, and start talking about the pain point of affordable and attainable housing, and almost everyone is affected.

So we may have to wrestle a little bit about what to do about it, but we share some pain around some of the challenges we face, which gives us some creativity to not have a left-right approach but to have a us approach to some of the local challenges.

Annie: I mean even this is probably true for y'all too but even right now here in Nashville my peers who are 40-year-old women middle to upper middle upper class women who own homes can't sell and move anywhere else.

Troy: That's right.

Annie: It's kind of like, well, where would I go? Because I can't afford to buy. And these are people who are already able to own homes. That's not thinking about the working families who got two incomes that are unable to make... I mean, it is... If anybody is struggling, everybody's struggling.

Chuck: Yes.

Troy: That's right. And disproportionately Black, Brown, people of color in our community.

Annie: So where do we start? So friends are listening and they're like, Okay, you're right. I want to do this in my town. Do you get in your car and drive over to the neighborhood that you don't know and just get out and be like, let's be friends. Where do we start? What's that first step?

Chuck: Yeah, well, we talk about this in the book. I think a first step can be, and I'm not just saying this just because we do this, but we'd love to partner with people who are really saying, Hey, I want to get involved in the work of racial healing and justice.

One of the things that we've learned how to do really well and we feel like it's part of our secret sauce is cultivating spaces of belonging and connection that activate people to live into their agency in this area of racial healing and justice. So we encourage people to reach out to us.

What we will help you do is figure out, what's your context? Is it a church? Is it a community? Is it a small group? And then how can that group begin a journey where over time you're building a larger cadre of people who have done some work around racial healing and justice, and now who are ready to have an imagination for how can we do this work in our city?

So in the book, we talk about the Living Undivided Circle, and it's based on Micah 6:8-

Annie: Oh, it's beautiful.

Chuck: ...which is all about walking humbly, which is really understanding your story, loving mercy, which is really around building in relationships, and then doing justice. And that's what Undivided takes people through. So we encourage anybody who's saying, "Man, I want to start," hey, we'd love to be a person that helps catalyze you in that journey.

Troy: And getting into those spaces of belonging is so critical. And that's something that you have to pursue. Especially if you've been in an all-White enclave, like what I grew up in, it's gotta take some effort. But also just a warning to White folks not to come in with all the answers.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Troy: The White evangelical, I think it's somewhere in our flawed DNA to believe that anytime we discover something, a problem in the world, we're the first to discover it, and we are the ones that are gonna solve it. It's this, Soong-Chan Rah talks about this triumphalism of White evangelicalism. And boy, that's a path to disaster. That's a path to paternalism and colonialism and trying to do for others what they can do for themselves.

How do we step in? For me, One of the most transforming things, and I talk about this in the books in my story, is learning to follow and submit to Black leaders and leaders of color. If you want to get involved in your local community, find a space that is not led—I'm strictly talking to White people—led by people that look like you.

What does it mean to join and be part of? And you say, well, my community's all White... and I discovered this a few years ago doing some work and organizing, that rural America is only like six to 7% less diverse than the country.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Troy: We are much more diverse. If you think about almost any little community, there is a Hispanic, Latino presence, there's probably a Black presence, not always, but a lot of times, particularly in the South, even in the Midwest. We can fall into the trap of believing that we live in these spaces that are all - what did you say? Mono...

Chuck: Monocultural.

Troy: Monocultural.

Annie: Monocultural. I know. I'll never forget it.

Troy: I've got to learn this word. But we say, look around and look around again. And we say, if you're in a congregation that's all White, what other congregations might you be in partnership? If you're in a denomination or a network, who can you learn from and who can you build partnership with that are spaces led by Black, brown, indigenous people of color?

Annie: Troy, what I hear myself saying, so I'm guessing some of our friends listening are saying is like, "Okay, I want to do that. Where do I start?" My brain is thinking, I need to find a book club that's led by a woman who is not White. Or I need to find... If our cultural, if our Monday through Sunday is mostly White, where do we even start to go find to follow a leader who is not like us?

Troy: Yeah, I think part of it is... we would say go local, look at what's going on in your community. For a period in Cincinnati I went and even became a member of a Black church. I was like in the 1% of White folks. So something like that if you feel led. Going to your local community and just looking at what organizations are there, what opportunities are there.

It could start with some virtual things. And there are spaces like Undivided, we have a monthly worship gathering that is 7 p.m. Eastern, 6 p.m. for you Nashvilleites.

Annie: Yes, thank you.

Troy: The second Sunday of the month typically, except for when we go up against the Super Bowl or Mother's Day.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Troy: It's a one-hour space that is multiracial, multiethnic, where we're bringing in guests like Brenda Salter McNeil and Shane Claiborne and Lisa Sharon Harper and Curtis Chang, our first four. And you'll get to hear from them.

But one of the things our people really want in that space, we reserve 15 to 20 minutes every time for you to go to a breakout room that will be multiracial, multiethnic, to just share and reflect and pray for each other.

Annie: Wow.

Troy: If you go to undivided.us, you can find a link to the gathering and just come check that out. But it happens every month. Again, undivided.us is a way to do that.

I do think, though, Annie, that one of the temptations or one of the challenges I see with White folks, and particularly older, we began this talking about middle-aged folks—I guess I'm middle-aged, 55 and older, trying to wrestle with that term—is the belief that just learning is enough.

So what we say about Undivided, we're not another book club. We're not another thought exercise. We're about relationship, cultivating spaces of belonging across race and ethnicity. And we also believe, as we say in the last part of the book, that what we're called to is not to talk about justice, read about justice, listen to an amazing That Sounds Fun podcast about justice, and stop there. We're called to do justice. That's what the Lord requires of us, according to the prophet Micah.

And doing justice means getting our hands dirty, which, by the way, is hard and a lot of fun.

Annie: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It is both. Chuck, a Black church sees Annie walk in. How does that make y'all feel? Does it feel like, what is she doing here? Does it feel like, is this safe? Does it feel like, Oh great, yay, she's welcome. I think sometimes the fear I have, I won't speak for anybody else, sometimes the fear I have is if I put myself in that space, that I am breaking into something that they would rather me not be at.

Chuck: Yeah. Well, Annie, I'm definitely always reluctant to speak for all Black people.

Annie: Certainly, certainly.

Chuck: But the question you asked, I would say, is one of the few exceptions. But I can tell you this. If you have never gone to a Black church, I think you'd be hard pressed to

find a warmer welcome and a kinder embrace in any gathering of people in the world. I will tell you, before you leave, somebody's going to invite you to dinner or lunch, and they will be so glad that you are there.

I think there's just such a hospitality of spirit that is a part particularly of the Black church experience. I grew up in a Black church. And there's just such a spirit of welcome that I think you would be warmly embraced.

And quite frankly, it would speak to levels of belonging that I think really reflect the gospel in a powerful way. Because here's how I look at it. I look at it and say, my understanding of the scriptures is that Jesus chose to love me when I was unlovable. That's my understanding of it.

And so if you think about it, all that Black people in particular, and this isn't just true for Black people, this is certainly true for indigenous people and other people of color in this country who have been impacted negatively because of racism and racial structures. When those people are able to come to a place of looking at the color of one's skin and not hating them, not being afraid of them simply because of the color of their skin, but embracing them as a person, I think it's an opportunity for us to experience Christ-like love.

And so again, when I think about this work and when I think about this call, I always want to look at it as what is the gospel opportunity? And part of the gospel opportunity is when you put yourself as a White person in spaces where you're not the leader and where you're not the majority, you experience a grace and a belonging that you can't experience in any other way.

Annie: So any of our friends listening could go to a church of a different race and not feel like they are invading.

Chuck: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Troy: And so much of the multiracial, multiethnic church has been on White terms.

Annie: Yeah, right. Interesting, Troy.

Troy: Black community, come to this White-led church, we want to be multiracial. We'll put somebody up in the worship team that looks like you. Would that do it?

Annie: Oh, wow.

Troy: And same with Hispanic, Asian-American. To go someplace where White people are not in control and submitting to that I think is powerful. I think the other thing

that I hear in that question, Annie, is, and we say this a lot, there is something about Whiteness and our insecurity to say, I don't want to make a mistake. Yeah. I don't want to go the wrong place. I don't want to say the wrong thing.

Annie: I can't win, but I can't lose.

Troy: When there's tension, I'm going to be a spectator. I'm going to be a learner and a listener. I don't want to take up space, any space-

Annie: That's right, Troy. I think you're right. I can feel that. I think a lot of people feel that.

Troy: And part of the learning, and Chuck's helped teach me this over the last decade as well, is that stepping back communicates something powerful, but it's negative. It's that I'm just here to be an observer. I'm not willing to take any risks. I'm not willing to be vulnerable.

And what we say is that anything, any mistake I might make or will make, in word or deed is... Chuck, it wouldn't be the first time you've experienced some racist comment or action.

Chuck: That's right.

Troy: But if I am just afraid of doing that, then it's not a growth mindset.

Chuck: Yeah, absolutely.

Troy: What I've learned is when I'm willing to not dominate, but be part of conversation, share my story, ask questions, be real, that trust grows so much quicker with my Black and Brown friends.

Annie: Even if you make a mistake.

Troy: Yes.

Chuck: Yeah, absolutely. There's a fundamental belief that I think we have to believe... You know, this is going to air around Juneteenth.

Annie: Yes, yes, we're getting ready to go there.

Chuck: Miss Opal Lee, I don't know if you know her story or not.

Annie: I know her name, but...

Chuck: 94 years old, I think, now, but has been on a campaign and has walked, I mean, all across the country to advocate that Juneteenth become a federal holiday.

Annie: Yes, because it's newer.

Chuck: It's newer, yeah. I think it's only like the last two years.

Annie: I mean, I read a research about it because I was like, Wait, I've heard it and now it's a national holiday.

Chuck: I think this is only going to be our third celebration as a country as a federal holiday. And one of the things she says that I think it's connected to what we're talking about now is she says the reason that Juneteenth should be a holiday is because it's the day when we all experienced freedom.

I mean, basically what she says is, she says, we should celebrate freedom from Juneteenth through the 4th of July.

Annie: Wow.

Chuck: You know, and the reality though is 4th of July represented freedom for some, but that doesn't represent freedom for all in our country. Juneteenth does. And so I just think it's connected to this.

We have to believe the words of Lila Watson, who was a indigenous leader in Australia or New Zealand. She said, "If you have come here to help me, then you're wasting your time. But if you believe that your freedom is bound up with mine, your liberation is bound up with mine, then let's work together."

And as followers of Jesus, I know that I can only be as free as my brother and sister. I'm called to bear the burdens, right, of those who are my brothers and sisters in Christ. I think there's an opportunity for all of us to see that racism has harmed us all and that there is a struggle we enter into together that doesn't just mean more freedom for people who look like me, but it means more freedom for all of us.

Annie: Yeah, that's good. So Juneteenth, coming up on Wednesday, national holiday, so everybody... possibly is off work. For sure the federal employees are. We are. I know a lot of companies are. Because it's a newer holiday, forgive me that I don't know this because I've been on tour the last two Junes and so I was not even in Nashville. Are there marches? Are there things to go to? Is this something we all go and celebrate together?

- Troy:** There are celebrations, some of which have been going on for decades. We have one in Cincinnati that's been going on for decades. There's also newer ones that are popping up. There's often - what? Is it red velvet cake?
- Chuck:** Yeah, red velvet cake.
- Troy:** ...is a tradition.
- Chuck:** ...is a part of the celebration.
- Annie:** How come?
- Chuck:** I think because red is like the blood of the people. The blood of the people who have suffered.
- Annie:** Yeah, wow.
- Chuck:** So it's a way to honor.
- Troy:** And I think it's important to note that the freedom for those who were formerly enslaved rolled out over several years. And it obviously goes back even to self-emancipation, the Underground Railroad, folks when the Civil War started just walked off the fields, that people took that agency, and that for a group in Texas, they didn't get the news.
- Annie:** Yeah, that's what I read about. That's why it's June. It actually was January 1st, 1863, but the people in Texas didn't find out or didn't follow that until June 19th of 1865. So it took two and a half years to get to Texas.
- Troy:** I mean, there's a way of thinking about... Again, emancipation and the end of slavery rolled out over a few years because the Emancipation Proclamation did not include Kentucky because it only applied to states that had rebelled and joined the Confederacy. And the actual amendments to the Constitution didn't get ratified until well after Juneteenth.

And what I love about this holiday is it is a date and experience that Black people in this country own, have embraced and lifted up and invited our nation to be part of. It's in some ways a Black, in almost every way, a Black-led holiday, if that makes sense.

So as White people, when we participate in Juneteenth and celebrate it, it is a way to honor and get a little taste of what does it mean to submit and be part of an experience that we have not shaped, defined, or controlled.

Annie: Great.

Chuck: So I think this is airing before the holiday.

Annie: Yeah, two days before.

Chuck: Two days before. Google. In your local city, Listeners, Google, is there a Juneteenth celebration you could be a part of? We're going to be a part of one in Cincinnati. I'm just so excited because a lot of folks that are part of the Undivided movement are going to be there together celebrating Juneteenth.

Annie: I love it. It is this opportunity, just like you talked about earlier, Troy, where we can be at something led by our Black and Brown friends?

Troy: Yes.

Annie: Also, I need to celebrate because if that is the time when everyone was free, then I'm celebrating that too.

Chuck: That's exactly right.

Annie: Because my ancestors were freed from being slave owners.

Chuck: Yes. Exactly.

Annie: So they received a spiritual freedom and a freedom from misbehavior and from mistreating other humans.

Troy: Or evil.

Annie: And evil. Say that. Say that. Please say that. Everyone was free.

Chuck: That's exactly right.

Annie: So we all get to go celebrate.

Chuck: Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Chuck: Christian should be at the front of the line.

Annie: I have been so pumped about it. Yeah, I can't wait. Juneteenth.

Chuck: You should be at the front of the line celebrating this.

Annie: Let's go. I'm gonna be in New York, so I can't wait to see what New York has to offer.

Chuck: There'll be some good stuff going on in New York.

Annie: Yeah, I will Google it. If y'all run across anything, send it my way. That is where I will be.

[00:50:45] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Earth Breeze](#). Okay, if you're traveling this summer, y'all, Earth Breeze is the easiest thing to pack and take with you so you can do laundry on your trip.

They look just like your ordinary dryer sheet, which is important to pay attention to, but it's actually ultra-concentrated, liquidless laundry detergent. It's still tough on stains and odors while also being gentle on the planet and your skin.

Earth Breeze's lightweight cardboard packaging takes up hardly any space in your laundry room or your suitcase. Plus, with flexible subscriptions delivered right to your door via carbon offset shipping, you'll never have to worry about running out of detergent again.

These tiny sheets can stop millions of detergent jugs from entering our ecosystems, which I love. In fact, 500 million detergent jugs end up in landfills and oceans every single year. No, no, no. We can be a part of stopping that.

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

Now, back to finish up our conversation with Troy and Chuck.

[00:52:05] <music>

Annie: Okay, the last thing I want us to talk about, and then I'll ask you what sounds fun to you. Scripture says every tribe, tongue, and nation will be gathered in the end. So what that means is one of the things that goes with us is our race.

Chuck: That's right.

Annie: And so will y'all kind of give us a vision of why reconciliation now matters in an internal sense?

Chuck: Oh man, I could talk about this for hours.

Annie: Oh, good.

Chuck: So I'm going to try to be brief. You know, when John sees that vision in Revelation, it is so striking to me that those differences are still there. But what we know about God from creation is that everything He created is very, very good. God loves our differences. He loves the ethnicities that make up the world. He loves the cultures that make up the world.

And in no way is heaven going to be devoid of those cultures. So what I would say is, if you've never been to a Black church, you're probably going to experience it in heaven.

Annie: That's right.

Chuck: If you've never been able to worship in the islands with the Caribbean folks, you're probably going to experience that in heaven. If you've never been able to gather with the underground church in China and understand the rich cultures that they bring, you're probably going to experience it in heaven. Because I don't think that stuff leaves us. I think that we get to experience it more. And so Jesus invites us to pray a prayer every day: Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Annie, all I can tell you is anything that is good and from God, I want to experience as much of it as I can on this side of heaven. And I think the Lord's Prayer is an invitation to do that. Why would this be any different?

So I want to experience as much fun, goodness, diversity, richness, joy, depth of understanding who even God is that I get from the diversity of my brothers and sisters on this side of heaven, because I know I'm going to experience the fulfillment of that, the fullness of that when I get to heaven.

So that's an invitation that I would say we get to live into as followers of Jesus right here and right now. I want as much of it as I can get right now.

Troy: And if you haven't gotten a pipe organ or a Matt Redman song on this side, you're going to get those in heaven.

Chuck: You're gonna get them in heaven.

Annie: That's exactly right. That's exactly right.

Troy: I think for me, and this is part of my journey when it came to race, reckoning the first time my heart really got crushed was learning the story of Emmett Till. I write about this in the book.

Annie: Yes, oh my gosh, the guy on the plane next to you watching the movie.

Troy: Yeah, yeah. That's right. And I remember looking at my hands when I first heard that story and wishing they were a different color, and I've been on it. And that shame and guilt and heartbreak I think is an important part of conviction. It's not a good place to stay.

So I'm getting to the place where when I hear every tribe, tongue, and nation, that includes me.

Chuck: Amen.

Troy: That includes white people.

Chuck: Amen.

Troy: And it's not that we have to celebrate and embrace all that whiteness has become. And God created me this way. And God creates us in God's image. And that includes White people. And we don't have to walk around in shame or guilt or bound up by our whiteness.

Part of that invitation that I talk about, about not making a mistake, that is being bound up by our whiteness. That's allowing our whiteness and our history of racism to bind us up. God invites us into freedom. And freedom means being clear and celebrate who I am and knowing it's not good for me to be alone, it's not good for white folks to be alone. We're created for community. We're created for the multi-ethnic, multi-racial kingdom of God that John experiences in Revelation chapter 7.

Annie: That's good. Thank you both. Thank y'all for doing this. And for this work. *Living Undivided* was such an important read for me, and I cannot wait for our friends to pick it up. This is a great... like, if you're gonna go to the pool part of Juneteenth because you're not at work, take this with you.

Chuck: Thank you.

Annie: Go celebrate somewhere, and then go to the pool and take *Living Undivided* with you and read it. Okay, the last question we always ask, we're supposed to ask at the beginning, and I got too excited that y'all were here and started going. Okay, Troy, Chuck, tell me, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

Chuck: Well, I'll tell you what sounds fun to me. I am actually going to Disney World again with my three kids.

Annie: How old are they?

Chuck: They are 15, 12, and 10.

Annie: Great age to take them.

Chuck: And here's the great thing, and it really sounds like fun. My boys were younger when we went. They remember it. My daughter was too young to remember it. So Annie, I am so excited. And I'm about to lose my natural mind spending all kinds of money so my daughter can have the princess experience at Disney World. And I am so excited.

My wife and I love experiences with our kids, and this will be such a special one. And for her big brothers to be there to kind of support her as she has this shining moment with the dress and the dinner and all that, that sounds like a lot of fun to me. I can't wait.

Annie: I mean, I am 43 years old. I went a couple of weeks ago with my three-year-old nephew and our family. I teared up when I saw Tigger.

Chuck: Oh, yeah.

Annie: I mean, the connection-

Chuck: Is deep.

- Annie:** ...is so deep. So get ready. I was like, what is happening in my body? I feel like I'm being hugged by my childhood right now. And I was like, Annie, settle down. It is so fun. It's such a fun place.
- Chuck:** It's a fun place.
- Annie:** What a great... I mean, I don't know your Enneagram type, I have some guesses, but I don't know your Enneagram type because we don't type each other. As a seven, getting to have some relief from the pressure of the world for six hours, eight hours, you just go in, you're not escaping, you're just getting some relief for a couple hours in this place where they pick up the trash before you even see it hit the ground.
- Chuck:** That's right, that's right.
- Annie:** And so, it's just a great little thing. I'm so glad you're all going. I can't wait to see the pictures.
- Chuck:** Oh yeah, oh yeah.
- Annie:** That's awesome.
- Chuck:** It's gonna be fun.
- Annie:** Okay, Troy, what sounds fun to you?
- Troy:** I mean, other than going to Disney, which does sound delightful. Our kids are a little older than that, and we're not in the grandkid phase yet. I think part of what I love, and when I think about working on addressing racism, it doesn't sound fun. And we have this quote we use a lot. It's by Howard Thurman, who wrote this amazing book called *Jesus and the Disinherited* 100 years ago. But he once said, "Don't ask what the world needs. ask what makes you come alive and go do it because what the world needs is for you to come alive."
- So one of the most fun things I get to experience is when I see someone else coming alive. We see it in this work all the time. I think of Stephanie in Michigan, and Becky in Michigan, and Jesse in Cincinnati, Jessica in Traverse City, Eunice in Seattle. Folks that are discovering their God, a God-shaped opportunity to actually make a difference in the world for racial and ethnic justice. It is amazing.
- So I'm giving the highly spiritual answer.
- Annie:** That's great, though.

Chuck: Hey, it is fun.

Annie: It's gonna be fun.

Troy: Yeah, yeah. Love to cook, too. That's fun. I love to cook, and that's my respite, is to cook stuff.

Annie: You talk about that in the book, too.

Troy: Oh, yeah.

Annie: About how freeing it feels.

Troy: There was the ill-fated tomato soup.

Annie: Yeah.

Troy: You have to buy the book to get the whole story.

Annie: That's right. That's right. Well, your fun is allowed to be your fun. One of the things we do around here is we do not judge fun. So if it's fun to you. Thank you guys for your work. Thank you for coming and having this conversation with me. I really appreciate it.

Chuck: And thank you for yours. Honestly, thank you for just the way you honestly engage. You just made it so easy for us to have this conversation today. And that means a lot. So thank you, Annie, for what you do.

Troy: And in a world where racism is so negative and we get bombarded with negative messages, how do we think about this as an opportunity rather than a burden to lean into this moment and to be faithful to God together to address racism?

Annie: That's good. Thank you guys.

[01:00:00] <music>

Outro: Oh, y'all, aren't they awesome? Man, that is such an important conversation. I feel like I've learned so much. And really am grateful for their relationship and how they teach out of it. I just loved it.

Make sure you grab your copy of *Living Undivided*. Go follow them on social media, tell them thanks for being on the show.

If you like this episode, I think you're going to love Episode 888 with our girl Latasha Morrison or Episode 485 with Esau McCaulley.

And those shows are linked for you in the show notes below. If you have any questions from this episode, just go ahead and drop them in the Q&A box on your Spotify app, if that's where you listen, that's where I listen or send them to us on Instagram @thatsoundsfunpodcast. We'll try to answer them there.

If you need anything else from me, well, I am on my summer Sabbath, so I cannot be very helpful for you, but our team is available @thatsoundsfunpodcast on Instagram. You can go and ask us any questions you have there.

So 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 researching where I can celebrate Juneteenth in New York. I cannot wait for Wednesday. I can't wait to be a part of that and see that experience and celebrate that with my neighbors here.

Y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday with one of my favorite musicians, Jordan St. Cyr. See you there.