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**Annie:** Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors. This show is sponsored by [BetterHelp](#). If your kids are back in school this month, or August just brings around some new scheduling rhythms for all of us who like ever went to school, or you're in a new small group, remember to make space for prioritizing your mental health too.

Y'all know how much therapy and counseling has been a game changer for me, and I believe it can be that for you too.

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**Intro:** Today on the show, you are in store for a fun one. I get to talk with my friend Demi-Leigh Tebow. We've had her husband Tim Tebow on a couple of times now, but this time we finally get to have Demi here on That Sounds Fun. She was just with us at the Ryman on Sunday too. If you were there, you know it was so much fun. She is such a treat.

Demi is a sought-after speaker, philanthropist, and the former Miss South Africa and Miss Universe. Yes, we talk about it. Today we get to talk about her brand new book, *A Crown That Lasts*, and lots of stories about her life that I don't know if you've ever heard before. We really dig in. This is an inspiring episode that I think you're going to love getting to share with your friends. So here's my conversation with my friend, Demi-Leigh Tebow.

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**Annie:** Demi Tebow, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

**Demi:** Thank you. I just totally missed my protein shake.

**Annie:** No, did you? I totally missed you too. Oh, hilarious. We can start over or we'll just let it be. This is the real thing. This is it. I'm so glad to see you. What a treat. I'm so glad we're getting to do this. People are hearing this the week after we were live at the Ryman, which is the best. So thank you for coming to the Ryman Auditorium.

**Demi:** Are you kidding me? I am so honored to be invited. What are you thanking me for, girl?

**Annie:** Listen, anytime someone gets on a plane for someone else, I am thankful. Whenever our friends do this for each other and fly... I mean, y'all do this all the time for people with the Tim Tebow Foundation, with Her Song. I mean, people say, "Hey, will you come and talk about it?" You go, "Put me on a plane and I will do it." So thank you. I'm really grateful.

**Demi:** I'm honored to be there.

**Annie:** Now, this is our 10th year of the podcast. That's what we are celebrating. And your husband has been on the show multiple times. Your mother-in-law has already been on the show. So I'm just working my way through the Tebow family.

**Demi:** I'm excited to join them in the author club.

**Annie:** That's exactly right. Oh, my gosh. I cannot wait to talk about the book. The first question we are asking this year, since it is the 10th anniversary, because it's called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you. What does Demi Tebow do for fun?

**Demi:** My word, Annie. Right now, a nap sounds fun.

**Annie:** Yeah, I bet.

**Demi:** A nap sounds fun. You know what it takes writing a book. A lot of really long night. And that's sounds really fun. You what a perfect day would be? Get up, get my cup of coffee, go throw the toy in the pool for my golden, like exercise, take the other two for a walk, and then go play some pickleball. Come home, eat a good, just fresh salad, grilled chicken meal, maybe take a nap then. Honestly, that sounds like such a nice day right now.

**Annie:** Agreed.

**Demi:** I haven't had any of those just yet. So maybe once this book is on shelves, maybe I can do that.

**Annie:** Yeah, that's right. And it's August. It'll still be hot in Florida for a while. You've got like four more months to do those outside things. Okay, now you and Tim are very health-conscious, which I love about you. But in your morning-

**Demi:** We go to Ryan.

**Annie:** I've seen you cooking on the internet, ma'am. You do a lot of healthy, like added avocado here. So do you put anything in your coffee in the morning? Are you like a protein powder in your coffee?

**Demi:** I do. I do.

**Annie:** I do the same. I do the same. I'm like, that's like a free 20 grams just for showing up.

**Demi:** Yeah, yeah.

**Annie:** So easy.

**Demi:** I load up that collagen powder because it mixes really well with your coffee. I have the collagen powder. Just unflavored. Like 18 grams of protein right there.

**Annie:** That's it.

**Demi:** It's hard. I feel like eating the amount of protein that I feel like I need. Yeah, you have to find some supplements.

**Annie:** Yeah, that's right. I'm the same way. I'm like, I'll take that grilled chicken on the salad. But also, if I can just knock out that first set of grams of protein in my tea in the morning. Why not? I

**Demi:** You drink coffee?

**Annie:** I don't drink coffee, dude. I wake up like this. Can you imagine?

**Demi:** Oh, that's fair.

**Annie:** Me on coffee? Nobody. Absolutely nobody. Also, this is as close to Florida gear as I've ever worn, by the way. I thought of you this morning, right? Because I went to University of Georgia. And do you know I was in Georgia while Tim was in Florida?

**Demi:** Oh, my... Okay. Yes, I do think I know that.

**Annie:** Wow. So the idea that our friendship happened after those years is really a testament to the Lord that God is bigger than SEC football. But yeah, I just want you to know I changed dresses this morning when I got dressed because I was like, "That one is almost blue and orange. That is a Tebow level to make a difference.

**Demi:** That's a really big deal for a Bulldog.

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

**Demi:** [inaudible 00:06:02] work after all.

**Annie:** That's right. That's right. Okay, so your book is coming out this week. I want you to back up a little bit. So many of our friends listening want to write a book. Your book, *A Crown That Lasts*, first of all, it's excellent. But tell me when you wanted to write... when did you want to turn your story into a book versus you could have done a podcast series, you could have done probably a documentary. What made a book the right thing for you?

**Demi:** Annie, you know what, I don't necessarily know a book versus a podcast. I've always loved writing. I genuinely have... my 12th-grade teacher would be so proud of me. Actually, I need to send her a copy because she just instilled such a love for writing in me from a young age. And I'm thankful for her. I was like the girl that loved writing my essays. So I've always loved writing.

I think I've thought about writing a book for a couple of years. I think I've been able to gain a lot of life experiences, even at this age, my last year in my 20s.

**Annie:** Yeah, girl.

**Demi:** I started writing this book a couple of years ago, and I realized I had to stop because I hadn't grown enough at that time. I hadn't seen the purpose. I had the stories, I had the experiences, but I didn't know what the purpose was of a lot of them.

I started writing this book really when I was in a waiting season that really just felt like a wasted season. Of course, in that moment, I couldn't see that that waiting season actually set me up for maybe a winning season later on, right? Love a little alliteration.

**Annie:** That's good. Yeah.

**Demi:** Write that down.

**Annie:** Yeah, that's right. You should. Anyway, I stopped writing. I picked up my MacBook last year, the 17th of July, and I start writing this book. I wrote it in like three months. I handed in my manuscript at 15th of October. It's one of those things that just felt... I think like Nelson Mandela says, like, it always feels impossible until it's done. And it really felt like one of those things, like writing a book, like somehow coming up with 70,000 words to write about that I really just feel like the Lord had given me such a clear message that I wanted to share. And I was just ready to write it.

I don't know, in a way, it felt easier than I think I expected. Not that it wasn't hard. A lot of the chapters, I feel like I really just was vulnerable in the book and was honest more than anything. Some of those chapters were hard.

The first chapter I wrote was about my sister. I was in South Africa when I started writing the book. And I wanted to write the chapters that really kind of happened in South Africa while I was there. Because I realized, Annie, even like thinking I have worked through losing my little sister and have worked through her death and even just the purpose of her life, I realized when I actually started putting it into words that there was so much that I still needed to work through and pray through and really come to grips with.

My sister was born with severe special needs and a lot of disabilities, and her life just sent me spiraling into having all these like, why God questions, Annie, that I know I'm never going to have the answer to. You know, not until I get to heaven one day and get to be face-to-face with my Maker. You know, 1 Corinthians 13 tells us like now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we will know fully, you know, just as we are fully known.

And I had to come to grips knowing that if I'm going to continue asking God why, that means that I'm going to continue questioning Him for the rest of my life. And instead of asking Him why, I started asking Him where, like, Lord, where are you?

**Annie:** Wow.

**Demi:** That was very helpful for me because I think when you ask "why" you're questioning, but if you ask "where" you're seeking, you're saying, show me. Like, where are you in this? Where do you want to use me in this?

**Annie:** Wow.

**Demi:** Anyway, that was something that I think that the book allowed me to... writing it allowed me to figure out.

**Annie:** I mean, start asking "where" not "why" needs to be like, someone is pulling over and taking notes right now. Someone is like, I need to start asking where and not why. I mean, tell me if this feels true to you. There are times where I don't even ask why, because there's this cognitive knowledge of like, You don't get to ask God why. That doesn't tend to get a response that you want. So instead of switching to where I just switch off and I just move on, whatever, I'm never going to understand whatever.

And I think what you're doing is such a healthier response of like, no, don't stop, but move forward into where. Instead of why to an exit, go why to a why. That is really helpful.

**Demi:** Well, I mean, after... Well, not after we lost my sister. During a really hard period in my sister's life, she was born without her cerebellum, which is your small brain. It basically regulates and correlates your whole nerve and muscular system. So anything that requires muscle usage, she didn't have any control over it. Imagine swallowing, holding something. Anything that required muscle usage, she didn't have control over.

She also suffered from severe seizures. Like at one point had like 42 in a 24-hour period. It was really, really hard, really hard. My dad and I are very close. My dad grew up in a Christian household, grew up in the church. I grew up in two Christian homes. My parents are divorced, but grew up in two Christian homes. I knew the Lord from a young age and had gone to church. And so as my dad and being very close with my dad, my sister's life sent him into a spiral of just not being able to come to grips with not having the answers to so many of those "why" questions.

I think that really affected me, but man, Annie, the Lord showed up in such a kind way for him. And that totally affected me too. But my stepmom really wanted to go to Israel and my dad said, "Well, I'll go with you, but I'm just going with you so you're not by yourself in an unfamiliar country. I'm just going to come to support you. But I don't want to go to any of the sites. I'm staying on the bus. I'm staying at the hotel. Like, I don't want to see anything. I'm just going to be..."

But you know, somehow the Lord softened his heart on that trip. And my dad's such a visual person that seeing the empty tomb, you know, walking in the garden, seeing the olive trees, like swimming in the ocean, like all of those things just made it so tangible to my dad. And my dad genuinely came back from that trip, a complete changed man. A complete changed man.

I think that really impacted me so much as a teenager at that point, seeing how the Lord just showed up in my dad's life. It was kind of a miracle in a big way.

**Annie:** How old were you when your sister passed away?

**Demi:** I was... how old was I when...? It was 2019. What's that? Like five years ago. I was 23 if I'm not mistaken. Tim and I just got engaged. I was based in the U.S. at that point and my dad called me and told me, "Hey, Sisy is not doing good. She's in hospital."

That made nothing because she's been in hospital over and over. Like five months. So at first, we didn't necessarily think much of it. But I remember, Annie, my dad called me, I was on the West coast of the U.S. in a small town. It took like three flights just to get back to New York, where I lived at the time.

And my dad called me and said, "Hey, it's really not going well with Franje. You should see if you can come home. I remember I couldn't get a flight back in time. I missed the last flight to South Africa that day. Like I couldn't get back. I remember being on the first flight and there was no Wi-Fi, the smaller planes, you know, and like getting off at the airport and just calling my dad to check in and then catching the next flight and then getting off at the layover.

**Annie:** Oh my gosh..

**Demi:** He was so kind to just allow me to get back into a safe space before she passed away. I wasn't able to fly home until a day or two later. But that was hard to work through that. It's one of those things that you just couldn't do anything about completely out of your control.

**Annie:** And just flying across the country, I mean, across the world to having to get there in time.

**Demi:** Yeah, that was hard.

[00:15:36] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation to tell you about a brand new kids' book I think you are going to love from our friends CAIN the band. Okay. It's called *I'm So Blessed*, just like their hit song. And it's starring CAIN as little pieces of fruit. Y'all, it is so cute.

They took the message of their song, *I'm So Blessed* to create a lyrical picture book where kids will read about Logo Lemon, Tay-Tay Tangerine, and Maddie Melon through their daily lives as they encounter challenges and frustrations, but learn how to praise God through it all. If kids have breath in their lungs, they can find joy

in God's blessings and praise Him by singing the fruits' favorite truth, I'm so blessed.

You can order CAIN's new book, *I'm So Blessed*, anywhere books are sold. Listen, all our VIPs got a copy of *I'm So Blessed* last weekend at the Ryman and people were reading it and they love it. It is so great. I am putting it in like my new stack of what I give every new little baby that is born. I'm adding this to all my friends' kids' libraries. You can get a copy wherever you love to buy books as well.

**Sponsor:** Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [ButcherBox](#). Listen, if you're hosting friends or family for a cookout soon, maybe Labor Day weekend, or you just want to make less trips to the grocery store, ButcherBox is the way to go.

Y'all know we love some ButcherBox around here. Our team gets real excited when that shipment shows up at the office and we pick out what we want and take home to enjoy.

ButcherBox offers a hundred percent grass-fed beef, free-range organic chicken, pork-raised crate-free, and wild-caught seafood shipped. And it's all humanely raised with no antibiotics or added hormones. Plus there's always free shipping on my order too. So it's truly the most convenient, no-brainer option. I love the grass-fed beef. I think it is so good, but really you cannot lose.

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Okay, now back to our conversation with Demi.

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**Annie:** When you're talking about writing while you're in South Africa, our mutual friend Lisa-Jo Baker is your editor for this book.

**Demi:** Love her.

**Annie:** Love her. And she's also South African. So talk to me, did that help you? Talk to me about having someone who kind of literally speaks your language, but also like throughout the book, you do mention places and speaking Afrikaans and all these parts of your South African life. Did it help to have an editor who knows South Africa?

**Demi:** Yeah, so much. First of all, Lisa is... the whole team at W is just amazing. I truly am so lucky to be able to work with them. They've made this whole process so fun, Annie, and Lisa has just been there every step of the way. She is an amazing editor.

But yes, she is South African. She moved here I want to say like 20-plus years ago. There's certain ways that we would say things in South Africa that just doesn't necessarily hit here. So he saved me definitely from a lot of jokes that wouldn't happen.

**Annie:** She's like, "I get that. Americans will not."

**Demi:** "I know what you mean, but nobody else will."

**Annie:** You know what's funny is that... I mean, this story is funny, but you write about being carjacked. I mean, that is an unbelievable story, Demi. But in it, you say, "I ran right up the busy dual carriage lane road." And I was like, "Dual carriage..."

okay, two lanes. Okay, I got it. Now I understand." I was like, "She's South African. She's South African."

**Demi:** I also had to go back and Google because the way trauma works, Annie, you don't necessarily remember all of the details in that moment. And I was like, I told them seven, there were two. So Google told me that's what a two-lane lane.

**Annie:** Yeah, it makes sense. There are multiple times... again, I'm thinking of our friends listening who are thinking about writing their own books, too. I mean, you tell some really personal parts, particularly of that story that are really traumatic. How did you decide what stayed and what went? Is that part of the partnership with Lisa-Jo? Did you write it in much more detail and she said, "Let's back it up?" Or did she ask questions? Was it kind of a dance of getting this story out correctly?

**Demi:** I remember one thing Lisa told me was like... I mean, I've never written a book before. So her guidance was super valuable. You know, getting to write 70,000 words allows you to really work in a lot of the details. She really challenged me to, like, go and sit and think back about that moment. I mean, I could even remember the guy's sweaty hand gripping my wrist and the hoodie and the smell and the car's hooting and just really forced me to kind of go back to that moment.

But more importantly than that, Annie, I think the reason I chose to tell this story, and I think I put in a disclaimer at the beginning of this chapter to warn people about what they're about to read, because that was important to me. I never want anyone to be caught off guard. But, Annie, me sharing this story, this story where I was carjacked by multiple men and had a gun pointing to my head, since opening up about this, I've had women come to me and say, Demi, I have filed a police report for the first time. Demi, I went and told my mom. Demi, I got out of that abusive relationship because you sharing this has shown me that I'm not alone, that there are people that want to help me, that can help me.

Annie, I like ran... I was able to escape, I write the whole story in the book, but I was able to escape that situation and ran up that avenue and nobody stopped to help me. It was broad daylight, peak hour traffic, half past five in the afternoon, and nobody would stop to help me. And that was maybe even... not maybe. That was more traumatic.

**Annie:** That's what you said in the book, that that's more traumatic, that not to be that girl, you know, like the girl who did stop and help you finally. So many people did it. So many people didn't. But Annie, I'm thankful for that girl not only because she stopped to help me and lead me to a safe place but I truly believe that she changed a big part of how I viewed my life going forward.

And you're stopping leaning over opening the old little car door for me and leading me to safety made me realize that I don't want to be, for the rest of my life, one of the people that saw but did nothing, that heard but did nothing. That incident has truly transpired into me learning about the fight against human trafficking, into me starting my Unbreakable conference for women. That has been the catalyst.

Till this day I don't know what my perpetrator's goal was. I don't know what they wanted from me. I don't know if they were there for my car or for me. I don't know. They were never caught, unfortunately. But I do know that that incident truly served as a catalyst to me learning about things I didn't know existed in the year 2017. I didn't know human trafficking happened outside of a Liam Neeson movie back then.

I think that story is just one of the ways that the Lord has allowed me to somehow turn that pain into purpose for His glory. When we are willing to give that pain to Him... My sister-in-law always says this, if you give that pain to the Lord, He will never waste that pain. He will find a way to use that. And I so resonate with that and feel like that is so true, especially in that instance.

**Annie:** One of the things you write a lot about in the book is where you find your identity and how the moment you turned around and gave away your Miss Universe crown or crown the next girl and then you walk back and you're like, what am I supposed to do now?

And I'm thinking about our friends that are listening, because I don't know if you know this, but I used to teach elementary school. And the first August that I didn't go back to school was actually really hard, because you're like, Well, what am I? If I'm not a teacher, what am I? And if you weren't Miss Universe, what are you?

There's so many people, like pastor's wives who are... they're no longer at that church, or people who are divorced, and this is the first start of a school year where the kids have two addresses or, you know. Will you talk a little bit about... I mean, it's even true you moving from South Africa to the U.S. When our labels change like that, will you talk for just a minute on what you've learned about like, how do we grieve and move forward when these labels that we've lived by for a year or a long time are suddenly changed in like a moment for you?

**Demi:** I subtitled this book *You Are Not Your Label*. I'm really referring to the labels that I kind of liked wearing, Annie. You know, like wearing that Miss Universe label wasn't a bad thing. Being a wife is not a bad thing. Being a mom, being a business owner, it's not a bad thing. But we walk such a tightrope when we root our identity in those things that are temporary.

Our life circumstances make up who we are, right? They give such an input into who we grow into becoming. Well, the problem with rooting our identity in our life circumstances is that that eventually at some point or another, I don't know about you, Annie, but at least in my life, it sends you on this roller coaster of insecurity, of doubts, of questions, of not feeling like you're enough and aiming up with those, like, what's next questions.

And I had to go and really, really figure out, Okay, I know I'm a believer. I know what Jesus says about me because I have read it in the Bible. I have memorized that scripture. But where do I root my identity in? If it's not in my life circumstances, if it's not in my Miss Universe crown or sash or my new car or my corner office or the role I fulfill as a mom, like, what is it that I read my identity in?

And I realized that if I don't want to keep living a roller coaster of all of these emotions throughout my life, I'm going to have to read that and something or someone rather, that is never changing, that is always trustworthy, and that is bigger than myself.

The only answer I could come up with for what to genuinely root my identity in is in my faith, in who God says I am. Annie, the Bible is full of the things that the Lord thinks about us. You know, the fact that He thinks about us all the time is, to me, just so mind-blowing and so beautiful in such a way.

So that's really what this book is rooted on. If I could give you one verse that has inspired this book, it would be 1 Corinthians 9:25, where Paul writes to the Church of Corinth and says, Hey, guys, don't go and chase perishable crowns. Go and chase a crown that will last for eternity. That's what inspired the title too.

**Annie:** For our friends listening, there's a thunderstorm in your life happening in the background. So that's what they're... hey, don't apologize. It's the summer and the afternoon. This is how it goes.

**Demi:** I have the Wi-Fi plugged into the wall.

**Annie:** You're doing great. No, no, you're doing great. It just sounds like thunder, which is going to happen.

**Demi:** Nobody is slamming doors around here. And if somebody were, it would have been my Dalmatians.

**Annie:** No, you're great. I mean, Demi, as you're talking about that, one of the things that I think I've learned so far, we've still got a lot of life left, is that the most strategic identity work the Lord does with me is through having an identity ripped away. Has

that been true? I don't learn good things about having my identity in Christ when I am working in an identity. It's always when something is being taken away from me.

So when those moments have started to come, I have this moment of like, Oh, I must care about this more than I realized or the Lord wouldn't be rooting this out.

**Demi:** Yeah, right. That's so true. I totally resonate with that, Annie. I mean, it was that moment where, like you said earlier, I walked off that stage and I had to give this, like not a bad thing, this good thing. It wasn't a bad thing. Where I had to give that back.

I know where that started. It started the night I won Miss Universe. My manager came up to me, my brand new manager came up to me, Annie, and she asked me a question that I wish I would have answered differently. And she asked me... I mean, it was cute and fun. Like, welcome, Miss Universe. And she comes up to me and grab me by the arm and she's like, "Who are you?" And I said, like, "Miss South Africa." Because we were all announced by our country. And I said, "South Africa." She said, "No, no, who are you?" And I said, "Oh..." I mean, I'm like literally wearing the crown and the sash that says Miss Universe. So maybe she's asking for my name. I'm like, "I'm Demi." And she goes, "No, who are you?" And like it clicked and I was like, "Oh, I'm Miss Universe.

And for the rest of that year, my bags got tagged as Miss Universe. The doorman greeted me as Miss Universe. I was announced as Miss Universe. I kind of stepped into that identity in a big way, you know? And then the night came where I no longer was that. And I had no idea really who I was. Annie, that was really the moment where I entered I would say a pretty drastic waiting season, somewhat of an identity crisis of sorts. And it's hard to know that in that moment, to really know what's actually happening here, I just feel very confused.

But I realized in that time, I was so nervous to tell someone, actually, I don't know what's next. So many people would invite me to be on their podcast or to do an interview. And I, literally Annie, pretended to be my own assistant, like made a different Gmail account. And she was like, "Demi is very busy right now. We'll go back in a few months when she's figured it out."

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

**Demi:** I wouldn't put a name at the bottom because I couldn't fabricate that big of a lie. But I was so fearful to say, "I don't know and I'm okay with that. I'm working through it." I felt like a failure in a big way. So, yeah.

**Annie:** Even in the book, you say that after she... I remember the story so clearly because after you said, I'm Miss Universe, she said, "You're Miss Universe. Let's go." And she grabs your hand and takes you forward into this photo shoot. And that's so profound because so often the labels that we give ourselves too fully, the people around us are fine with too. And it isn't all bad. You and I are authors. It is not bad to be an author. It is not bad when other people identify us as authors.

The problem is when we go, if I don't write a book anymore, what am I? Do I still have worth if I don't do this anymore? Not a lot of us are going to win Miss Universe, but we all have titles that if we sit with our journal tomorrow morning and go like, If this got taken away from me if this thing that people labeled got taken away from me tomorrow, who would I be and what would I feel?

**Demi:** Right. Exactly. Annie, and any nobody really taught me to even think about that or to prepare for that. You had all these books, had all these coaches and all these people that taught me how to reach that dream, how to write that book, how to buy that dream car, how to get that corner office, how to apply for that degree, but nobody tells you, well, what now when you actually achieve it too?

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Demi:** But you work all that way and maybe it doesn't happen. Maybe you don't get that job that you've just gotten the degree and the training and everything you needed. You know, what now? What now when that plan that you have so perfectly prepared doesn't work out? What do you do next? And that can be really hard.

I mean, that season in my life, I just genuinely didn't have a good community around me. My good community was all back in South Africa. And other than that, I didn't necessarily have friends in my life that cared more about me versus what they wanted or could get from me. Does that make sense?

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Demi:** I didn't have a group of people around me that could point me back to the truth, that could point me back to what does Jesus say about me? Does he have a purpose for my life? To tell me like, hey, this sucky moment isn't going to last forever. Tim and I were engaged at that point, but we were doing long distance. He was in the middle of sports. And so, you know, my highlight of my day was getting to speak to him on the phone in between his games or his practice day.

And I look back now and I'm like, man, if I had a good church community, if I had even just two good friends that could just point me back to the truth, how much easier it would have been to walk through that season and to maybe even just put

one foot in front of the other. I felt so stagnant in that season. I think just having a good community of people, that's what we've been created to be a part of.

[00:35:54] <music>

And now back to finish up our conversation with Demi.

[00:36:06] <music>

**Annie:** It's interesting hearing you talking about that because as we're... and you're doing this now as an author and so many people listening are doing this in their own way of going like, okay, well, I'm trying to go after this goal. I just ran a 5k with two of my cousins. And I've finished a lot of 5Ks, but I've never run one without stopping. But you will run one without stopping when your two cousins are on either side of you and they are not stopping.

**Demi:** So good. Yes, that's right.

**Annie:** Even as you're talking about, man, people told me how to get there, but they didn't tell me what to do while I was there and I didn't have that community around it, it's so encouraging to think, Okay, as all of us listening and me too, as we are building the next thing, as we are going toward the thing, do we have the people in place who are proud of us but not impressed, who are like supportive but are not like impressed. People who are impressed with me don't... It feels good, but it's very temporary.

**Demi:** That's so true. I so resonate with that. I had a group of people around me that I tried fitting in with, but fitting in is very different to belonging.

**Annie:** To belonging. That's such good stuff in the book.

**Demi:** It's not the same thing. When we think about fitting in, I sat... Tim does a lot of sports stuff, football stuff. You'll know. You know, Bulldog. In the fall, I sometimes get to travel with him. If I don't, we just don't see each other for a week. I was like, I get to go on the road with him.

And I was sitting at this college campus, actually writing this book, and I was sitting in the coffee shop and Annie, I could see every girl walking in that coffee shop like wore the same brand, had the same belt bag, maybe in a different color. I could even tell like what the popular drink was to order from the coffee shop. And I could just see like, Oh, that's gonna go out of style. Like, where do you then fit in? If that goes out of style, if they take the drink off the menu, where do you then fit in?

I then realized fitting is so different to belonging because fitting in means we're molding ourselves or breaking ourselves. And by the time you do fit in, one, you might just look awkward or not like yourself at all. I even think about me trying to fit into my mom's clothes as a 14-year-old. Like you're like boss lady, but you're really just like an imposter, right?

**Annie:** Right, right.

**Demi:** But belonging means that you are fully known and fully loved. And that doesn't necessarily mean that you are just fully known and just accepted and you're good and I love you no matter what. No, that means like, I love you regardless of your imperfections. I love you regardless of the things that aren't necessarily your best. And you know what? I love you so much because I know you, but I love you so much that I am going to choose your best interests and act on your behalf as your friend or as your partner that loves you, that cares about you, and that has your best interests at heart. And I'm going to tell you and challenge you when I think that you can be better, that you can show up, that you can work more.

Those are the friends in my life that I know I truly belong with. Because when I mess up, they're going to tell me, and they're also going to help me to get back and get better. So I'd rather belong than fit in.

**Annie:** How did you make those friends in the last, I don't know, five, six years? How do you now have these women, I assume, and some men around you too, probably, that are the real friends? Give us a quick lesson on how do we make those kind of friends.

**Demi:** It took time. Tim and I got married like a couple weeks before COVID hit, so getting plugged into a church community here in our hometown was difficult back then. It took time. I think COVID really made that harder because you can't just go out and be part of Bible studies or things. But two of my friends, we actually met because we all bonded over dogs.

**Annie:** Oh, perfect. That's great.

**Demi:** It was perfect match. It's one of those things where a friend of a friend of a friend, you're all friends because you kind of all have something in common. I think that's really how that happened for me. There was a time where I was friends with all of Tim's friends shortly after we got married and I moved my whole life to the U.S. Tim and I, I remember we had this conversation where we said, Okay, you have your friends and I have your friends but now I need my friends and then we need our friends.



**Annie:** Yeah, smart.

**Demi:** That was something that I really had to work on. Relationships take time. I think Tim actually played a really big role in that. I remember my two now best friends, we were like in that dating friendship phase. You know, like, do you want to grab a coffee or sit in church together?

I think it was my birthday and I think Tim asked them to go celebrate my birthday with me or like asked if we wanted to do... you know, it's like they didn't know if I wanted to be their friend and I didn't know, but Tim was like, I'm going to intervene here. So that's why I think sometimes like you hear of all these couples that were match made by a mutual friend because it's somebody that loves both of you and that cares both of you. So, honestly, two of my best friends, I'll give Tim the credit. He totally had a hand in that.

**Annie:** I live part-time in New York and make it... and so it's been really interesting because I've started a whole new community of friends there. So I've had to do the same, Demi, of being like, Okay, do we really like each other, me and this girl that we're being friends? Is this really... I went to an event and my mind was, is there going to be single guys here? Of course, that was my mind, Demi.

And then I left with two new girlfriends. Like I left with two new girls that I love being pals with. And I was like, This is still a big advantage. I'm not dating anyone from this event, but I've got two new friends. And we're doing that like, so do you like seeing movies? Do you like going to Broadway? Do you like going on walks? And so it is that new thing of like, Oh yeah, making new friends where you live.

A mutual friend introduced us, just like you said. But I had to say yes to that friend going, Hey, come to this big thing at Central Park and sit on a blanket with us. And these other two girls were on the same blanket.

**Demi:** I think sometimes it's just as easy as just asking. Just like, hey, do you want to go on a walk? Like, hey, I really enjoyed our conversation. I feel like we have a lot in common. I would love to be your friend. I think sometimes it's okay to be upfront. The worst they can say is like, hey, actually, I just don't have capacity right now. Who would actually say that? The worst that can happen is like, I don't... anyone's gonna say no, I don't want to be your friend.

So I think just being intentional, taking time, actually really listening, and trying to know learn what's important to those people. A lot of my friends, like I play golf, I play pickleball, they're not super into sports, but they figure it out for my sake and I do what they like because... compromise.

**Annie:** It's really neat. Even when I'm thinking about your book, it's set up so beautifully. You did such a cool job of like every section is summarized. Every section gives you a challenge, gives you some reflection. But it's also such an interesting... as I was reading, I thought you could read this with friends. Like this could be the central thing that you are sharing is walking through this like, Hey, I don't want to put my identity in stuff that will change. So let's walk through what seeds I've sown. Let's walk through what I have let grow that is healthy and that isn't healthy. And people can help you prune back and then really see the fruit that comes of that.

**Demi:** Yeah, I love that. Annie, oh, the thunder is so loud.

**Annie:** It's so good. It's beautiful.

**Demi:** Hey, Thunder, can you just stop for a second? I mean, something that was so important to me is that this book is applicable to my readers, and that is it is impactful in their own lives. My hope and my goal with *A Crown That Lost* is not that they get to learn something about me or my life story, but truly that they get to go and apply it to their own lives and go and just dig up and untangle those messy roots of our identity, go and uproot those maybe weeds of doubt that's been sown way too many times, and to go and plant new seeds of truth in our lives so that we can eventually get to a season where we get to flourish.

And listen, and those flourishing seasons doesn't mean that there's not still work that needs to be done. That plant still needs to be watered. There's still pruning that needs to happen, like that can still be a little hurtful, right? But in order for you to keep growing and keep moving forward, there are certain things that we need to do and apply in our own lives. That was really important to me to make that applicable to my readers.

**Annie:** So you're in your last year of your 20s, you have your first book out. When you're looking into your 30s, what are you hoping for in your 30s? What do you hope that decade holds that your 20s didn't hold?

**Demi:** I'm so thankful for my 20s though, Annie. There might've been hard seasons, but I think the thing that I'm excited about for the rest of my life, however long the Lord allows me to stay on this planet, is to genuinely just have confidence in knowing what my life's purpose is, and to be able to live that out every single day, no matter what that looks like.

I think that's the most amount of fulfillment that I ever feel, and it's the safest that I ever feel, is when I'm right where I know I'm called to be. Whether that means I'm

writing a book or I am a dog mom, you know what that means? To know that I am right where God needs me to be right now. And it's safest place I'll ever be.

**Annie:** I mean, what a treat to go into a new decade with that as the foundation. Like you get to live all 10 years with the like, Lord, just put me in your purpose. Like whatever your purpose is, it's right where I want to be. Will you talk for just a minute before we finish? Will you talk about Her Song just a little bit and tell people about it?

**Demi:** Yes, of course. I mean, like I told you earlier, the carjack situation really served as a catalyst to me learning about the fight against human trafficking. And that has just snowballed into learning about online child exploitation and just face those victims of child exploitation.

One of the organizations that I get to be a board member of and that I get to serve alongside is Her Song. It's the Tim Tebow Foundation's survivor care ministry here in the United States. We serve survivors of human trafficking all around the country. We have different campuses. One of the campuses is based right here in Jacksonville, Florida.

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Demi:** So it's a long-term restoration program where we really walk hand in hand alongside survivors of human trafficking. It's everything from immediate care, that urgent kind of 60-day period, to then going into a long-term one-year-plus restoration program. And then we also have a transitional phase. That's very important because, you know, any trauma works in such just crazy ways where we really want to allow our survivors to be able to integrate back into their new lives in a comfortable way.

It's not just a program that you graduate and it's goodbye. No, we really do life together. We're just at a baby shower for one of our survivors that graduated a couple years ago. And so many survivors that have completed the program and are now working and studying full time, they stick around as big sisters to all the women that has come after them. And to me, that is just one of the most beautiful things.

One of my favorite nights of the year, other than Night to Shine, which is how Tim and I met through my little sister, the celebration for people with special needs and disabilities. My other favorite night of the year is our Milestone event. We don't call it a graduation ceremony at Her Song, we call it a Milestone celebration. Or in South Africa, I'd say meter stones.

**Annie:** Yes, that's what you put in the book is meter stone.

**Demi:** Meter stones are set up along the road to show you how far you've come, you know? We love celebrating those milestones with our survivors because everybody is in a different phase of life. You know, everybody's story is different and we want to meet them right where they are. So it truly is one of my favorite nights of the year. We celebrate those milestones of how far They have already gone and how far they will continue to go.

**Annie:** It's just incredible to me. We've known each other a couple of years now and I've just loved watching how you have partnered with Tim but not disappeared. You know, like you have continued to know what God had called you to, and it matches so beautifully with Tim. It's been really beautiful to watch. So it just feels like such an honor to have been able to watch y'all grow together and partner together, but still run your own races. It's been really inspirational, truly.

**Demi:** So sweet, Annie. Thank you. Something I'm so grateful for is when Tim and I first met, we didn't have a ton in common. Our languages were different, our cultures were different. I didn't play any of the sports that he played. He wasn't into pageants. But those things don't matter. We learned how to play golf together. We learned how to play pickleball together. We found the board games that we love together. You know, I've got to catch up on watching his favorite movies. He's in charge of the movies in this household. But I feel like the Lord aligned our purpose and our path before we ever even met. You know, the love that I had for people with special needs through my sister and learning about the fight against human trafficking long before we were ever even met. It's just such a beautiful gift to have that in common. I think it's easier to learn what you have in common, but it's harder to learn what you have in purpose.

**Annie:** Ooh, say that. That is good. That is a good line, Demi Tebow. All right, friend, is there anything we didn't talk about that you want to make sure we say?

**Demi:** This was awesome. I just wish I could turn the thunder down a little bit.

**Annie:** It sounds so comforting. It sounds so much like summer that when our friends who somehow don't listen to this until like October will be like, Oh, summer storms. What a good thing to catch on a podcast. So I am thrilled it exists. Thank you for doing this, Demi. I'm really grateful. It was good to have you on. You are welcome back anytime, my friend.

**Demi:** Thank you so much. This is awesome.

[00:52:02] <music>

**Outro:** Oh, you guys, isn't she awesome? I know. Oh my gosh, some of those stories. Y'all, the book is just full of them. This is such a great read. I'm thinking about all the girls going off to college this month, girls that may be entering the workforce for the first time, or maybe your kid's teacher. She would love a copy of *A Crown That Lasts*. So make sure you grab that.

Go follow Demi on social media, tell her thank you, thank you, thank you for being on the show, and happy book launch week, Demi, if you enjoyed this episode. I think you'll also really love the episodes with Tim. That's Episode 273 and 376 and our episode with Hannah Brown, it's 348.

If you have any questions from this episode, just drop them in the Q&A box on your Spotify app if you're a Spotify listener, or send them to our Instagram account, That Sounds Fun Podcast. You're following there, right? Also, you know, there's a new Single Purpose League Instagram account. Make sure you're following that as well.

And if you need anything else for me, you know, I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram Twitter Facebook. Anywhere you need me, that's where you can find me.

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. Listen, today what sounds fun to me, speaking of CAIN, and their new book CAIN, is playing this weekend at Dollywood. So I'm loading up and headed to Dollywood doing a little pre-trip, getting us ready before Single Purpose League heads to Dollywood in December. So I'm heading to Dollywood this weekend.

Y'all have a great weekend. We'll see you back here on Monday with one of my favorite pastors, a guy you are going to love. His name is Jack Mooring. So we'll see you back here on Monday.