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**Annie:** Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be with you. Tired on this Monday. Fresh off of the That Sounds Fun 10th anniversary show last night at the Ryman. Listen, all you want to see is on Instagram. So just head there. I'll be recapping it for the rest of forever.

So today on the show, I get to talk with my friend, Megan Fate Marshman. Megan's a teaching pastor at Willow Creek Community Church, the director of women's ministry at Hume Lake Christian Camps, and the women's pastor at Arbor Road Church.

Megan is also walking the unique road of being a young widow and raising two boys and chasing all the things she's called to while navigating loss. So if you're in Single Purpose League, we recorded a short bonus conversation at the end that we saved just for you. We'll be dropping that in the Patreon for you today as well. It's all there for you at [singlepurposeleague.com](http://singlepurposeleague.com).

This conversation though, with Megan, we dig into her brand new book, *Relaxed: Walking with the One Who Is Not Worried about a Thing*. It comes out tomorrow. She takes us word by word through Proverbs 3: 5, 6 as a guide for really, truly learning to trust God. I think y'all are going to love it and love her. If you don't already know her, which a lot of you do, you're going to love her.

Here's my conversation with my friend, Megan Fate Marshman.

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**Annie:** Megan, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

**Megan:** What in the world? You have a podcast called That Sounds Fun where we get to talk about all the things that are fun and then all the things that are not fun, but how we can have eternal perspective that changes absolutely everything looking at our life. Well done crafting this podcast. I'm honored to be here.

**Annie:** Oh, thanks, friend. I'm so grateful. Okay, we got to start, because it's the 10th year of the show, we're asking everybody at the top, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

**Megan:** Oh man. I would say maybe surprisingly risk sounds fun to me.

**Annie:** Really?

**Megan:** Now stepping into the risk that may be something else, but actually being in the midst of it, and then anything you do as a result of it, that sounds fun to me. And here's why. Because I've come to realize that a lot of people, myself included, because this would be my own story, don't find God a lot throughout the day because they genuinely have convinced themselves they don't need Him.

I did a little risk experiment and I've continued it where very simply you just try to find that one little nudge from the Lord each day. And I have a little journal to keep me accountable to it. And I just try to say yes. And I think it's one of the most fun parts of my day in the moment. You get all the things, all the feels, all the reasons why you shouldn't, but I'll tell you, in hindsight and the stories I've gotten to experience, they've been fun.

**Annie:** Wow. Can you give us an example? Is it like talking to people at the grocery store?

**Megan:** You know, it's sometimes... It was a long time ago, I see why... actually about three and a half years ago, I was listening to the GLS, like an old recording from a guy who he was... at the time he was like 26 years old and he realized he was so fearful of rejection. And he found some note from himself when he was young and he had written himself a note, like by the time I'm this age, I'm going to be doing something amazing. And he found himself that age going, Why haven't I done anything?

And he basically always came back to this one moment of rejection when he was eight years old that created this narrative in him that he can't do hard things. He actually Googled "how to not live out of fear of man or rejection or whatever". And he found rejectiontherapy.com, which is still a thing. And now he's made it uber famous and basically gave him like, why don't you just do one little thing, set yourself up for rejection each day, and learn about yourself and the journey? But you know you're going to get rejected. Basically by the end of it, he ends up creating his own list. It's this great video, if you haven't seen it.

I was sitting across the table actually with my husband on our 10-year anniversary, and I said, "I want to do that but in my faith." If we all get those little Holy Spirit nudges that we ignore all the time, but for me, it's just something I've jumped in on. I assumed when I started the little risk journey that it would be like, pay for that guy's mortgage. And the surprising thing, I feel like the spirit just keeps nudging me as like, eye contact, lingering after church when it's easier to pretend you have somewhere to be, right? It's actually the little things. And as someone that studied heaven and studied... I spent my whole life going, God, what do you value that may not be what I value naturally? What do you value? It is those really small things. It's like when you're in an elevator, and it's easier to be silent than just saying, "Hey,

tell me where you spend your time in the next 30 seconds. Whatever it is. But just taking it and saying yes.

Now, I know that probably doesn't sound fun to a lot of people. And I'll be honest with you, when I started it, it didn't sound fun to me. But setting myself up to actually rely on the Lord and to do things that are stepping out of the boat, metaphorically. It's been a journey and a lot of fun.

**Annie:** I had a couple weeks off in June and I was asking the Lord, like, "What do you have for me? And what would you have for me in these couple weeks off?" And I had no plans.

**Megan:** Wow.

**Annie:** I was just at my apartment in New York. I had no plans. It was just like staycation. And the only thing I felt like the Lord said is, when you're at meals with friends, don't be the first to stand up to leave.

**Megan:** Oh, wow. Wow.

**Annie:** And I was like, that is really an interesting mandate. Okay, Lord, I will do that. And it was so impactful, because I didn't realize how often I'm the one who goes to the next thing quickest. And so instead, I spent every meal going like, "I would have stood up right now. I would have stood up right now. I would have started to end the conversation right now." And I just didn't let myself. And every meal still ended, like it wasn't on me to end any meal, right? Every one of them still ended.

But it was like, God didn't ask me to pay anybody's mortgage. He asked me to let other people decide when our conversations ended instead of me deciding.

**Megan:** Quick question for you. Did you either tell them or are your friends who are also your podcast listeners finding out right now about this?

**Annie:** This is real time. I have not said this... When I tell you, Megan, I have not said this out loud to a single person except you. You are the first time I've said this out loud in this entire... So everybody who ate a meal with me in June is like, That's why we sat there so long.

**Megan:** They're like, "That was one of my favorite conversations." Wow, I'm so thankful for this spirit.

**Annie:** Right, right. That's exactly right. So you're right.

**Megan:** Isn't it shocking because here we are, people that have done stuff like things, you've created resources, you create podcasts. And yet the biggest, greatest challenges are the things that are available to absolutely anyone who's listening in. I love that.

**Annie:** Yes. I had a real summer full of God saying very unexpected things that were small and mighty, small and very impactful.

**Megan:** Tell me more about June and tell me more about those. I'll flip it over real fast.

**Annie:** That was the big one. And then there was also a real conversation. I love that people are hearing these shows so close to each other because we just had Davey Blackburn on the podcast as well, who also lost his spouse very suddenly and very young. And we were talking about anger with God and I told him that the Lord and I had this real conversation where I was like, Hey, I don't go to anger very quickly. As an Engram 7, I just don't tend to hang in anger. But I was like, I think I need to express some things. And as that was happening, I felt like the Lord said back, I need to express some things too.

**Megan:** Oh, wow.

**Annie:** And the sentence I kept hearing was "in relationship like this, anger leads to intimacy". Because I've always thought anger leads to disconnection. And the Lord was going, hey, us having these conversations is actually an increase in intimacy, not a decrease.

**Megan:** Yes. Wow.

**Annie:** So those were really the two big moments of my summer.

**Megan:** Oh, man. But I think it was like two months ago, I had to do a message on anger as well. So, man, you're pricking a good one right there. I know. I'm sure I just need to listen in onto that conversation. But yeah, it has to get out.

In fact, one of my biggest surprises is when I was looking up all those imprecatory Psalms is that the token like Women's Conference Psalm 139 is an anger Psalm. That threw me. And for those listening, it's that one where it's like, he knows me everywhere I go, I sit, when I lie, oh, He knows. I'm fearfully, wonderfully made. We put a lot of that on our sweatshirts, right? They're great. They're great. It's true. It's like, God is omniscient. He's omnipresent. He's everywhere. He knows everything.

And I remember first during a Bible study, and we actually separated the guys and the girls and we read Psalm 139. I'll never forget it because the girls came back and

they're like, He knows me. And all the guys came back in their quiet time, the small group was like, so like everything? And I remember that.

And then I go to school and we're studying anger. I'm back in school, finishing it up right now. And we studied anger and he's like, "Turn to Psalm 139." I'm like, Psalm 139? He's like, "The part everyone skips." That whole "he knows me is like He knows your insecurities." When He says He knows, He knows that level three anger you haven't dealt with that keeps coming out when you get level one annoyances with your kids. You know what I mean? Like, He knows. He's with you. He knows all the stuff that's hiding. He knows all of it. And that's David going like, so if you know me, search my heart. And then it comes out, right? And that's the little anger portion. Man, turns out we don't have to do a single thing alone. That's really good news for us. Huh?

**Annie:** Yeah. I love the "Where can I go? If I go to the heavens, He's there. I've said to people before, what if David's voice was not, where can I go? But like, where can I go? Could you actually tell me? Because if I go there, you're there. And if I go there, you're there. So could I get some distance? You know, like we always assume he's doing it in this very sweet, tender voice. And I'm like, that's not how I always read it.

**Megan:** Mm-hmm. Especially when you get to that "away from me, bloodthirsty," in the same chapter.

**Annie:** Yeah. Right? I want us to get to your story, but can we take a minute and talk about being female teaching pastors at churches?

**Megan:** Let's do it.

**Annie:** Okay. I'm going to read you back your byline because there's a lot of words that set off tiny alarms in this. Female teaching pastor at Willow Creek Bible church. So you are taking a leadership role at a church that is very publicly struggled and come through and continues to serve their community and love Jesus. It's absolutely incredible. Talk to me about what you love about being a teaching pastor and how you came to embrace that title.

**Megan:** Man, I will just say God, who's outside of gender, loves His church. We know that. I think we all need to be fathered. And I love the opportunity to mother a church. I love that when a kid falls on his bike, a male is like, "You got this. Be tough." And I love that the females sprint. And I love that God wired us differently because some people need to hear "it's time to be angry" and sometimes people need to hear... And it's hard to allow this thing to come out of you that you feel like you can't control.

And another voice might say, "And you can control it." And we may say... and I love the opportunity to mother the church. The story with Willow Creek was getting a phone call from a dear friend who was the creative director at the time when everything happened a few years back. And three of us stepped in to serve the church. I did not see myself, what am I, five or six years later, still serving the church in this capacity, but just teaching once a month. I love that church.

One thing I love about where it's at even today, but really where it's at then out since I first came was pretty desperate. And turns out that's a pretty good posture because if they're seeking to find God, which that's why they kept showing up because they realized we can't be here seeking something else. It turns out that's not promised in scripture, but I'm so thankful for God's promises, right?

Jeremiah 29:13, if you seek to find me, you will. And the good news is so many people I meet from week to week to week that go, "I've been here since the start, since the living room," and they continue because they're there seeking the right thing. So I've gotten to love that community.

And the big surprise is they've experienced a lot of griefs, but my own grief was a really unique grief, I think for the community, because it was one of the first times the grief brought us together and not separated us. So that was a unique space for me there as well.

**Annie:** I follow in your footsteps often. I think of you and watch you often as the female teaching pastor at Crosspoint, where we have also been through our own things and our own pains. Your sentence is what I say to people often is like, Man, don't you want the family of God to be mothered? Like, isn't it right that there are times when the father speaks and there are times when the mother speaks?

So I'm up in two days or three days, however long we are till Sunday, and I'm like, okay, this week, barring anything changing between now and Sunday, this week is a mothering Sunday. People need to feel mothered this Sunday. And so that's what I get to do. I mean, I love being friends with female teaching pastors, because I think we are a helpful addition to the family of God and are within what He's called us to do.

**Megan:** I wonder, Annie... I may have actually heard it from you because we crossed paths years ago, right? The whole mothering piece. I don't know where I got that from, but it's interesting in the journey of being a teaching pastor. Probably. Who knows. Or maybe we both heard it.

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

**Megan:** But I think, how interesting. Because it took me years to discover my own voice. Because I listened to the Tim Kellers. I mean, I've listened to Tim Keller, basically my entire career. I've listened to the John Mark Comers, those kind of go-to people that I'll listen to. It took me a while to find my voice because I thought like, In order to do this well, these people have done this well to me, I need to be more like that.

And then during the era that I was really studying how John Mark Comer preached, I found myself quoting a bunch of people and there's moments like, I didn't read those books. He did, you know? So I need to find my voice. And I'll just tell you, if you are a female listener stepping in, not necessarily teaching pastor, but man, by all means, but if you are leading in a small group, if you are literally, and I hope by the end of this conversation, asking one person to coffee, and you're having that conversation, my hope is that you finally discover, God, why are you just like that with those gifts to put them on display? He doesn't need me to quote a bunch of other people. He needs me as a female who open up my heart to God's word.

And I'd be curious, Annie, I want to ask you this question next. What's your unique contribution as Annie F. Downs to the church? Teaching pastor Annie F. Downs what's your unique...? Because I actually know what mine is and it's taken me years to find this out. All I do is I open up God's word and I allow it to change me in some way, shape, or form. And I can go through that little process I do each time. And then I just tell them what I found.

The reason this is my simple formula is because I think for years I tried to impress naturally, right? I wanted to do it well. I wanted to honor God's word. I wanted to be accurate. Still do. But I wanted to do it so well that people got to the end and they really liked it, whether it was the message or me. And I felt consumed with it. Like, did I do good?

That's just human and natural. It's not sinful. It's just what it is. I didn't know there was a second option, which is, and this is where I'm really landing these days is, when it changes you, whatever it is, if something changes you, and this is... we've experienced this on a daily basis when something is such a gift or you find social media thing everyone needs to follow, anything that you want to share because they have to get this, you suddenly are free from caring what they think about it or how well you did.

And friends, that is the most freeing place. Whether it's on a stage in front of some audiences or whether it's in front of a friend, when you're not trying to impress, when you're free from finding your love or acceptance from them.

I literally picture a cup before I go. And this is whether I go on stage or I go in a wedding. As a single woman, I walk into a wedding, which is hard at times, or whether I'm walking into a coffee shop, I literally imagine this little baby cup, which was like my life illustration for years, where I naturally would put my little cup on its side and be filled up by people's opinion of me. I love them. That's good. But then I wait to be filled up in response.

And I just tilt my cup upward. Actually, sometimes I have to tilt it over and ask the Lord, like, please do me of all the places I want to find love. And then I tilt it up and I pray the prayer from Paul in Ephesians 3, just fill me to the measure of all the fullness of you. That's really what I do in my sermon prep. Just fill me with whatever truth, even if it's like enlightening something in me that I didn't know was in their anger, whatever. And then fill it with your love. Oh. And then I walk on, I'm like, can I tell you what I found? And friends, it has transformed me as a communicator and freed me up, not just on stages, but also in coffee shops.

Annie, how do you think God wired you to teach God's word is yourself?

**Annie:** Okay. So I haven't written this down, so I'm going to fly that by the seat of my pants a little bit. I want to think more about it, but we're going to say it publicly anyway. The picture I keep getting in my mind is I am the teacher and preacher that is the shelf you can reach at your eyesight.

**Megan:** Oh, I like that.

**Annie:** And the reason I'm recognizing that that's my unique gifting is you're not stretching high. I'm not doing the high stretch and you're not bending down. I'm the eyesight level teacher. If what you had to work through is I'm not impressing them or like, "Am I receiving love? Did they get it?" What I've had to work through is "they don't think I'm very smart."

And what God keeps giving me is not often the most challenging text, but is the, like, you could actually go out and do something different today and you would be different kind of text. And so the thing the Lord had to break down in me is, yeah, what if everyone thinks you're as simple as you're teaching? Will you be all right? Can you still obey me? And is it okay to be as simple as you're teaching?

I used to have a pastor who would say knowledge exceeds your obedience. As I'm talking to you, I'm thinking, yeah, the challenge I've had is, are you willing to be humble enough to teach the thing God gives you even if people don't walk away and think I'm brilliant. Because they don't. They don't. That is not ever the feedback. The feedback is, I feel like you're my friend. I can do that. That was so easy. I've never read it like that.



I want to be a doorway like that, that leads them to deeper teaching that gets people to... this is way more than you signed up for. We have a donut we draw around here at the office a lot, ministry donut. And the very center is Bible teaching. And where we say we're called to is the edge of the donut is to spiritually curious people that might hear about Jesus for the first time, or people who already know Him that need a reminder. And we send them towards the gospel.

**Megan:** That's beautiful.

**Annie:** So I had to remove the desire or the belief system that being in the center of the donut meant you're the best kind of Christian communicator. And instead, go, wait, God uniquely made me to be the fun one and God uniquely made me to be the edge of the donut one, because someone has to greet everybody when they come in. And that's who I want to be.

**Megan:** Oh, I have so many thoughts. One of them is that though we are such sevens to the point where I was choosing sports over church in high school until my youth pastor looked at me and he's like, I have a job for you. And I was like, "What job?" He's like, "Would you like to be the initiator of first impressions?" And I was like, "That sounds lovely. That's a hire to volunteer for free. That sounds like you, or it turns out now that I work at a church, he basically was saying, you want to be the greeter? But aren't the greeters one of the donuts? So like initiator, first impressions into the love of Jesus, yes.

And I also love the word obedience. I was just sitting down with a guy who basically took a trip with his family to Africa. And then they come back and they quit their jobs and they go, We're doing a nonprofit to teach discipleship from what we learned in Africa. And his number one finding, this was last week, at Hope Heels with Katherine Wolf at their camp. How beautiful.

But the worship leader guy, he said, "It's so interesting. What we found in Africa was that if you start with obedience, people naturally long to know God more." And I was like, "I'd have to think on that for a bit," but I believed him. And I was like, "I think it's like, yeah, because when you start to obey, your life does change. You literally change your life. And then you want to know the source of it so you can know who to obey, whose voice.

He's like, because when people know the voice, they've heard the voice, they've been loved by the.. like when that's the case, so much so that it leads you to obedience, like you don't walk away from that. But he goes, but knowledge, which is the American center, right? American center, because sometimes cultural Christianity is knowledge. Like, if I can just get more, if I had that nugget or that

quote from the podcast, right? And I grab them from here [inaudible 00:22:08] just said is the quote from this podcast, get to the center of obedience.

But he says, when you have all the knowledge, I just don't see a lot of obedience for a lot of the most knowledgeable people when Jesus says like, lose your life, sir, take the downward trajectory, not the upward one. Like knowledge just naturally does something different than obedience, right? So I find everything you just said, I'll just yes and amen. Amen. And I've experienced you on a stage and watched everyone convinced that you are so approachable because joy... like people long to relate to joy.

And last thing I'll say is, I remember... so we will get to this, I know, but... and it's weird. Usually, I'm not the one to initiate jumping in about my husband, but the very first message I gave after my husband went to heaven, I was standing on a stage and they asked if I wanted to do a live audience or do it on the cameras. It was kind of the COVID 2021. So I said, "Oh, give me the cameras." And so it was like five cameras. And I finished the message and they black out the lights and it was one of the loneliest moments that I had.

**Annie:** Really?

**Megan:** Oh, because that's the moment I would text him or call him or go walk into his arms. Like all these. And it's just the first time doing ministry. I didn't know if I would do ministry after. I get to know to what extent, like if I'd speak again. That was my first message. And the lead pastor, because they finished the recording, he walks from the very back, nice and slow, I was just catching my breath, and he's like, "This is going to be a different season for you." And here I am three years later saying it has. And he says, "But here's why it's going to be good." And I was like, "Tell me." He goes, because pain is relatable. You are going to move from being impressive to impactful. And then a little part of me, because we're human is like, was I not impactful before? But he's like, "No, no, no, no. Pain is relatable."

And I'd say, Annie, longing for hope, wanting to have joy, not just know about it, like all of these things are relatable. So if we're willing to be human right where we're at and any other person wants to communicate God's word, whatever you have to bring in all honesty is incredibly relatable and you don't have to be anything else. Wow. I wish that not everyone would just agree with what we're talking about, but they'd be willing to go, Okay, so what does that mean for me? And what's the unique way that God's gifted me? Maybe not to stand on a stage, but to at least live today and to be perfectly okay with that.

[00:24:27] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Liquid I.V.](#). Y'all, it is hot out there and I need you to know your favorite summer treat could be giving you extraordinary hydration as well.

Liquid I.V. has these really fun summer flavors like Popsicle Firecracker and Rainbow Sherbert that hit the spot when you need some extra hydration. I also really liked the cotton candy one. Each stick is filled with electrolytes, essential vitamins, and clinically tested nutrients from the number one powdered hydration brand in America, Liquid I.V. You just tear open the pack, add it to your bottle of water, and you are good to go. You can find all your favorite flavors on their website from acai berry and lemon lime to pina colada. And they have a line of sugar-free flavors like raspberry, melon, white peach, and green grape.

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That link, pretty much every other link you could ever hope for are in the show notes or in Friday's AFD week in review email that we send every week. You want to be getting that. It is the best of us. So you sign up for that in the show notes below as well.

**Sponsor:** And another incredible partner I get to tell you about, [Wayfair](#). Listen, there is no better feeling than loving your home. Wayfair makes it easy to create a space where you can relax and unwind no matter what season it is. It's the place to shop for everything home from living room seating that fits your whole family to bedroom finds that keep you cozy.

Listen, I've told you this before. I mean it. My New York apartment really feels like home now, and that is mostly in thanks to the fun things I picked out from Wayfair. The couch. Y'all. Seriously, if I could buy it and put it in my Nashville house, I would do it here too if I needed a couch. It is my favorite couch I've ever sat on. We have linked it and all the things I picked out over on Like to Know. We've got the link in the show notes below.

But if you're shopping for your home or apartment or dorm room, Wayfair is the way to go. They have a huge selection of home goods ranging from appliances and area rugs to beds and wall art, everything you need for your home from living room and outdoor areas to bedroom, bathroom, and more.

Wayfair makes it easy with fast and free shipping even on the big stuff. They'll even help you set it up. You've heard me talk about it before. They set up a chair for

me that changed the game. I could have never done it as quickly as they did. It's good to come home when you live in the Wayborhood. Visit [Wayfair.com](https://www.wayfair.com) or download the Wayfair app. That's [wayfair.com](https://www.wayfair.com). Wayfair, every style, every home.

Okay, now back to our conversation with Megan.

[00:27:18] <music>

**Annie:** Maybe we should tell some of your story. My question is going to be, what made you decide to stay in ministry? But why don't you back up? You and I met in, I don't know, 2013 or 2014. I feel like a million years ago. The teens of 2000. I have no idea either, but many a year ago. Your new book, *Relax*, that releases tomorrow, tells the story of your husband, Randy. Will you kind of give us a flyover and then tell us why you stayed in ministry after losing your husband?

**Megan:** I will say there wasn't some big moment that's like, I'm going to do this. I think every day since, which it was three years ago in the middle of the night, Randy has a heart attack with... goes to heaven. I would say the reason I'm still doing it is because... I'll put it this way, of one superpower, I feel like I've been gifted. And I think everyone who's experienced grief or will, you are suddenly gifted with this perspective that things that don't matter, don't matter. Like people liking you, that doesn't matter as much. And the things that really matter, really matter.

So why am I doing ministries? Because it really matters. That feels like something that really matters. I try, as I'm like doing messages very rarely, and even in podcasts, I'll be honest, Annie, I don't want to talk about pain. But then where else do we? I love the churches I've grown up in. There's mainly been two. The one I like really grew up in, they were very good at liturgical inviting into worshipful songs of lament. And I felt like my in my 20s, I never appreciated it ever. I'm like, This really is kind of sad. Okay.

Why do I keep doing it? It's because I feel like I walk. I think it's Colossians 3 that's like, set your mind on things above. When I'm thinking about Randy, I'm thinking about heaven, or I'm studying heaven, it literally changes how I live in the now. And I can't help but want to get people to number one, land in heaven for all of eternity with me, because it's really better than we can even imagine. And if you're sitting there listening in, try to imagine what would be ultimate heaven. Even for you here on earth, like what would be the ultimate heaven? It's better than that. Like, it's that good.

So not only do I want people to get to heaven, I number two... I remember driving at one point, and my 8-year-old and I were talking about heaven and my little boys,

"I should go now. This sucks. I just want to go now." Like, dude, me too. Yeah, this sucks. And we just talked about all the things that suck. We're going back and forth.

And then there was a moment it felt like just the Holy Spirit little gift. I'm like, Wait a second. Remember how Jesus taught us to pray? May your kingdom come, it will be done on earth and He's finished it "as it is in heaven." I'm like, d"Do you think that maybe while we're here we don't have to wait for heaven because Jesus is telling us to bring it here now?" And he's like, "What do you mean?"

And it turned into one of the richest little 8-year-old conversations I've ever had with my son. Because man, Revelation 21, the end of the story, which we know and if you don't, Jesus is coming back. So whether we go home to Him or Jesus coming back, the new heaven is the new heaven and new earth. Like He cares about it. And in the meantime, Jesus literally said, "Let me teach you how to pray. Now we're going to talk about the sin. We're going to talk about all that stuff about daily bread, the stuff that you need, we'll talk about it all. But we're going to land with you recognizing that while you're here, there's a point may your kingdom come and your will be done. Where? On earth as it is in heaven."

So when I think about heaven, I think about no insecurity because we're going to be finally secure in Christ. I just say this in the meantime, if you have insecurity in every pocket of your life, or you feel it just for a moment... This got me like two days ago. Insecurity is actually one of God's gracious gifts to us while we're on earth. Because he's going, why are you trying to find security outside of me? It's not going to work. Because when I see insecurity, I'm like, whoa, where's that coming from? Because I don't want to find it outside of Him.

So I feel like in the meantime, He wants all the things that are going to be in heaven. Long conversations when you're not the first one to get up from the table, that feels heavenly because you're just lingering with nothing else to be, but present. And God's equipped us. Why am I doing it? Because I feel like my heavenly perspective, half of me feels like it's in heaven. And so I get to bring that to people who need things like hope.

**Annie:** How did your theology of heaven change after Randy passed away? Did you do more study? Or had you already done that for some reason?

**Megan:** No. Ready for the weirdest, almost eerie? My last flight before Randy went to heaven, I was studying the book of Philippians and specifically that Philippians 1:21 that says, "To live is Christ, to die is gain." This is really weird, but we had just been having multiple conversations about how we felt like we were in the midst of the good old days. We kept saying it out loud. Just kind of eerie, right?

But there was a moment I looked at him and I was like, "You know, I read that verse. It's like to live is Christ, to die is gain." And I was like, "This is kind of cool." Because I was finishing up my doctorate and I still am on spiritual formation, which is that fancy way of saying, let's become more like Jesus. I'm finishing that up. I'm like, "I get to live as Christ. Like we're supposed to become more like Him. He uses our highs, lows, insecurities. He uses literally everything, both the positive and negative, not just our good Bible studies, but also our disobedience and the reasons why. Long story.

So to live is Christ, but then to die is gain. And I said to Randy, the day before he goes to heaven, I said, "I believe it in my head, but I can't imagine it getting better than this moment right here." And then Randy goes to heaven and I have not stopped studying it, Annie. And I not only have studied the thick, dense, like Randy Alcorn theology books on heaven, I've also read about hundreds of near-death experiences.

Let me give you one because they continue to blow my mind. Here's one. A guy talks about... The reason I like we'll even talk about it because a lot of them wind up with scripture. Like Jesus says, nothing will be hidden that will be exposed before the light of the world. So Jesus says that to this guy who at the time was not a believer, has this near-death experience, goes to heaven... whether it's a dream, I don't know, but here's what he experienced.

He goes there and he says, "Your whole life..." And they say this is true for most people that have this encounter or near-death experience. Your whole life is like a wraparound and you see everything you've ever done. Every thought or deed, attitude, sin, secret. Everything is fully exposed. And this guy's testimony is everything.

And in that moment, I have never felt more loved in my life. And then I'm sitting there reading stuff like that. And again, wondering what my point is here on earth. In the meantime, I'm going, that's not just reserved for heaven. We're already fully known, fully loved.

Some of my theology, even like believing whether or not Randy can see, I used to think he would be off worshiping, just busy, distracted. I've studied a lot of that. I didn't know there's a difference between present heaven and future, new creation, heaven, new heavens, new earth. I mean, everything you can imagine. Some of it, I'm like, wow, I think I was wrong. Hopefully, I didn't tell anyone.

Lots of things have changed. But I'll tell you, the more you think about it, the more you study it, it shapes. And what it does, it tells you and equips you. Anyone that

you know that studied heaven, it goes, wow, it turns out what we do today really matters.

**Annie:** Yeah, right. Turns out what we do today really matters. Is that how you got to even writing about this in *Relaxed*? Was it kind of like... Again, David Blackburn, I read him this quote from an event I went to that said... the person was talking about the enemy. And she said, "When this is over, I'm going to punch back." Is there some of your continued work and some of *Relaxed* that's like a... like more than ever I'm on mission because of what it's cost me?

**Megan:** You know, it's interesting. I like that phrase. I'm going to sit with it for a while. I'll tell you that. My friends have laughed and we've sat around a table and they're like, remember that time you wrote a book after your husband went to heaven and you've had to bear the financial, like every aspect of life, the single parenting, like all these things that you didn't sign up for. And you write a book called Relax.

**Annie:** Literally.

**Megan:** That's where it's kind of fun for me and like thrilling and why I want everyone... that's why I really care about people reading. I wasn't a great marketer of past books I've written just because I felt a little bit funny with the whole, like, Oh, self-promotion. I just didn't want to get in the way. I know what social media can do for my own soul. So I'm really cautious of all that.

But the reason I'm kind of going forward on this one is because this stuff's changed my life. It's what I talked about with me as a speaker. Like when things change you, everyone has to know. Like how in the world have I gotten to a place three years in that I've taken a journey that I'm more relaxed than I was before. And the subtitle kind of gives it away a little bit, but it says this: *walking with the one who's not worried about a thing*.

That's what it's about. Walking with someone who's not worried. He's not worried. He's so sovereign that even you can't screw it up. That's good news, right?

**Annie:** That's right.

**Megan:** You can screw up the direction your life is going and then relationships that you're forming. But man, when it comes to the sovereignty and Him saying He's going to use all things to form you into His likeness, He will. If the spirit of God is in you, I have good news. You're walking with someone. He's dwelling within you. And so your job is not to try to do a bunch of stuff for Him. It's actually to open all the stuff to Him because He's already there. And He's like uncovering His own self, His own image in you and through you, through both your successes and also your failures.

**Annie:** One of the things you talk about in the book a lot, which I'm really thankful for... I mean, for our friends listening, it goes through Proverbs 3: 5,6. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding." It's an incredibly cool outline to a book. But in it repeatedly, you talk about like, "Clearly, this has not been easy. This is not what I would have picked. I'm not having a great time. There's a lot of things that I thought wouldn't be like this."

But the whole trust God chapter, as I was reading it... what I'd love for you to speak to, Megan, is how do you hold at the same time, trusting God, and at the same time being honest about your anger and your fears and your disappointments in God, not in Randy, but in God... So how do you hold both? The other problem is one tragedy isn't in a ticked box? And once you get a tragedy, you're done getting tragedies. So we have to hold a life of trusting God and a life of maneuvering pain.

**Megan:** Yes.

**Annie:** How?

**Megan:** I would say to trust in the Lord is not the moment you just declare, God, I trust you. To trust in the Lord is to be honest about the moments and the ways that you don't. Now, we're talking. To trust in the Lord, if you want to know where to begin, I would tell you what my professor told me. You know, those moments in prayer where you're doing the little performance prayer. That's great. You know, dear Lord, thine is the kingdom. I love you. Forgive me. You start to get in that little pattern and then your mind begins to wander. Anyone? And then it takes you like 60 seconds to realize it's somewhere else. And then you like pause your prayer and shame yourself back to the performance prayer. So sorry. Lord, I trust you.

I used to think that the "trusting the Lord" was the moment you declare it. But that sentence is trust with all your heart. And what's in your heart? I'd say this. Follow the wandering mind. Follow it. Because Jesus put it this way. He said, where your treasure is there, your heart will be. And I wonder if the place our mind is wandering to is actually a work of the spirit leading us to the very thing He wants to talk to us about to trust Him with.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Megan:** Because it's so crazy that so many of us trust the Lord Jesus for eternal salvation, but the relational drama that you think your friend is mad at you, you feel like that one's up to you or the financial stress. Oh, that's on me. So to trust in the Lord, I could tell him, "I trust you, even though I'm stressed out." No. Trusting Him is



telling Him how stressed you are. And the good news is, is not going to surprise Him.

If somehow you're however long into this podcast and you just don't care about Him, the first step of trusting him would be to tell Him that because it's not going to surprise Him. And I almost imagined Him going, Now, we're talking.

**Annie:** Now, we're talking. That's right.

**Megan:** And then the beauty of trusting in the Lord is the freedom from not having to solely trust in yourself. The whole first working of the book is a lot of the substance before you get into the second half of the book, which is all the practicals. It's part of me wants to jump to the practicals because people are like, "I want to learn about how to be a friend. I want to learn about money, about grief." Like I hit a lot of just kind of topics. Risk is one of them. "I want to learn about all that stuff." And that's interesting.

But there's a foundation in the beginning. That was an aha for me, which is one of the temptations in the Christian faith is to do it without Him. Here's a small example. You're sitting in on church and the preacher preaches a really good word on prayer and you're like, "That's good. I need to pray more." And then you try to remember to pray more and you're relying on the weakest form of strength called the flesh where we're doing it and the word is autonomously. You go, "I'm going to do that on Monday. Maybe you do by Wednesday." No way. You've already forgotten. Because we only merely rely on ourselves.

So this invitation from the Proverbs is you don't have to trust in yourself, solely living for yourself. That when we feel that pressure and that weight and the burden trying to... here's another thing I'd tackle quite a bit. Just trying to figure out, I feel like that's a Christian cliché, socially acceptable way of someone saying, I'm just trying to control my life. We've just wrapped it differently.

If I say on this podcast, "I'm just trying to control my life," we'd all say that's not okay. But if I say, I'm just trying to figure out how to figure it, you know, that one everyone's okay with.

**Annie:** Say it.

**Megan:** But it's a fancy way of just going, "I just need to trust." And I say, I have to figure things out. I have to. It's on me. To which that's what I feel like the Lord is doing. And it's the only way we're going to get relaxed is when we recognize the invitation is not to trust in oneself. And especially, man, when we realize, and here's a big chunk of it, when we realize we're not as we should be. You hear the Christian ideal

and you go, "This is me. I'm not as I should be. I don't pray enough. I feel like I don't get it enough like everybody else. I don't feel enough. Like what do you do?"

And tackling the major temptations in that place, whether that's to kind of despair or settle for just a valley of dry bone spirituality, where you log in and try to find the right pastor, preacher, podcaster that's going to inspire me to try harder. And I'll say, and that's the temptation to do a lot of it without Him. So we tackle a lot about all the temptations that even sound good without Him.

And the best response to that whole thing that we're not as we should be in life, it's not about grabbing the next book actually, but hopefully then as you grab this one, you'll learn that the goal is not found out there. It's recognizing that the best response to us not being as we should be is not our response to it.

**Annie:** We have a button here called the Wowie Zowie button that we push whenever someone blows my mind. [wowie zowie]. And that is it. I mean, how many times I have said, I'm figuring this out. I'll figure it out. I would never confess I'm trying to control my life now. But I can try to figure it out.

**Megan:** How'd you get the Wowie Zowie? Can you give the background?

**Annie:** Isn't that adorable?

**Megan:** Yeah. Did you get gifted? Did you find it?

**Annie:** We created it. It's my nephew's voice saying Wowie Zowie.

**Megan:** No, it's not.

**Annie:** We just made our own. We just needed it. We needed it for moments where you blow my mind and do that mind-blown emoji. That was what we needed it for.

**Megan:** That is so good.

[00:44:03] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Shopify](#). If your kids are heading back to school and you're ready to take on a project you've been dreaming about, Shopify can help you sell whatever you're creating and get it into the right hands.

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**Sponsor:** And one more amazing partner I get to tell you about, [Our Place](#). Okay, we talked the other day with Melissa Urban about Whole30 and being intentional about what we put in our body. Y'all know I don't cook a ton, but I do cook sometimes, and it matters to me to be thoughtful about what I use to cook with too. That's why I love Our Place Cookware and Appliances.

Our Place is a mission-driven and female-founded brand that makes these adorable kitchen products that are both healthy and sustainable. Their products are made without PFAS and Teflon. In comparison, most of today's nonstick pans contain forever chemicals, which are under increasing global scrutiny for their impact on the environment and our health.

If you're looking to replace your cookware or appliances, or you're already planning for wedding gifts or Christmas gifts, or just because gifts, check out Our Place. They have so many fun colors to choose from too.

Find out why Our Place has 75,000 five-star reviews. Go to [fromourplace.com](https://fromourplace.com) and enter our code TSF, like That Sounds Fun, at checkout, and you're going to get 10% off site-wide. That's [fromourplace.com](https://fromourplace.com), and the code is TSF. Our Place offers a 100-day trial period with free shipping and returns.

Okay, now back to our conversation with Megan.

[00:46:28] <music>

**Annie:** Will you help us... throughout the book... You're right, the back half is beautifully tactical, which I think are so helpful. I get so annoyed at books that don't tell me what to do. Tell me what to do. It's also my spiritual direction doesn't work as well for me as therapy. My therapist doesn't tell me what to do. My spiritual direction, we just sit quietly, and I lose my mind.

Thinking of your life in the last three years, so many of our friends listening have women in their lives whose husbands have gone to heaven or whose husbands are not in the family anymore for a number of reasons, and they're single moms navigating church and single moms navigating baseball tournaments and single moms navigating ministry. What do you need from the rest of us? What does a single mom uniquely need from the church in 2024?

**Megan:** I would say as a widow, single mom, we have this weird tendency. I think it's a human tendency. It's not just a single mom-widow. This will go across the board. But I'm going to shout it out specifically for this life stage. That we think that autonomy is one of the greatest things that we can achieve. If I can do things...

And I'll tell you, everyone applauds it. It's actually not only something I want, it's something people applaud. So when I tell my friends that I fixed a cabinet, they're freaking out. So excited. When I fix a sprinkler, they're like, Yes. It's naturally celebrated. So I think that's kind of fed into us.

I had an interesting moment with a widow who's in her 80s in my little Bible study. I do a Bible study with a group of 80s and 70-year-olds. At one point, I looked at her, I said, "What do you need this week? Gladys, tell me what you need." She goes, "Can I be honest?" I'm like, "Yeah, anything you need." She goes, "I think I need you to stop asking me that question." I was like, "Gladys, why?" She's laughing with me. She goes, "I can't believe I'm about to say this." She goes, "Because I've come to believe that I have nothing to contribute." Because she goes, "Everybody asks me this question."

I think as widows, the reason we fight back with, I don't need anyone, and I'd rather just go hide in a corner with my kids and not be a burden on anyone, is because we don't want to be the one that's just helped all the time. I think there's something in us that wants to bless.

My life was flipped for six months. Before I was the one writing a check like, "Bless you." And then suddenly I'm getting those checks. It was so uncomfortable to just receive.

I'll tell you two things that will, I hope, lend you, wherever you're at, to ask for help. Number one, my sister said this to me when I told her, "I'm kind of sick of being the needy one. I'm sick of that." And she goes, "Megan, do you realize that it actually brings out the best in us?" She goes, "I don't think you realize that. It brings out the best in me."

Now, mind you, "If I lived and just got lazy, that's another story." And I think we all know the difference. But it actually brings out the best in us. And I think like glad as people need invitation to contribute. And they want to.

I mean, if you looked at my phone... I didn't check my phone for about two or three weeks after. There was hundreds of whether it's emails or messages or whatever of people going, "Let..." I hated this phrase though. "Let me know if there's anything I can do." But then suddenly it's on me. I'll tell you, if someone around you is in grief, "My favorite thing is, here's three things. I'm going to do number one... I'll send it to the person that's really close to the person. "Here's the three things I think I can do." Get specific. Just let me know-

**Annie:** That's a really great tip. I have a friend right now who's going through grief and I said to her, "Let me know."

**Megan:** Sorry, that's-

**Annie:** I'm going to say, "Here are the three options. Here's three. Which of these can I do for you?"

**Megan:** Here's three things. And I'm going to do the first one.

**Annie:** Wow. Thank you.

**Megan:** I'm going to take your whatever. Get creative, I think, because the person who's in grief doesn't have that capacity. So number one... best thing is it actually brings out goodness in others. And so you need to trust that.

Then number two, the only way to receive help requires something that's actually beautiful. And that's humility. And it sucks. Because I'd, again, rather be strong. And look, when I'm prideful, I think there's some things I look really great and impressive and all that. But it's pride. So here's the gift of humility.

I started studying humility, I'm like, what is it about humility? You got that? Was it Andrew Murray's book, *Brilliant*? Here I am quoting people. Watch out. I'm like the next John Mark Comer.

**Annie:** Love it.

**Megan:** But that book, there was something that talked about like, so where's humility and the fruit spirit? And then the phrase was humility is the root of the fruit because... and as I'm studying spiritual formation, I've come to find out something shocking. The exact same way we grow in the faith is the same way we were saved in the

faith. My professor would say sanctification recapitulates, which is a fancy, fancy way of saying salvation rehearses sanctification. Sanctification rehearses salvation. You're just rehearsing the, Oh Lord, how I need you.

The same way you come is the exact same way that you grow. If you want to come into Sunday morning, ready to grow. It's not about achieving knowledge. It's about going, Oh Lord, how I need you. Search my heart. Where do I need you? And the truth is no wonder the pastor could share the gospel every time. And it should never just be for first-time believers. It's for the whole room. The question is, are we humble enough to receive it?

So as a widow, I would say the two pieces. Number one, or not just necessarily widow, single mom, anything, asking for help can bring out the best. And have those conversations. Talk with your people that you're asking for help about the insecurity. Let them reaffirm. Because some people may say, you know, it actually has been a lot for me. And that's okay. They need to be honest too.

But then other people go, I love this. And the 20-somethings that are asking for mentorship and you're like, I don't have margin for mentorship, but guess what? The best mentorship you can actually bring them is bringing them into your life. And I've found that as well.

Like some of my closest friends are younger than me, not necessarily in their twenties. I have young friends that are just a few years younger than me in their singleness. Especially one of my best friends is a single gal in her early 30s who we just do life together. And it's like one of the greatest... and I'm shocked to find like, it's one of the greatest gifts to her. And we shared Christmas morning together and it was mutually one of the best things.

Because me with two kids who are not going to say thank you naturally without me telling them, and then when they do say thank you, it doesn't feel great. Because I told them to like enjoying like another person my age and adult conversations. I think we might be surprised that inviting people in doesn't always just mean that it's for us.

**Annie:** Yes. Megan, you're amazing. I cannot wait for people to get *Relaxed*. It is just such a beautiful handhold of a book and so helpful. Is there anything we didn't say that you want to make sure we say?

**Megan:** Oh man. Probably the last thing I would just say is the end of each chapter we did these spiritual formation activities. We — me and the Lord together.

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

**Megan:** We did these spiritual formation activities because the whole point of the book, and it's going to say it over and over and over is go to God. Go to God. It's like you, Annie doing your... you know, going through the Gospels. It's just go to Him. You don't need to actually pick up the next book. And if you only finish one chapter and it brings you to the Lord, that was the point. The point is to not do this life alone ever because He died to make relationship possible. I think not just for all of eternity in heaven, but in the meantime, all those things, He's bringing heaven down. And one of the best gifts we have is His spirit in us so that we don't have to do a single thing alone. It's the whole book. The point of it is to take you to him. Relax is a by-product of intimacy with Him. It's not the pursuit. If we try to pursue relaxed, we'll critique everyone, including our kids and our friends on how relaxed they make us feel. It doesn't work. It's the by-product of intimacy with Him. So the goal is to take the time it literally takes to be with Him.

**Annie:** Beautiful. Thank you, my friend. Thank you for writing this. Thanks for sharing your story when it is still so close. It is an up-close story. And so I'm really thankful.

**Megan:** Thanks.

[00:55:06] <music>

**Outro:** Y'all, isn't she the best? Oh my gosh, I love her. I love her. I love her. Go grab your copy of *Relaxed*. Congrats on book release week, Megan. Make sure you're following her on social media. Tell her thank you for sharing her story and being on the show.

And if you enjoyed this episode, I think you're also going to really like 889 with Katherine Wolf or Episode 863 with Savannah Guthrie.

If you have any questions from this episode, just drop them in the Q&A box on your Spotify app, if that's where you're listening like me or send them to us on Instagram @ThatSoundsFunpodcast. We'll try to answer them there. Make sure you're following That Sounds Fun podcast. There's a lot of fun stuff going on there on Instagram.

If you need the answer to me, you know, I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. Anywhere you may need me, that's where you can find me. 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... Listen, here's what sounds fun to me. We're getting

ready to go do a little celebration around Let's Read the Gospels. And then we've got a fun announcement coming for you around Let's Read the Gospels as well. Have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday with my friend and guest at our 10th anniversary show this weekend at the Ryman, Demi-Leigh Tebow.