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Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. Listen, I'm so happy to be here with you today. I am the luckiest part of this entire conversation. I cannot believe it.

Today on the show, we get to hear from legend worship leader, Darlene Zschech. If you don't know her already, you do, but in a world, Darlene Zschech is an acclaimed Australian composer, worship leader, pastor, author, and speaker who helped pioneer the modern worship music in the church from the 1990s and onward.

Her new album *Testament* that released on Friday, it marks the milestone 30-year anniversary of *Shout to the Lord*, her song that became an anthem for the church worldwide. Her voice and that song has absolutely shaped my faith. I will tell her today. Yes, of course, I cried.

So today, not only do we get to celebrate the faithfulness of God through her work in ministry, but we get to sit under the wisdom of a woman who understands long obedience in the same direction. What a gift! This was a real honor to do. Here's my conversation with my new friend — Did I really just get to say that? I can't believe it. Here it is — Darlene Zschech.

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Darlene: Therefore, pray and open up your home and do everything without grumbling. I'm like, Okay then. Thank you. Let's go.

Annie: 1 Peter 4. I'm writing that down.

Darlene: 1 Peter 4:7-11. And in The Message, it's life-changing. Dustin Smith, our pastor at Nashville, he was the one who brought it to my attention a few months ago and I have lived in it and swum in it ever since.

Annie: Isn't that amazing? We're just going to go by the way. It amazes me when scriptures like that have existed in my Bible the whole time. And I'm sure I've passed over it.

Darlene: I know.

Annie: And yet in the moment... will you talk about that in your life? How like when scripture comes to life like that?

Darlene: Well, that's the living word of God, right? It's alive. In certain moments, different things jump out in different ways, different layers. The unsearchable riches of His word is exactly what it is. We just have to be in it to receive it.

Annie: I'm curious about this as your career has spanned over 30 years publicly.

Darlene: I can't imagine.

Annie: I mean, you were leading worship before *Shout to the Lord*. So it's not like that's the day it started. But this album is celebrating 30 years. I mean, you don't have to give us all your secrets, but what's your private life with God like? How have you stayed in this this long?

Darlene: Well, yeah, it's interesting. For me, it's not something I work to stay in at all, actually. It's my followership of Jesus. I was radically saved at 15. And so in following Jesus, I find myself writing or leading. But actually, even that, these are things that I have the privilege of being able to do and apply myself to.

We pastor a church. I've raised three children. I have six grandchildren now. These two are the riches that are my community of faith. It's all part of my followership of Jesus. Mission. Really, really important to, I think, the life of a Christian, but my husband and I in our church. So yeah, I don't fight to stay in it. I just stay near to Jesus and He holds me.

And every day looks different. Every season.... I've learned little secrets along the way, though, that I got to pay attention to seasons and the rhythms of grace for my life. Seasons, they are necessary and they come and go but yeah.

The other stuff... it's a joy and it's an honor. It's an honor to lead anyone in worship anywhere at any time. I wouldn't even really call it a career because it's just something that I do.

Annie: When you talk about seasons, it's interesting you bring that up because we talk about it a lot around here. We started the year with Banning Liebscher on the show from Jesus Culture.

Darlene: Oh, I love Banning.

Annie: Ain't he wonderful.

Darlene: He is.

Annie: What a gift. I texted the other day and I said, "If you hear anything from the Lord," and the next thing was like three paragraphs. I was like, "You did. I know, I know."

Darlene: That's beautiful.

Annie: But I'm so curious, when we talk about seasons, how often do you spend time identifying what season you're in? For me, I'm not married yet, don't have kids, but there are times where I go like, "Man, there's something growing in my life. I need to pay attention." And other times I'm like, "Nothing is working. Nothing's working. Oh, it's the winter. That means they're seed. That means I'm meant to rest." And I feel like I'm supposed to produce all the time.

Darlene: And it's necessary. It's necessary.

Annie: So how much of your brain is working on that? Does that happen often?

Darlene: Probably. And probably the older that I've gotten, I'm more aware of it. When I was younger and little kids and run, run, run, I'm like, Whoa, whoa, this is big. But I've learned that if you overstay your welcome in a current season, even though you feel like you have to stay there and you're a bit hesitant to jump into the next one, if you overstay your welcome, that overstay, it's never fruitful.

Annie: Never. This is our wowie zowie button. [wowie zowie] My nephew says wowie zowie whenever I get my mind blown. That's it. When you overstay a welcome in a season, it's never fruitful. But I'm panicking when I'm not fruitful because I think I'm doing so... All I'm doing is going back to the trees and asking them to produce again. And the Lord's going, "Move to a new orchard."

Darlene: Yeah. Just rest in His... I was talking to a girl yesterday and I just said, "I think this is your season to take a really deep breath. Just a really deep breath. Allow your roots to go down deeper." You know, the pruning, all the things we love.

Annie: Yeah, right.

Darlene: Woohoo, pruning. But they're all necessary for you to continue to bring fruit that's lasting. I think our responsibility is just to stay close to Jesus, let the fruits of the Spirit be at work, and let Him take the lead. Just let Him take the lead. But we're just going to stay close so we know what He's saying. That's the responsibility.

Annie: I think we underappreciate seasons in our lives, I feel like. Especially maybe... I mean, this is Western, so it'd be Australian and the US, but maybe this is US-centric because we have issues. But I feel like my friends and I are expecting it to be summer all the time in our relationship lives, in our work lives, in our health. I am

noticing this one little part of my health that is part of getting older and part of the gig, but I'm like, no, no, no, we need to go backwards. I need to fix this. I need to call my doctor. And it's like, no, this is seasonal. All your friends are talking about this. This is very normal.

But do you sense that? Maybe 20 years ago or 30 years ago, did you want to stay in summer all the time, and now maturity has helped you appreciate all the seasons? Or is this a unique...? Maybe it's a unique Annie problem, Darlene?

Darlene: I don't know. Wouldn't it be great to stay in summer all the time? But in the earth, I mean, it would kill the earth in a very short amount of time. I have a friend, a writer, you might know her, Alicia Britt Chole.

Annie: Oh, I love her.

Darlene: She's a very dear friend. She's like Yoda to me. It's like, "Help. I need help with this." But she talks so beautifully about seasons, unlike anyone I've ever heard. But she talks about Jesus' whole life in His first 30 years was unseen. Basically, we get some little glimpses but-

Annie: Barely.

Darlene: It wasn't all summertime.

Annie: That's right.

Darlene: But without that, we wouldn't have had the impact of His three years that literally we're still living in the fruit of it.

Annie: That's right. Has she written about it?

Darlene: Oh, yeah.

Annie: Does she have a book about seasons?

Darlene: Oh, yeah.

Annie: Oh, I haven't read that one. I've read her lit one and her most recent one, but I haven't read-

Darlene: You meant *The Night is Normal*?

Annie: Yes. Is that the one that's about it? I guess she does do seasons. But *The Night is Normal* was-

Darlene: Anonymous. Have you done Anonymous?

Annie: No.

Darlene: Okay.

Annie: Okay, Anonymous. I'm writing it down. You're bossing me. Okay, you said a word earlier. You said "fellowship". What is that? I haven't used that word in my life before.

Darlene: You know, a lot of people talk about the discipleship into Christ and I... I don't know. It's called my fellowship of Christ.

Annie: It's beautiful.

Darlene: This is how I follow Jesus. And I don't know, just a little word that popped on out.

Annie: Yeah. So it feels like such a friendly walk with God to call it a fellowship. Like it's a fellowship and you're following. It's a follow. It's a version of discipleship. It feels-

Darlene: It's tactile. It's tactile. Which I think our relationship with Jesus needs to be. You know, it's present. It's alive. It's always interesting.

Annie: Yeah. Oh, I was sitting with a friend yesterday, I was in Denver yesterday and they're in a financially fine place, but not... they're like, We have what we need and they feel God telling them to invest in something new. And I was like, "Yeah, that sounds like Him." My limited knowledge of the Lord.

Darlene: He is many things. He is many things and all the things that we love. But one thing I've learned about God, He's not safe. He's safe as a Father, but he's not like, "Let's do a safe ordered life."

Annie: Yeah. Not predictable at all.

Darlene: That's a better word. Thank you. Because He is safe. But you know what I'm saying?

Annie: Yes.

- Darlene:** He's not like, "Let's do a start and let's do it..." It's just going to be like this and praise the Lord. There's going to be a bow on it at the end. No, it is not. This now I know. My faith has a job, right?
- Annie:** Yeah. Oh, wow.
- Darlene:** And it's called following Jesus because I need faith to do it.
- Annie:** Mia Fieldes.
- Darlene:** Love Mia.
- Annie:** Mia and Rita, did you listen to their episode on Rita's podcast?
- Darlene:** I did.
- Annie:** Holy... I mean, I sobbed. I was getting my nails done and I had to stop. I texted both of them, I was like, I had to stop because the Holy Spirit and I were getting into it and I was having my nails done. I have to go home. I can't listen to this anymore. I have to switch to something funny. But even Mia talking about faith, without faith, you cannot please God.
- Darlene:** You cannot. You cannot. That's the whole reason we have faith. I mean, I see that in worship. You know, without faith, I cannot enter in-
- Annie:** What does that look like when you're leading?
- Darlene:** It's the whole thing. It's the whole point. You know, people say to me, how do you lead worship when times are tough and maybe you're going through a tough time? And I'm like, How do you not? Wow. It's the point. It gives our faith a job. This is the whole thing. Worship is not I sing song through, you know, to make you all feel better. No. Worship is powerful. And we enter in by faith every single time. Otherwise, it's a spiritually, literal life-shifting moment every single time.
- Annie:** Wow.
- Darlene:** And so you got to do it by faith. But without faith, it's impossible. Please we got to live in that faith land. It's not comfortable, but that's where God invites us. He's like, come on this journey with me, my child.
- Annie:** That's what I feel. The thing I'm sensing in my own life with the Lord right now, even at... I have a book due at the end of the year. You've written. You know that when you're-

Darlene: You're right.

Annie: ...three months out, it is what is your brain doing all the time. Right?

Darlene: Yeah.

Annie: One of the things I'm experiencing as I'm writing is the Lord kind of reminded me, like, it's never about a destination. It's always about a journey. So even in dating, like I always think, Is this the guy I'm going to marry? And the Lord's like, What if the faith part is just going on the journey? And what if this person's meant to be in your life and you're not going to marry, but this is the journey.

And I've been thinking about what does it look like to have faith that the destination is never. There is never a destination. Everything we're doing. We'll finish projects, like you finished *Testament*, we'll finish books, we'll finish... but it's all-

Darlene: But they're part of the journey. My husband calls it the great faith adventure. And he's like, if it's a trip, you have all your plans, it's all ordered, it's lovely. God never invited us on a trip. He invited us on a journey, on the great adventure. And you're right. It's like, no, just when you think you got it all together, Let's go. Pack those bags. Let's go, baby.

Annie: Our entire team sat at the table you saw when you walked in last week for three days and we planned out 2025 and the first part of 2026.

Darlene: Can you come over and do that? Bring your whole team?

Annie: It is unbelievable. We do a yes-no list where we say, This is what we're saying yes to. This is what we're saying no to. We fast and pray before. So then we're all kind of on the same page. And this year for the first time ever, I also said, This is our yes and no's unless God does something different.

Darlene: Yeah, no, absolutely.

Annie: So will you talk about the balance? Because so many of our friends listening are figuring this out too. The balance of without vision, people perish. So we can't go, Oh, 2025 is good. So we do have to have leadership and plans and vision, but how do we balance the open-handedness of the great adventure with the responsibility of budgets and plans and schedules and calendars?

Darlene: Look, it's big. I believe that I know in my own life, the word is trust, right? It's like, God's like, yeah, it's all good. And yeah, He's leading and He's like, but you still gotta trust me. You still gotta trust me to lead you into unknown territory.

My husband and I love pioneering. We love unknown territory. But He's like, "Do you really trust me?" I had to learn that when I walked through cancer. He's like, "Do you trust me?" I said, "I think so." I thought I did. And now I got to work out "Actually, do I?" So it's in those seasons of squeeze that you actually really learn what you believe, why you believe it, all of those things. And I just think they're necessary.

Look, I've done something a little bit different in the last couple of years, I guess, where I want to place my time, energy, all of those things, what I feel like God is calling me into. I used to sit down with invites and all of that and like, Okay, what do we say, yes and no to him? I felt that for me I was responding or reacting to what was someone else's idea to put in front of me. Mark and I just went, do you know what? I actually think I am not really doing things that are organized a long way out in advance. I just feel at this time in my life to be more fluid. And so I can say yes to the unknown and to leave a bit more margin so that I can be quick to respond to the things that I don't know about yet.

Annie: So if someone says, We would love for you to come sing at Christmas? You've made margin to go, That's a yes from the Lord. Has it been fun? It seems adventurous.

Darlene: Okay. Behind your head, that sounds fun.

Annie: It is what we do.

Darlene: But it's that trust thing. God's like, do you trust me? I'm like, oh yeah, I've learned to really trust Him, to like literally fall into His arms with trust, and to be less scheduled so that I can... and look, it drives everyone around me crazy. And that's okay. I'm good with that.

And I don't think you get to that until you get a little bit older and you get a little bit more courage around who you are, what you're about, hit a few snags along the way, and just like, that develops some resilience and fine tunes who you are. So it is fun getting a little bit older, I'm going to tell you. It's fun.

Annie: As I've been working on this book, I said to my agent yesterday, we were both in Colorado Springs and I said, "I feel like I've shifted from the sister to the aunt in my writing. I feel like so many of my books were the sister going, I got to tell you my story, blah, blah, blah." And this time I'm like, "I need you to do something."

I'm telling you... I'm 44, I can tell you a couple of things. I'm not the mother, but I feel like the aunt. And I'm not the grandmother.

Darlene: So good.

Annie: It was an interesting switch. Have you felt that over your career switching seats?

Darlene: Oh, yeah.

Annie: Because now you're the mother of so many of us in faith.

Darlene: I definitely felt the shift like, of course, naturally, but when it happened spiritually, I was like, Oh, okay.

Annie: Interesting.

Darlene: And that didn't happen simultaneously, by the way.

Annie: Oh, interesting. Were you a natural mother before you were a spiritual mother?

Darlene: Yeah. I feel like that spiritual mother, the Lord was just having to iron out a lot more things.

Annie: Me too. Me too.

Darlene: There's this amazing scripture, I think it's in Isaiah 40, and it's talking about shepherds and how Jesus leads us. And then it really set me free as a mother. It's really set me free. It says, Jesus leads those He loves. It says, and those with young, he leads gently.

I went and talked to a shepherd from New Zealand. I'm close to New Zealand. New Zealand is a lot more sheep than people. And he said that when you're in a pasture and you're trying to take sheep from one pasture to another. He said, all the sheep go, but the ones with young, they just let them go at a much gentler pace, but they all get to where they're meant to be at the same time.

To me about seasons and about trust and about these things that we're talking about, it kind of laid it out for me. Because all the best things in my life, to be honest, I've had a child on my hip. It's never been easy. It's just happened like that. And when the Lord showed me that, it's like, oh no, this season is gentler and we all get to where we need to be at the right time. Took all the pressure off.

Annie: For our friends listening, we will make sure to put that verse on That Sounds Fun podcast Instagram, so they can see the exact verse.

Darlene: Perfect.

Annie: We'll find it. Because every one of us, whether... I mean, I'm thinking our young mom friends are crying in the carpool hearing you say that. But all of us are carrying something with us.

Darlene: A hundred percent. A hundred percent.

Annie: The Lord will lead gently.

Darlene: He leads gently. It's like, yes. Because we live, especially in the West, I'm going to say, in the developed world, there is this more, bigger, higher, greater, more, come on, push it out, push it out. But the Lord's like, really? Really? Did you hear from me? Was that me? Because we've also got a... he's interested in the whole of our life. Our body, soul, spirit, all of us developing at a rhythm that reflects Christ. The push and pull I think is good. It means that you're awake to it. If you just were sitting in a raft and going along the water, you're dead to it. It's like, you've gone to sleep already. But I feel like, no, no, be awake. Pay attention to these seasons. Pay attention to his voice. Those little [unctions?] that you get, you got to pay attention to them.

Annie: Yeah. I feel like this is what you're saying that I would always rather jump and thought God said something. I always feel like He's happier with... happier is not the right word. Sorry, everyone. I feel like He's more pleased. Maybe happier. That is how I feel. I feel like He's happier with me when I jump thinking I heard Him and when I wait because I'm not sure. And he's like, Oh, Annie, that was not me, but I appreciate you trying.

Darlene: But He's a good dad.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Darlene: He's going to be there. One day he said to me, "I was wrestling over something," He goes, "Daughter, if you go to the left, I'm going to bless you. If you go to the right, I'm going to bless you." I'm like, Oh, so that one's up to me. He's like, Yes, it is. Yes, it is. I'm like, what? That's too much responsibility.

Annie: I lived in Scotland for a while, in Edinburgh. I remember when I was deciding about that-

Darlene: Why? That's amazing.

Annie: It was amazing. A church invited me to come help plant a college ministry before any of this started. I tried to be an author, I'd gotten tons of rejections, and then the church call and wh... This is wild story. But while I was over there, I got a book deal. It's like the Lord just handed me this dream life for a season. It was beautiful. I loved it so much. But when I was deciding about moving there, it was the same where the Lord was like, what do you want?

Darlene: What do you want to do?

Annie: And I remember like, Oh, that's how this goes. I want to go. And he was like, Well, there we go.

Darlene: And as you go, and I guess, when you talked to me about... right at the beginning, you asked me about worship leading and career. It has been as I go. As I follow in just every day, all these other things. As I go.

Annie: As I go. This is the perfect time for me. You should write that. That may be how y'all do it. I've never written a song on purpose. So I wish you-

Darlene: Today might be your lucky day.

Annie: Oh my gosh. I have a co-write with Darlene Zschech. Somebody tell.

Darlene: If you're in the room, you're on the page.

Annie: Can't believe it.

[00:23:20] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Liquid I.V.](#) Okay. October is so busy y'all. I feel it. I know you feel it. I want us to stay hydrated so we can keep doing all the things we want to do.

If you're traveling for fall break or just trying to keep up with an overflowing schedule, give yourself a little tropical treat that will also support your health with Liquid I.V.'s new Hydration Multiplier+ Immune Support that comes in mango, passion fruit flavor. It has five times the daily value of vitamin C and three times the electrolytes of the leading sports drink. So you can give your body the immune support it needs. It's this little tropical hydration escape from the fall hustle and bustle.

So just add one stick of Liquid IV to your water bottle. Tear, pour, live more. Support everyday wellness with Liquid I.V. Get 20% off your first order at liquidiv.com and use the code THATSOUNDSFUN at checkout. That's 20% off your first order when you shop better hydration today, using the promo code, THATSOUNDSFUN at liquidiv.com.

Now, just a reminder that that link and literally every other link you could ever hope for, including the ones that Darlene and I talk about in the show are in the show notes below, or we'll send them right to you every Friday in the AFD Week in Review email. You can sign up for that in the show notes as well. You don't want to miss this Friday's.

Sponsor: And one more incredible partner to tell you about, Fatty15. Okay, what is that? Well, Fatty15 is a science-backed award-winning vegan and pure C-15 supplement. Let me tell you why this matters. Essential nutrients keep our cells healthy, which keeps us healthy. If you want to get all science-y about it, studies show that C15 works by strengthening our cells, improving our mitochondrial function, and protecting us against damaging free radicals. The result: better long-term metabolic, liver, and heart health.

It turns out many of us are deficient in C15, which results in weaker cells that makes for less energy and quit working earlier than they should. All of that makes us age faster and sleep poorly and feel sluggish. No, thanks. I ain't got the time. By replenishing our cells with that essential C15 nutrient, Fatty15 effectively repairs cells and restores our long-term health. It also has three times more cellular benefits than omega-3 or fish oil.

Your Fatty15 capsules come in a super cute reusable glass jar with a are shipped to your door quarterly and pouches made from recycled material. Y'all know we love that. Fatty15 is on a mission to replenish your C15 levels and restore your long-term health.

You can get an additional 15% off their 90-day subscription starter kit by going to fatty15.com/TSF and using the code TSF at checkout.

Sponsor: When I get my Thrive Market order, it is the best day because I know I can restock my pantry with my favorite snacks, sauces, and staples, and I don't even have to leave my house.

One of the things I love about Thrive Market is that I know I can trust the ingredients of what I'm buying. Instead of standing in the grocery store aisle reading through all of the labels to see if it's full of junk or things I can't pronounce, Thrive Market's already done that work for me.

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Their mission is to make healthy and sustainable living easy and affordable for everyone, so they seek out brands and products that follow ethical practices, including fair pay and treatment for workers, strict quality standards, and safe working conditions.

Want to shop at a grocery store that actually cares for your health? Go to thrivemarket.com/ThatSoundsFun for 30% off your first order, plus a free \$60 gift. Let's go. That's thrivemarket.com/ThatSoundsFun.

Okay, now back to our conversation with Darlene.

[00:27:18] <music>

Annie: Okay, so I'm 44, so Shout to Lord came out when I was 14. This is your as-you-go story because I don't know about you writing it, I don't know the history of it, except it showed up on a cassette tape in my house.

Darlene: Come on. Come on. Good old cassette tape.

Annie: Thanks be to God and thanks be to my mom that it showed up on a cassette tape. I remember... we have a lake house, and I took the tape player, one of those with the two big speakers on either side. I took the tape player down to the dock one night. It was probably the summer after eighth grade, so I was probably 13 turning 14. And I just played Shout to Lord over and over. That key change in the middle, Darlene, that key change in the middle.

When they said you were coming in and that you were willing to be on the show, I just thought, what a chance to tell you that your voice and your songwriting has absolutely shaped my faith. I said, my Jesus, my Savior, Lord, there's none like you before I knew my life would look like this publicly, before I knew the losses we would experience as a family, before I knew that I wouldn't be married when I thought I would, before I knew I'd get a dream career. Before I knew any of that, you taught me to say, there's none like you. I just am thankful to get to thank you for that.

I'm sure this happens to you all the time because there's a billion 40-year-olds running around with you as their teenage soundtrack. I'm sure this is true globally

because of the reach of that song, but I'm not sure there's a song that shaped my choices and that lived in me for so long. I'm just so thankful. So thank you.

Darlene: You're so beautiful.

Annie: I was like, well, I've got you. You're trapped. You have the headphones on. You can't go anywhere.

Darlene: Only to God.

Annie: Tell me about having a song that has a 30-year reach because people still say... I mean, we sing it at church, people still sing it. What is that like?

Darlene: I don't even have words for it. Like for my life, it's just been a total gift. And it's just pure worship. I've seen men try to own that song or try and push to hear that. It's just worship. It belongs to the Lord. It left my lips and left my life. I was pretty aware of that early on.

Annie: Really? You knew it was different?

Darlene: I didn't know of any impact or anything like that. I would never, never, ever say that. It just traveled. Now, this is before internet or getting on Instagram and here's my little song.

Annie: Yeah.

Darlene: But literally, once I played it to my worship pastor and I played it...

Annie: Did you write it by yourself?

Darlene: Uh-huh.

Annie: Yeah. Let's go, Darlene.

Darlene: Once I played it to him... I wrote it on my little piano at home, just in worship, my little girls around my feet, just in worship. Between Psalm 96 and Psalm 100, sorry, you'll find a lot of that song. When I played it to him, I made him stand with his back to me because I wasn't confident as a songwriter at all. But I just thought-

Annie: Was it like your first song you'd ever written?

Darlene: No, it wasn't.

Annie: But early.

Darlene: It wasn't, but way early. I was like, "My Jesus, my savior. Change it if you don't like it. I know it's bad." Like the whole song I'm doing that. "*Shout to the Lord*... I know "shout" is a big word, but the Bible says..." By the time he just turned around, he goes, Can you just sing it through? We're going to do this this weekend." And then it was gone. But that's what worship is. It's here to here and it's gone. It's about Him. It leaves you. It's about Jesus. I do get frustrated when I see some of the culture that kind of feeds something else. And I'm like, oh, I just want to hug you and slap you as well at the same time. Because I'm like, no, no, no, no, no. Because worship is not a genre. It can't be limited to any of these systems that the world creates and that we've all been part of, shaped by.

But in the West, we just got to be so careful because there are sacred... what would we call them? There are just sacred places in the Bible that the Bible shows us are reserved for Christ alone. I think that about people's lives. I'm like, you know that you've been born for Christ. You've got a mission in you from God. That's why you get so frustrated because when you're not on his path, it just feels awkward and people will wrestle to try and find that way.

And I think that's the same thing with worship. It's reserved for Christ. So the whole impact thing, I don't overthink it, to be honest. I love the stories. And they overcame by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony. I go, oh, that is so good. You can refute my theology, but you cannot take away my story.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Darlene: And that is... you know. So love it.

Annie: Yeah, we'll take that one back with you. 30 years, I was with you from the get... from 1994 I was with you.

Darlene: I love that.

Annie: It's amazing. I mean, your new album, *Testament*, that came out Friday, it is two and a half hours long, Darlene.

Darlene: I'm sorry.

Annie: Don't be sorry. That is not why I'm saying that. I loved it.

Darlene: I mean, it's not a short listen. It's not even a running, put it in your ears and go for a run because it's a marathon. It's not a sprint.

Annie: I mean, I listened on the plane. I listened in my house. I mean, I've had it going.

Darlene: And it's still not to the end.

Annie: I have three left. I tried so hard this morning. I have three left. The last one's 10 minutes, Darlene. I could not do it. The last one was 10 minutes. I tried so hard.

Darlene: Oh, that's so funny.

Annie: Tell me about that. Because what you've actually offered us is a pretty full worship experience because the songs also, the new ones and the revised ones that you've recorded again, it is a full journey of kind of everything you would need to say to the Lord. It kind of feels like an encyclopedia of what you might need to say to the Lord.

Darlene: So beautiful. When *Shout to the Lord* was turning 30, it was actually my children that said, You need to do something.

Annie: Really?

Darlene: One of my son-in-laws, Andrew, son-in-love, he said, you should do 30 songs. We should call it *Testament*. It's about the faithfulness of God. And so you're writing books. I mean, today you're writing a song, but you're writing books. And these are your signposts along the way of how the Lord is shaping and releasing your life to the world. These songs are just these spiritual markers for me of His kindness and His nearness and my response in worship. So, yeah, look, at about song 20, I'm like, hu, this is a doozy. Okay, we can do it, guys. We can get there.

Annie: So when you're recording, you're like, everybody buckle up, bring your snacks.

Darlene: Yeah. But it's been fun.

Annie: It's beautiful.

Darlene: And I have enjoyed every second of it. Also, it was therapy for me because my youngest daughter got married and my husband and I cried for a month. Then the kids are like, Mom, you need to do something because you're calling us a hundred times a day. "What are you doing? Do you want to hang out?"

Annie: I mean, before this album, you haven't really... I mean, you haven't come to the U.S. in a long time. What are you experiencing being here now around this album

release? Tell me something that's been like, man, this is interesting to see God doing. I'm seeing Him doing something interesting. And what's a warning you would say when you're watching what you're seeing now?

Darlene: Oh, I mean, look, the other night at the Dove Awards, Forrest, his speech, it was just like mic drop.

Annie: Really? I haven't watched it yet.

Darlene: And I was just thinking of, you know, because young adults, they get beaten up on a lot, you know? Like they're losing their way, they're dah dah dah. But I'm watching him and I'm like, you're not losing anything. You have got the fire of God in your belly. I was a big fat mama that night. I was just so happy. So I see that.

I think the church gets beaten up on... and I'm a church girl, so I'm all in and I'm going to defend her all the way in all of her awkwardness. But Jesus said He'll build His church. The thing that I think is also something we need to be careful of in the deconstruction era, you know, God still says that the church is Christ's body in which he lives and moves and fills everything with His presence. I'm like, Ooh, again, another little sacred. Be careful, peeps. Be careful. Be careful what you are loyal to. That's the right thing. Be careful what you criticize. But little Frank, I'm like, whoo, that just blessed my heart to pieces. It was amazing.

Annie: I'll tell you one of the things I watch when I see someone come up like that, or if anybody that's winning a Dove or a K-Love or whatever, I always wonder, where do they go to church? Because I think what I've experienced and what you model beautifully, and I'm thinking of Brooke models, if you are not invested locally, your global impact will be limited forever. Without local investment in your church, even if you can only just show up locally, if without that local covering, I have no global impact. And so I'm always watching them. And if they aren't plugged in somewhere locally, I'm like, this won't last. This will be short.

Darlene: Yeah. Look, and even leaders of worship that aren't plugged into a local church, I'm like, people, people, please. And then they beat up in the church. I'm like, you know it's the church that's like paying your wages right now. So come talk to me. Again, it's my hug and a slap. It's like the two-handed thing.

I'll tell you something interesting. I don't know what it was like when you were growing up. I'm a lot older, but the three things in ministry, I remember preachers used to say, the three G's, you got to stay away from gold, money, glory belongs to the Lord and girls, the three G's, right? And it was like, warning, warning, whenever you did a leadership class.

But my husband said, He said, I think there's another G and I think it's for this time. And I think it's the word grief. He said, I think that in the deconstruction, he said, there's all this unmet expectation, this undealt with people suffering in silence and suffering in isolation. And he's like, this other G is literally isolating people so much with no one to talk to. It literally takes them out.

So we're very passionate about trying to get people plugged in, get connected. Try again. Try again and find a local community who loves you more for who you are than what you do. And then walk alongside that local community. Look, there's no perfect church. When we get to heaven, it's going to be all good, but on earth, it's full of people like me. I get things wrong. But my heart is to love you.

Annie: It was a perfect church until I showed up. When I showed up, I started messing up. I mean, that is true for all of us. My sister... when my nephew was on a playground, a little boy pushed him down. I had this moment when I was thinking about people leaving the church where I was like, my sister did not parent my nephew to stop going to playgrounds because a little boy pushed him over.

Darlene: That is good.

Annie: Playgrounds are still very available to my nephew. It is pay attention to who's around you. And when you get pushed down, get in a conversation and make it right. And then maybe stay away from that kid.

Darlene: Brush off. Brush off. Stay away. Put a little... all right, you're maybe not my person for the rest of my life. But-

Annie: But I'm not leaving the playground.

Darlene: I'm not leaving the playground. I can disagree with you and still love you to pieces.

Annie: Why did we lose that? Talk to me about 1994. Could people disagree and still be friends in a way? This feels like the last 10 years that has been lost, especially between Christians.

Darlene: Yeah. Look, I just think there was more conversation. I think there's more connection, more connectivity, more opportunities to disagree in a healthy environment. But if you're just disagreeing on social media with no accountability, I just think that... those opinion pieces on social media, I think that is the most gutless thing I've ever seen. It's like, there was no accountability there. And if you were my child, I'd be like, Hey, hey, we don't behave like that.

Annie: Yeah, we don't talk to people like that.

- Darlene:** And the Bible says, You sit down, you talk to someone. If you've got a disagreement with your brother, before you go to worship, it says, before you go to worship, before you go to war, let's have a conversation. We can agree to disagree, but we keep the bond there. Big topic.
- Annie:** Mother us again on this. When you think about social media, when you started leading worship, it just wasn't a thing. Again, I knew your name and your face from the cover of the tape.
- Darlene:** I bet you knew the inside of my mouth. On every album cover, how many fillings does she have?
- Annie:** That's exactly right. But I didn't listen to the song and then immediately follow you on Instagram, like we can today. As you're watching Christians today, what are some gifts of social media for our faith and what's a warning you'd give us about social media when it comes to our faith?
- Darlene:** I think sharing the God story, again, the testimony is great. I think stay away from a perfectly curated life. It's just nonsense. It doesn't help people because comparison is a killer. Always has been, always will be. And you've got to realize that on the other end of your probably well-meaning, look at my perfect life post, on the other side of that is a mental health epidemic across every spectrum of life. You just got to think before you post, is what I will say. Just have another read. Have another read. Is it helpful? Is it necessary? Does it build people? Is it to look at me? Just have a think. Take a moment. Sit over that post and just like, okay, let's just have a think. If it's all those things, great.
- Some things don't need to be posted. I talked to someone this week and they're trying to organize an event for a certain person to be unseen and spend time in prayer. And I'm like, Oh, so you're going to ask people to leave their phones at the door? And it was like, oh, really? I'm like, yeah, because we got to help people create sacred spaces, help people create these sacred spaces.
- So I would say that is both answers to that question. It's the warning and it's just have a think. Be intelligent and responsible for your social media and make sure it helps edify and not opinion pieces with no accountability. I just think that is low. I'm like, you're better than that.
- Annie:** Yeah, that's it. You're better than that. I bet you're better than that. I'm not experiencing you better than that, but I bet you're better than that.

Darlene: I know you're better than that. I know you're better than that. You're just having a moment and you're going to express yourself to the world. Not everything the world needs to know about.

[00:44:51] <music>

Annie: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation one more time. Are you having the best time? I'm having the best time. But I got to tell you about [KiwiCo](#).

Y'all know we love KiwiCo around here. They have just launched something brand new that we are really excited to tell you about. KiwiCo is now offering KiwiCo Clubs to engage kids on a journey of seriously fun learning. What we love about KiwiCo is that their crates aren't just a fun project for your kids to work on, but they actually learn something too.

And now with KiwiCo Clubs, they get to go on a comprehensive learning journey. So your kids will learn the fundamentals through hands-on projects and progressively build on their skills with each new project they work on. How cool is that? You can watch your kids go from learning to building bows and arrows to engineering their own robot.

KiwiCo has five different clubs to choose from with unique topics like science, engineering, and art. And it's more than just a crate. KiwiCo Clubs members get really great perks like 10% off orders, free shipping in the U.S., and early access to new crates. A ton of my MiniBFFs and my nephew Sammy love KiwiCo, but they're all into different things and interests. So KiwiCo has them all covered.

KiwiCo Clubs, my MiniBFFs, will build skills over time, learning about everything from robotics and engineering to geography and art techniques. Plus there's no commitment, so you can pause or cancel anytime. Tinker, create, and innovate with KiwiCo.

Get up to 50% off your first crate at [KiwiCo.com](#), promo code, THATSOUNDSFUN. Again, that's 50% off, five-zero, off your first crate at [Kiwi.com](#), promo code, THATSOUNDSFUN.

Sponsor: Listen, I need y'all to know I love [Prose](#) so much that I keep bottles of their shampoo and conditioner in both New York and Nashville. Because no matter what city I'm in at the time, I do not want to skip washing my hair with my favorite custom hair care.

Since 2017, Prose has transformed traditional hair and skincare with a made-to-order custom model. They combine the know-how of their team of

in-house cosmetic chemists with an advanced AI algorithm that personalizes your formulas based on 80 plus unique factors, so you are truly getting a custom-made-for-you product.

Prose also offers custom skincare. So go give it a try too, because with the Prose promise, if you don't love your first order, it's on them. So there's never been a better time to switch to custom.

Prose is so confident that they'll bring out your best hair that they are offering an exclusive trial offer of 50% off your first hair care subscription order at prose.com/ThatSoundsFun. So take your free consultation, get your one-of-a-kind formulas, and see the difference custom hair care can make with 50, 50% off at prose.com/ThatSoundsFun.

And now back to finish up our conversation with Darlene Zschech.

[00:47:43] <music>

Annie: With *Testament* out in the world, we get this opportunity now. I love talking about this when worship leaders come on the show. Will you talk for just a second about how worship in your home, in your car, you know, my New York life and myself in the subway and my ears, how does worship actually affect your environment? Why does it matter if we play it out loud at our houses versus just, I mean, for years and years and years that people only sung together. But will you talk for just a minute, why does it matter that we have music in our homes for worship music?

Darlene: Well, because we're trying to set an atmosphere of faith in our homes. And so, yeah, there are certain things, I guess, again, this invitation into the throne room of God, right? From that place, like it will shift things in your home and therefore in your mind, in people that come in into the atmosphere in your home.

People won't be able to put a word on it. Like people who don't follow Jesus yet they won't be able to have words for it, but they're like, I always feel peace when I come into your home. They don't know that in the background is the word of God put to music being sung over them, in them, through them. I just love coming and sitting. It's like, yeah, yeah, that's awesome. And then you can start to unpack the why. But it's really powerful.

Look, I think sometimes it's hard, especially when you're going through a hard season, because it does confront your pain and it asks it to pay attention to the word of God. One of my friends, when I was on my last round of chemo and I didn't think I could do it, I've nearly died twice, not from the cancer, but from chemo. And she's like, right, this is what we're going to do. She had a plan. She came into

bed with me. She goes, now I've got this new song from Bethel, *You Make Me Brave*. And I'm like, I don't want to hear it. Because the pain, emotionally, physically, the fear. And she's like, no, no, you are going to hear it. And I'm going to play it again and again, again and again, until you are ready to go into this last round of chemo. That's the power. And when it's like the bridge, you make me brave. And she's like, yes, he does. That's a good friend right there, right?

Annie: That's right.

Darlene: And I'm like, ah, but it did something in me. It kind of sharpened what my sword had become wobbly and weak. It's like with the high praises of God in their mouth and two-edged sword in their hand, Psalm 149. But my arms were tired, my sword was limp. It helped reposition me for my last stage of war. And I'm like, that is the power of the presence of God in the words of God, that we have the incredible gift of being able to sing to Him. And they will shift your life. There's only two things we take to heaven, isn't there? There's people. Worship. It's the atmosphere of heaven.

Annie: Wow.

Darlene: It's only two things. So we get this little glimpse of heaven on earth. And it's like such a gift to us as we worship Jesus here, which we will do for all of eternity.

Annie: Two years ago, I got a sword tattoo. I have white tattoos, by the way, so you may not be able to see it, but I got a sword tattoo.

Darlene: Why do you get white tattoos? That is so interesting.

Annie: It is fun. I have a lot.

Darlene: Do they light up at night?

Annie: No, I wish. I wish I had done glow-in-the-dark. Part of it is I like that no one knows unless I tell them.

Darlene: Wow.

Annie: And they're just for me mostly anyway. But the sword was super cool.

Darlene: That's super cool, Annie.

Annie: It was so fun.

Darlene: Did it hurt?

Annie: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Darlene: [00:51:53]

Annie: And I did this one. I got to where... a prophetic voice in Scotland gave me this word about like, it is time for you to step into the warrior season. And so I was looking all over Scotland for a sword. Like I was trying to find a sword to buy. And then I went to Israel— this was October of '22 — and I was like, Oh, I'll just get a tattoo of a sword. I mean, I like treat it like a rosary a lot, but it's that verse. Oh yeah, you should. It's that verse of like, this is what we battle with. Like we are in a battle. I heard someone yesterday say, he said, every morning I wake up, I put my feet on the ground and I say, I'm reporting for duty, sir. And I was like, oh, that's a great line. I want to start saying that.

Darlene: Look, I reckon the last, it must be 15 years or so, I put my feet on the ground and I just say, Yes. You know, that word Hineni, which, you know, when Abraham-

Annie: I don't know the word.

Darlene: Right. So in Genesis, when God calls Abraham and he says, Yes, Lord. And what it means is before you ask anything, before I know what it is, my answer is yes. And then God says, now I want you to take your son, your only son and I want you to go up this mountain and we together are going to worship. It's a powerful passage of scripture, but that's what it means. I've just put that as a practice in my life. And it gets-

Annie: Yeah. He takes you, that's your word.

Darlene: But He does. But I still, I'm like, yeah, it might be like, yeah, yeah. But it's like, yeah, Lord. One of these songs is like, whatever it looks like, whatever it looks like, I say yes to the spirit. Yes. It's just, yes, yes, yes. Hineni. And it's a powerful understanding that you can trust God with your yes. Because actually in the end, it's to see His greater yes come to pass, His yes and amen over our lives.

Annie: It's amazing to hear the mothers saying that. You're saying that. Rita has a "my yes is my yes is my yes".

Darlene: She does.

Annie: So for our mothers to be saying, this is the season of yes. You need to say yes before you know, especially when the world feels... I mean, I haven't lived forever,

but I've lived long enough to feel like the world feels like it's crying out. Like the earth feels like it's crying out and people are crying out. And just to go, okay, Lord, I don't know where all this goes. I mean, I know in the long run where it goes. I don't know where all this goes on earth, but my yes is my like, yes, Lord, before the day starts. I need to start saying that.

Darlene: It's powerful.

Annie: That's beautiful. What a gift.

Darlene: And we say it in the safety of His presence, right?

Annie: Yes.

Darlene: So when you're asking your children to do hard things, right, we ask them to do hard things in the safety of our love. Like we're not asking them to do things. We're going to stretch them because they need it. They need to develop tenacity, resilience, all these things, but they're in the safety of I'm a dad.

Annie: Yeah. Yeah.

Darlene: It's the same. It's like, I got you. I got you daughter. I got you son, but you need to do this. Yeah.

Annie: I joke with the Lord a lot. One of the things I love is that He never forgets what we prayed and asked for. And He answers whenever He wants to answer. But sometimes He'll say, look, I didn't forget. I didn't forget. But He also doesn't forget the things we agreed to, like when I was 14 and I was singing *Shout to the Lord* in the middle of the night on the boat dock and I was saying, you're my comfort and my shelter. He doesn't. So there have been times when I have wanted to compromise later in my life and the Lord goes, "Oh, sorry, I believed you when you were 14. Who she was actually telling the truth. This is you being weak. That was you being strong. I'm going to believe her." And I go, oh, fine, fine, you're right.

Darlene: And there's something that got shaped in you. And then like that, you know, that heart after God.

Annie: It's what I see my friends doing and how they're raising their kids too, where I go like, oh, you don't realize that I made choices at 5, 9, 14 that the Lord holds me to. That He believes her over me, what I want today, or what I think I want today. And it's my parents, it's my church, it's worship leaders like you that shaped my decisions then that are playing out now because the Lord doesn't forget. He didn't

forget what I was saying when I said that to Him. It was the yes. It was the Abrahamic yes.

Darlene: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, definitely. You know, what you're shining is so bright. So that yes and all the subsequent yeses are culminating in something so miraculous and wonderful. It's beautiful. I'm just so-

Annie: Thank you. Okay, The last question we always... is there anything we didn't talk about you want to make sure we talk about? I mean, we could do this forever. I'm just like, Darlene, teach me more.

Darlene: I'm like... No.

Annie: Okay, the last question I always ask is because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you. What does Darling Zschech do for fun? I have to know.

Darlene: Well, levels. I mean, I love to cook. I love it. I turn the music up and I'm like, it's fun. It's the atmosphere, right? I set the atmosphere. I love setting the table. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn't. It's all good. So that's fun to me. I love fishing.

Annie: Oh, really?

Darlene: Love fishing.

Annie: Do y'all live on the beach?

Darlene: We live close to the beach. So we're in a fishing paradise. I love horse riding.

Annie: Do you?

Darlene: Don't get to do it very often, but I love it.

Annie: Horses are so spiritual. I think there's something too.

Darlene: Right.

Annie: That animal is connected to the Lord. Well, I mean, Jesus rides one in at the end, so there must be something to it. But He could have picked any animal and He comes in on a horse.

Darlene: Yeah. I do lots of fun things and I also... I lift weights. My husband and I, as we've gotten older and they're like, got to build your bone density. So we're like, yes.

Annie: Okay.

Darlene: So yeah. I really love it. I really love it.

Annie: Strength training. I mean, it is what they're telling all of us, 30s and up is get strong. Isn't it great? Because back to the 90s again, you know what no one was telling me the 90s? No one was telling me to be strong. Everybody was telling me to be skinny.

Darlene: Ooh.

Annie: Right.

Darlene: Okay. There it is.

Annie: That was it. My teenage years and 20s were "be as small as you can". And now it's just be strong.

Darlene: And isn't it funny now you look back on photos where you felt you were not small and you're like, I was microscopic. I was tiny, tiny, but it was like, no, no, don't-

Annie: But I wasn't strong. No.

Darlene: No.

Annie: I was trying to take up less space.

Darlene: What is that?

Annie: We are not going to let women take up less space.

Darlene: No way.

Annie: No.

Darlene: No way. Look, because of the table references throughout the scriptures, you know, as a church, I'm like, table is where it's at for me. I love seeing you seeing me. And I say to our church all the time, If you want to be thin, we are not the church for you.

Annie: We got too much fellowship, too much food to come.

Darlene: Too much fellowship.

Annie: That's it. That's it. If you want to be strong, be here.

Darlene: Be here.

Annie: Yeah. That's it. We'll feed your body and your spirit.

Darlene: Come on, baby.

Annie: That's right. Would you mind praying for us?

Darlene: Oh, I'm honored.

Annie: I'm just thinking about our friends listening who just are feeling the yes in them that they want to say, but it feels scary. It is scary. It's scary to me too.

Darlene: Scary to me too.

Annie: It's just good for us. Let's say yes anyway. I'll say yes, scared.

Darlene: Because I want the adventure. I don't want the well-planned, you know, perfect life. It's like, no, no, I want the adventure, the God adventure.

Annie: That's right. Pray whatever the Lord tells you, but I'd love for you to close us that way.

Darlene: Oh, thank You, Jesus. Firstly, I just want to say thanks Lord for Annie, her life, her yes, the platform she's provided to bring so much life and wisdom and strength to so many people. And I bless her in Jesus' name, her going out, her coming in, the dreams in her heart that only You and her know about Lord, I bless them in Jesus' name.

And we thank you that you are working all things together for good in her life. Oh God, I thank you. And every listener today. Lord Jesus, we have an inkling of the times that we're living in. There's that sense of urgency. And Father, I thank you that you have entrusted us. You knew what you were doing when you placed us here for this season in history. And I pray that we will understand that, be aware of it for those who need to kind of be reawakened today to their purpose.

I just pray Holy Spirit that you will do what only you can do in the life of every listener, that they will get up today and take a bold step of faith into their new yes before you. I thank you, Holy Spirit, that you are moving by your power across the earth. I thank You that these generations coming through are not lost to you, Father, but we pray, Holy Spirit, you will just grab their hearts, let them really rise to what you are calling them into.

And I pray as mothers and fathers where I sit with my generation, that we will not be critical, but we will hold up their arms and cheer them on as they really fight dragons of this season that they are born to fight. This is a season we were born for, Father, and I thank you today. We give you all the glory. We will worship you forever. Lord, I pray continually, Spirit and truth, let it be so beautiful before you. And we thank you, Lord, that you are a good God, You are a speaking God. And I thank you that we, your people, will be listening. We bless you in your mighty and most powerful name, that name of Jesus. Amen.

Annie: Amen.

[01:02:13] <music>

Outro: Okay, you guys, can you believe that? I mean, Darlene Zschech goes in this category of legends, and we every now and again get to have a legend on the pod. In fact, if you enjoyed this episode, I think you'll also love... look, here's a little legend series. Episode 465 with Cece Winans, Episode 302 with Michael W. Smith. Legends. Absolute legends.

Go listen to *Testament* if you haven't already. It came out Friday. Like we said, it is a beautiful, long listen. So put it on in your house. I've switched my Alexa in the morning to just playing through *Testament*, and oh, it's just beautiful.

And go follow Darlene on social media. Tell her thank you so much for being on the show. And like I said, we will share the verses that she mentioned on the That Sounds Fun podcast Instagram. So make sure you are following there so that you can get all that extra good stuff, like the scriptures she told us about. And if you have any questions, we can answer them there @ThatSoundsFunPodcast as well.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that is where you can find me.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same. Okay, listen, today what sounds fun to me this week is banana pants. Listen, here's what happens. I'm in New York currently,

but tomorrow morning I fly home to Nashville for just a day because we get to see the screening of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. You guys, spoiler alert, I've seen it and I sobbed. I cannot wait for our staff to see it and you to get to see it in just a couple of weeks when it comes out. But here's your spoiler alert: Bring your tissues. That's what sounds fun to me is a day back in Nashville, getting to see that movie with my team.

Y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday. Oh, you guys, speaking of legends, Thursday we have Michael Tait and Adam Agee from Newsboys. Y'all get ready. This is a great one.