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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 glad to be here with you today.

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Intro: Today on the show, I get to talk with my friend, one of my favorite pastors, Phil Manginelli. Phil is the lead pastor of the Square Church in Smyrna, Georgia.

He is also the founder of Resistance and Renewal. He equips churches and organizations teaching internationally on navigating the cultural landscape of a post-Christian world and following Jesus in a secular age. Phil is an expert on this concept, on this content. I am dying for y'all to hear this show. So I'm glad you're here.

Phil and I got to sit down a couple of weeks ago at the Hephzibah House in New York, talk all about this and his new book, *You Are Not Alone*. Learning how to live as a person of faith in 2024 seems very challenging and the center of a lot of conversations. So this felt like the exact right time to bring Phil on to talk about what is going on in the world, in the U.S., and in our faith and where those all meet.

So here's my conversation with my friend and pastor Phil Manginelli.

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- Annie:** Phil Manginelli, welcome to That Sounds Fun in New York City.
- Phil:** This is amazing.
- Annie:** Welcome to Hepzibah House. Okay, say what you said about how it felt when you got in here already.
- Phil:** It's peace. It's peace.
- Annie:** Over the weekend, I spoke at a conference in Marion, Illinois, and the room they set us up in as our green room was their prayer room. And I was like, very interested. I just have a real belief that walls hold on to things.
- Phil:** It's so true.
- Annie:** The rooms where people pray, that stuff stays, right?
- Phil:** I fundamentally believe it does.
- Annie:** What makes me think of that as well is we know that evil stuff stays when people leave. And so it must be true that godly stuff stays too, right?
- Phil:** Yeah, I do. I'm just a lot bigger in mystery these days. And I think we think of things too simply. So I actually do really believe that when there is a place that has been just saturated in the presence of God, it makes a difference.
- Annie:** I'm really hot right now on the aroma of Christ idea, that everywhere we go, we change the place we're in. I was sitting on the subway when I was going down to prayer this morning, sitting on the subway, and I was like, "I changed the whole smell of this car just by getting in here." And I was like, "All right, Lord." I was listening to Rita Springer and her song, *Amen. Amen*, when the river dries up, and I was just looking at everybody, I was like, "Y'all don't know I changed the smell of this place."
- Phil:** I love it.
- Annie:** Okay, so aroma of Christ. Will you talk about that for a second? Because I've been talking about it from stages, but I want to make sure I'm doing the theology correct. What is it like that believers in Christ actually change the environment they're in, just like the rooms change?

Phil: Well, I mean, I would say fundamentally, we have to actually hold on to the idea, which is true, that when we are the body of Christ, it's not just a metaphor. I am a living, walking temple of God who's in union with God and the presence of God is with me. Whether I feel it, whether I'm even walking in holiness and righteousness or whatever I'm doing, that never ceases in my life.

And that whole invitation is I think when you come into clarity and awareness of that, is that that invitation of my life gets to be that representation of Jesus everywhere I go. But it's more than just that representation. It's that I carry something. Every room I walk in, peace walks into it. Every room I walk in, joy walks into it. Every room I walk into, healing walks into it.

I think sometimes we have... a lot of people I know... I used to do this. You pull back a little bit from those kind of ideas because you found yourself in seasons where they were either misrepresented or almost taken advantage of. Sometimes, I mean, in my own life, I feel like I am reclaiming faith from the edges of the extreme faith movement.

And I looked at all of these things and said, "Oh, I don't want that. I don't believe that. I don't see that." And you almost overreact. And I think there's a lot of us that are going, Oh, there's a lot of truth there that we need to come back to. I need to reclaim this because it's true.

I think when we actually understand it, we partner with God, His promises start to be tangible and realized. I really believe it is about understanding that while the presence of God is always with us, there are genuinely times that there is a tangible manifestation of His presence, which is unique. It's not all the time. And that that is always possible.

I think that's the way I want to start living, is with the sincerity and the innocence to come back to the place of go, yeah, actually, everywhere I am, anything is possible. And it has nothing to do with me other than I belong to Jesus.

Annie: That's it. I mean, yesterday, the guy at church who taught, named Guy from Australia, but Guy taught at church yesterday, and he talked about, like, Lazarus could do nothing to raise himself from the dead. There is this beautiful part of regeneration that we have no control. God is the one who brings people back to life.

And on the train this morning, I just kept thinking, "I've done nothing. I've done nothing to smell different. But I smell different in this car. And I've done nothing to do it."

Phil: And maybe this tells you a lot about my own mindset. When I really stand in that, it's also what a release from false things. I don't have to do anything other than belong.

Annie: Oh, that's it.

Phil: It's that sense of unworthiness. For me, if you're talking about the backdrop of my own voice that I have to continually bring in alignment with Jesus, it's like that's for the worthy. I'm aware of myself enough to go, Ah. And the reminder of that I can do nothing is also the reminder that I don't have to do anything. I actually get to be released from the shame or the pressure that I place upon myself of "this is about my performance". And actually, go, No, it's really about my belonging. My performance doesn't negate my belonging.

Annie: That's right.

Phil: Not that I want to please Jesus in everything that I do. But it's easy for me, at least, to become caught in that kind of cycle of thinking that it's up to me.

Annie: So correct my theology on this or tell me I was on-ish. I taught the armor of God this weekend. And breastplate of righteousness, one of the things I said to them, it will protect all your organs, all the things I've heard people teach. I said, I reshare. That is what we get to do. I heard someone say this, let me tell you too how it changed my life.

But I said, You know, the thing about righteousness... this is what I want you to make sure I was on about. The thing about righteousness is we didn't do anything to deserve it, but our behavior out of it is also the righteousness. So I did nothing to deserve the righteousness I experienced through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

But the part two of righteousness is now because of that, I will run from sin. Because of that, I will have authorities over me. Because of that, I will worship in the train car given the opportunity while I'm sitting there realizing I smell different than everybody else. That's true, right? There can be two parts of righteousness. There's the part we don't control, but then our response is part of it too.

Phil: Absolutely. And I think it's... because I do think that part's important because the invitation is there is something I've received that I can't earn that is the fundamental truth of who I am. So my identity is established only in what Jesus has accomplished for me. But then the expression of that is my invitation into partnership.

So the promises of God are not light switches. They don't just tangibly play out in your life regardless of what you do. They're true, but this is like the concept of freedom. Freedom is a gift to be received and it's also an alignment that needs to be expressed. So there's those two dimensions of all of that life. I think because that's true, there's a tension in that.

And that's where we can get caught in ourselves like, what do we do with that tension? And we kind of insert our own works or our own sense of righteousness or our own sense of unrighteousness. Rather than just going, No, it's just a simple principle. I've been given something I belong to, and I can choose whether I live in it or not. And when I do, there's a tangible degree of righteousness. So when I live out the righteousness that Christ has placed in me, it actually is a second level of protection over my heart.

Annie: Yeah, right. I mean, faith without works is dead. So it's got to be both. I think sometimes the thing I struggle with is don't tell me to do nothing. Don't tell me there's nothing to do. I mean, I recognize Lazarus did not raise himself from the dead, but he certainly had to walk out. No one went and carried him out. So it's the faith without works is dead.

Phil: Oh man, my oldest son, Jake, is 15. We were doing a discipleship conversation just two days ago. And we're talking about this. Jake was reading kind of where Jesus talks about eternal reward. And he suddenly had this sense of insecurity, fear.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Phil: But we sat down, we talked through it for like two hours. And I said, "Jake, what I want to just encourage you in something that's happening is, one, you care, and two, you believe Jesus. Don't minimize that. You know, some of these things we have to get that wider view on. And ultimately I said, "Jake, there's this tension, which is that the Bible has this very clear statement, which is that I am literally saved by grace, that I cannot earn, I cannot work for, my works are meaningless in acquiring it. It is actually whether I'm going to come into allegiance in faith with Jesus or not.

So it's completely something that's received. So I will spend eternity with Christ in Christ because of nothing that I've done. And then also there is the reality that my life matters. You think about all these little things that we don't talk about very often. Pictures of judgment for a believer. Often we hear the word "judgment" we only think negative. Judgment isn't an exclusively negative thing in God's mindset. It's just the ultimate rendering of His decision-making and justice.

So I'll be held accountable for what I teach. I'll be rewarded for the secret things before the Lord. There is some kind of mystery to eternal life. It's even one of the things Jon Tyson talked about. Our friend Jon Tyson. A long time ago, I remember talking about, we need to learn how to exchange an earthly FOMO for eternal FOMO.

Annie: Yeah, that's good.

Phil: But there's really no answer to how those things hold together other than there's just a tension. And what I kind of was talking about with Jake was rather than... none of it is an invitation into performance. But the most remarkable thing, what it actually tells us, is that our life matters. My life's not a chess game that when I die all the pieces get knocked off and none of it mattered.

Like ultimately, if nothing I did had eternal value, if nothing about my life somehow mysteriously broke into the life that's to come, then my life doesn't really matter. Maybe a single decision matters, but nothing else matters. But when you actually begin to go, I don't really have a whole... The more I study the theology of it, the more I just kind of sit in the mystery of it.

But then you get to, rather than feeling the uncertainty, you get to embrace the beauty of it, which is that my life matters. My decisions matter. I matter. Therefore, I matter. God really values me and He values how I live. That principle just bleeds into all of those things we're talking about. I think it's that place where we've got to become experts at grace, but in the way that just... When we really understand grace, it's just that longing to become more and more like Jesus. A grace that wants to make me gracious. A grace that wants to make me like Jesus.

Annie: That's good. No one will believe that we both identify as closely as Enneagram 7, right? We just went in. We just went in. We waste no time.

Phil: I love it so much.

Annie: Welcome to our friendship.

Phil: I love it so much.

Annie: I would love for you to retell the first time we met, and then I will retell the first time we met, because it is one of the most profound experiences of my adult life. For our friends listening, you pastor the Square Church in Smyrna, Georgia. You were pastoring friends of mine, so you are not a total stranger. I think that's important going into this. We knew of each other. We had maybe even texted or something before. We knew each other existed. You were pastoring a co-worker of

mine, even at the time. So you tell what happens. I don't know if I've ever heard you say that before you showed up at the coffee shop.

Phil: Because Eliza, who, you know, worked with you. Eliza's amazing. She's on our staff, been part of our church since we planted the church. And of course, knew you from a distance, knew of you. And Eliza would travel back and forth. So there was always kind of some constant conversation.

And it was on one of her trips that I just started to pray for her, and I was praying for you, and then I suddenly had this real sense that the Lord had spoken to me. But also, I didn't know what to do with it, you know, because it's one of those things, when you have a relationship, and you can come towards somebody. Because one, I fundamentally believe we hear from the Lord. Two, I think the gifts of the Spirit are real, right? I believe in the active work of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And yet at the same time, I'm wrong sometimes.

Annie: Me too.

Phil: God is infallible. I am quite fallible. And my heart speaks. Sometimes there's really beautiful things that my heart's speaking to, you know? So there's that humility, I think, and awareness. So it's one of those things, especially because part of the word that I sensed for you was... not corrective, but almost like-

Annie: Certainly collective, Phil.

Phil: It was a warning.

Annie: It was a warning.

Phil: It felt like a warning. So I remember just coming to Eliza... and I felt it enough to go, "Oh, I don't know what to do with this." So I go, Eliza, "If I reached out to Annie, would she... I don't know, would she find this presumptuous, arrogant?" And Eliza's like, "Oh, I don't think so at all. I think she values this and would value it from you." And I was like, "Okay."

So I reached out and I was... I genuinely felt like what I had heard from the Lord. But without the context of relationship, I really thought, Oh man, I hope that you'll receive what I have to say. Again, not that I'm right, but it's worth weighing. It's worth weighing.

So actually moving from that and having that conversation with you, I mean, it was remarkably meaningful to me.

Annie: Me too.

Phil: One, because I think the Lord was... He was in that moment. But again, you know, I think for people who, you know, you're such a spiritual voice in their life, I think sometimes for them too, what's fun for me about being on your podcast is to be able to say I consider you a very real friend in my life. You're better off the podcast. And that's not as... you know, I love your podcast. But your love for Jesus is real and your love for people's real and you're humble and you're not above a random pastor. You know, even though we did have some relational context that you don't know, saying, "Hey, I think I hear the Lord on something." And you have a genuine fear of the Lord. So that was very meaningful to me.

And then just the process of... and then the gift, right? Which is just what I've learned about God is how often there are moments that seem small, seem like a single thing. And now I can look back on my life about how many of the most significant things that God has done. Some of the most significant people that the Lord has brought into my life, they all started in the most random places.

Annie: I told Tyson about it yesterday. I saw him yesterday and said, "Oh, have you ever heard about when Phil and I met?" And I'll say the details aren't as important just because I don't want to bog people down with them. But I had made a choice that wasn't a healthy choice in a season where our church did not have a pastor. And that's the part I think is really important and leads into your book, *You Are Not Alone*, is there are so many pastors right now that are struggling and so many pastors that are leaving the church.

And one of the things that does is leaves the people without a shepherd. And that was kind of your word to me is like, "Hey, you are operating without a covering. And in that, the enemy has brought a temptation to you that you have fallen to, and you've gotten yourself in a sticky situation." I was like, "Holy bananas. He is..." Because I remember you even said, "Do you know what God might be talking about?" I was like, "Oh yeah, I know exactly what God is... I know exactly what God told you and I'm almost mortified that He said it to someone else."

I mean, I think that it has changed... I think I've said this to you privately, but I'll say it to you publicly. That conversation in 2017 has changed how I shape my life as an unmarried woman who does not live with my family. So even once I am married, I will still believe in pastoral authority over me. And it's one of the reasons I say to people all the time, if you want a public life... a) I don't think you should pursue a public life. I think trust God with all that. But if you're not plugged in locally, your global impact is going to be limited at some point.

Part of that is you've got to have a covering. So I know there's you, there is Christy McClendon, Lisa Harper, Kevin Queen, Jon Tyson. There are more. There are a handful of pastors and my counselor and my mentor, Nancy, that all know you have permission to be a covering for me and to say that kind of stuff.

What do you say to the people right now who don't have a pastor, who don't have... kind of talk about what a covering does and what a pastoral covering is and what to do if you find yourself without. Because I didn't have language for that, Phil, before you told me that. I didn't realize that our pastor leaving the church had left me without a cover.

Phil: I mean, some of it, even what my thoughts around it would be so connected to, you know, because what I still remember quite vividly when I was praying, it was a picture. I saw like a roof, like a ceiling that had a storm breakthrough and it was like the water was dripping in. And you know when the stains begin to form on the ceiling, because it is exposing whatever kind of leak it was, I still remember that picture and watching like water breakthrough and drip in.

One, I think we were made for it. I think everybody needs it. I think the idea that there isn't a person who needs covering is foolish.

Annie: There are so many single women, Phil, who think, "It's okay. I don't need anybody. I'm fine."

Phil: And that might sound harsh. I have mercy. Even though I would say it, I think it's foolish, I have mercy because I think a lot of people come to that position from pain.

Annie: That's right. And from being forced.

Phil: Or being forced or the different things that come. And so I understand the complexities that come with it. I understand even the false representations of it. Because what a covering isn't is a statement of somebody's incapacities or the freedom that they possess or-

Annie: Or that they're incapable of running their own lives.

Phil: Exactly.

Annie: It's none of that.

Phil: Right. Exactly. It's actually just a fundamental truth of how God made us and that He made us in a position that needs to be covered. We need those voices, those

people, the fathers and the mothers and the friends even. Sometimes it's people with experience. Sometimes it's people from positional authority. Sometimes it's just the people that God placed into that season of our life. But it really is about going there.

This is the desire that the Lord has for us is that because there is more happening spiritually in our lives than we understand, we underspiritualize the world. And when you under spiritualize the world, then you kind of live in this sense of, there aren't really these greater stories happening around you. There are. There always are.

So one, just recognizing that if you are a follower of Jesus, you know, even the enemy's hatred for Jesus that cannot be accomplished. Revelation just tells us he's turned it towards his kids, his family. So the enemy and his forces will spend literally the rest of their lives trying to ruin us out of their hatred for Jesus. So that's just true. You don't have to be like a hyper-charismatic person. You just have to be a person that believes Jesus. All denominations from the most reformed to the most charismatic, this is a fundamental Christian belief.

But the beauty outside of that, so that we need that kind of covering is that following Jesus was never meant to be something we did alone. It is something that actually requires community. And community is not just people who are like me or people are in my same age range or gender or interest group. Community is really the fundamental dimension of family and that there is a place in that picture of family where God invites people to come alongside of us and over us to protect us.

And when we minimize that, what it means is though we can live with a little bit more independence. It's an unprotected independence. There are just those spiritual principles that, left to myself, all I have is myself. But when I actually function in community and when I recognize that part of that community is covering, then I actually get to live from the wealth of my family.

And I think that's how God longs for us to function. And specifically, I think about, you know, single women. This is a whole conversation.

Annie: When we're done, we're going to do a promises of God conversation real quick for our Single Purpose League, but you can say anything else you want now, but we'll also talk just to some singles.

Phil: So what I would say is this. I think there is pain. I think there's pain for people who long to be married and aren't, so who would have no kind of theological issues with the sense of that covering exists, whether in marriage or in church or structures like that. I think there's a sense of loss, but I also think there's a deep wound in the heart

of so many women from a lot of the false expressions of what we kind of have claimed manhood and womanhood to be.

There's the kind of classic camps, complimentary and egalitarian. I find them both kind of limited in their ability to express everything that's in the Bible. I fully believe in the quality and the giftedness of women, fully believe in the inherent differences of men and women. And I don't think we've seen a lot of good expressions.

Annie: Can you name that? What's that theology? That's mine too. It's like, yeah, we are all so gifted in very similar ways, but we are so different in the expressions of it. So whatever that theology is between complimentary and egalitarian, I'm there too.

Phil: I've heard the phrase "complimentary without hierarchy".

Annie: There you go.

Phil: So, you know, something in that realm.

Annie: I'm like, I love having a covering from male pastors in my life who know they have permission and I am looking for a spouse that will be that for me. And also I preach on Sundays. So I am both of those things.

Phil: And I know this even from so much of the journey of walking with my wife, Emily, where Emily would say... And she said so publicly, so I don't feel bad saying this on your podcast. I would say the single greatest private wrestling of her life has been the issue of, "Does God really prefer men? Am I less than in the eyes of God?"

And the journey that she's gone on, the journey we've gone on, and the beauty of what has come in the midst of that, the deep theology that has come in the midst of that, of recognizing that when you recognize that... so God created male. Male and female are the only indicators of the image-bearing nature of God. So maleness reveals something about God. Femaleness reveals something about God. And they're both these divine indicators of part of who God is.

And when you begin to actually look at a true theology, often when we think about theology of manhood or womanhood, you kind of just get into conversations of roles. I think roles exist to some extent, but I don't think roles are a good expression of understanding what's in our gender.

What you see is that there's a primary call on women towards being curators of life. And while that's a picture that we see in childhood and being able to be a mother, it's not limited to that. That being a woman is not being a mother, but being a

mother is an expression of what's in the heart of every single woman, which is the curation of life, whether that is about physical life or spiritual life or relational life. In many ways, they're the stewards of union.

And there is this fundamental call on men to be those who lay down their lives to protect. You couldn't find a man, doesn't matter who they are, who you wouldn't say, somewhere deep in your bones, do you want to be the person who lays down your life for your family, your closest friends, whoever it would be.

Annie: And I have literally never thought that in my head.

Phil: No, it's fundamental. And I think we miss this. Like, you know, bound in womanhood... like there are virtues in our gender. Again, sometimes when we culturally stereotype them, we get into some trouble, hurts... because we're different. There's a range of what it means to be a man, there's a range of what it means to be a woman, but there's virtues.

And I think if we understood virtues and the expressions of them differently, I think we could actually see what the Bible is saying. But even I point to this. There's a reason we have a single mom crisis and not a single father crisis. Because bound in womanhood is a virtue of faithfulness. It's undeniable. It's a part of the image-bearing nature of God.

Annie: Yes, that's when I think about my friends who would lay down their lives and females, it is for their children. It is to make sure their children get fed or children get cared for. That's the time I hear women say, I would give anything. But that is to curate life. They would give anything to curate more life.

Phil: And then I really do believe that what a covering isn't is forced authority. What a covering isn't is control. What a covering... all of those false expressions that I think we've seen of it. So I just want to say too, I think there's a lot of women who recoil a little bit from the idea that they would need a covering because of those expressions.

And what I would say is that needing a covering isn't about lacking. Needing a covering isn't about being less than. Needing a covering isn't about that God really prefers men. Needing a covering is that you have an assignment. And to fully function in that assignment is about allowing what God has not made you to be to be found in others. So I think there's that principle. And I also think it's a principle of life that is for all. I need covering.

Annie: I was going to ask you that. What do pastors do to get covering?

Phil: Well, most pastors don't, which is a massive problem. Which also is part of my case for why denominations are a little better than we think they are.

Annie: Yeah, right. Because the covering is there.

Phil: Again, you get into these conversations, they go... you have to have long ones. You know what I mean?

Annie: Yeah.

Phil: Because there is so much complexity in it. So we belong to a denomination and denominations are not perfect. I don't have allegiance to a denomination. I have allegiance to Jesus. But I tell my church, when you walk through membership in a church and you find all those things, I say, there's a handful of reasons why we're part of a denomination, but there's one that stands above them all, which is that I can be fired and that I have both someone to turn to if I need help, and I have someone to be held accountable by if I need accountability. That I can't abandon the gospel-

Annie: You have that in kind of a bishop kind of role above you in the denomination.

Phil: Yeah.

Annie: That's beautiful. I can be fired. Do you know I actually have three people who can fire me as well? But there are three people who, if they decide together to close the company without my agreement, it closes. And it's like a written down thing. For a similar reason that I thought, this could get whack-a-doodle pretty quick if I'm just left to my own. So these people are allowed to close it.

Phil: For me, I've just come to learn that I want to be good enough so badly that if I don't have a safe place of fatherly, motherly voices above me that I can go and just be broken with or uncertain with, left to myself, I'll convince myself that it's more important that I keep it inward and figure it out for all of whatever. It's almost like I'm just aware I can lie to myself. So covering becomes that place where I go, there are times where I just need to throw things up. And that the Lord really does honor that. And He not only makes room for that, but then He speaks through that.

Annie: I do want to say, for me, covering hasn't just been accountability, though it is. It is. Y'all, I mean, I think you know you have permission. Kevin knows. John knows. I mean, there's pastors who know. Lisa knows that that is true. So it's not just that.

Like you said, it's a place where I can just be Annie, and I can have really hard faith questions that I can't talk about publicly and answer publicly yet, but I can process

it with you. We've sat on your back porch before, and I've been like, "What are we doing?" And so I think it's such a gift. I have never felt freer to be me than when I had reliable authorities over me. It's almost like y'all built these fences and went like, well, just go. And the boundaries fall in pleasant places. And when you get close to a fence, we'll tell you, but you go.

And I have never felt freer to do what God's called me to do because there's a group of you that have permission to speak into my life, but I have permission to call and go help. Or here's a funny thing. Or how do we talk about money? How do I talk about this? I mean, even... I think I've talked about this before. Kevin and I, as my lead pastor in Nashville, and as part of the teaching team, have talked about my dating life, like really my dating life. What does it look like to be a single-dating teaching pastor? And it's awkward. And also, what a great covering.

I can't get myself in a situation that I go, "I wonder what Kevin would think." I'm like, "Oh no, I know. We've talked about it. I know exactly what Kevin thinks."

Phil: And it is that mystery, isn't it? You bind yourself in, you actually make yourself more free.

Annie: So free.

Phil: It's that upside-down kingdom principle that just exists in so many places.

Annie: I can think of friends historically in my life who thought they were the most free, and I observed them to be the most trapped. And I thought, Oh, I can tell you three things that I think would really ease you up. But okay, live your best.

Phil: No, it's true. What a lie secularism and secular culture has told us. Not that I'm trying to bridge into the book early, but that's it. The idea that independence is true freedom or true freedom is the ability to do what I want, rather than actually go, no, true freedom is the power to say no. And true freedom is the wisdom of others who know life greater and fuller than I do, that actually helped me determine life and health. And I think we miss that. That true freedom is found far more in my "no" than it is in my "yes".

Annie: Yes.

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Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupted this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Thrive Causemetics](#). If you want to update your fall makeup look, respect, you know Thrive Causemetics can help you do that, right?

And they are one of our favorites around here. I, hand to heaven, use their viral tubing mascara every single day. You know, the one you see all over the internet in the turquoise tube. If you've been thinking about trying it out, now is the time.

Plus Thrive Causemetics has thousands of five-star reviews. So, you know, I'm not the only one singing their praises. I think you'll really love their brilliant eye brightener too. It's a highlighter eyeshadow combo that makes your eyes pop, but with very little effort. There are 17 buildable shades to choose from and play with. So you can use as little or as much as you like. You just apply a light shade, like their shade Stella. I love it. You put that on the inner corner of your eyes to give you a glow and to open up your eyes a little bit. And then you use a metallic shade all over your eyelid and blend with your finger for an easy smokey eye. You have got to try it.

All of Thrive Causemetics products are certified 100% vegan and cruelty-free, and they're made with skin-loving, high-performance, and trademarked formulas. They also donate to eight major causes, including those impacted by cancer, domestic abuse, and veteran and education organizations. So let's go. Let's spice up that fall look with Thrive Causemetics, luxury beauty that gives back.

Right now, you can get an exclusive 20% off your first order. Please go stock up on that mascara. That's at [Thrivecausemetics.com/TSF](https://thrivecausemetics.com/TSF). Like, That Sounds Fun. That's Thrivecausemetics.Com/TSF for 20% off your first order.

That link and pretty much every other link you could literally ever hope for are in the show notes, or we'll send them straight to you in Friday's AFD Week in Review, which we hope is the best email of your week. You can sign up to get that on Friday in the show notes below, and you definitely want to get that on Friday.

David: Hey friends, I'm David Magee. I'm a little crazy, and aren't we all? I want to tell you about a podcast I just launched. It's called A Little Crazy. I teach you how to manage and channel your mental health issues into strength, recovery, and lasting joy.

What are my qualifications to lead this conversation? I was once lost and lost it all before I learned to manage better and walk confidently against the grain, becoming a bestselling author and change-maker.

I dig deep on this podcast to reveal inspirational stories and valuable tools for management, recovery, and personal insight from the perspective of family. Mental health is a family story, as is recovery and finding joy. From crazy faith to love and

everything in between, my entertaining guest and I vulnerably smash the stigma and bring down the walls that hold us back.

I hope you'll join me on this podcast. Subscribe now on your favorite podcast app by clicking "follow", or watch all the episodes over on YouTube. See you soon.

Annie: Okay, now back to our conversation with Phil.

[00:37:48] <music>

Annie: True freedom, for me, has been the more people that know everything, the freer you are. Like, I don't have to shout my sins from a stage or from a podcast, Mike, but there's a lot of y'all who know you can ask me anything. And what I would have told you, my 20s would be the scariest thing because I had secrets. Now is like, Let's go. Please, let's go.

I think, and you write about this in the book, I think part of the secular age for leaders is the enemy is trying to take us out before we're done constantly. Finding a pastor who finishes well publicly is hard. Now, privately, they're finishing well everywhere. They are. So many of our friends have pastors. I'm thinking about [Charles Sinath?] that we both knew in Marietta. Never public, just a faithful pastor for a long time.

Phil: It's so true.

Annie: They're finishing well, privately, all sorts of places. But I want to finish well, and I'm a public person. And you want to finish well, and you're a public person. It feels like part of what's happening in culture is the enemy is trying to cut us off before we finish the race.

Phil: I see it everywhere. I think there's the dual side of that, where I think we're in an undeniable moment where the Lord is seizing His church.

Annie: What does that mean?

Phil: He's always the Lord of His church, but I think there are moments... I think about Jesus in Revelation. I think we minimize sometimes Jesus speaking to the seven churches of Asia. Here's the resurrected Jesus, the ascended Jesus, speaking to seven churches, giving them commentary. He's giving them encouragement and correction, right?

But He says to many of them, there are things that if you do not change, I will remove my lampstand from you. And it's a statement of saying, I will eventually

close you because you don't get to represent me and continue in what you're continuing in. What it means is that there's the seasons where under the Lordship of Jesus, He has grace for the church in failure, but there's lines where eventually the Lord goes, no, no, we're done, we're done.

Annie: Wow.

Phil: And I think in some ways that as an American church, as a Western church, we're finding ourselves in some of those days where the Lord just is coming into that place where He's saying, It's time to remove some lampstands. And so I think we're in a season where God is purifying His church. But purifying His church will also mean exposing His church. Man, which draws me even to greater fear of the Lord.

But coming back to what you're saying, I also think of the trap. When we were kids, I'm sure this is true of you, when I thought about following Jesus, there was no vision of being known.

Annie: No.

Phil: My heroes were missionaries who laid down their life on the mission field. The idea of being a Christian celebrity was incomprehensible outside of like Randall Cunningham football players that were also believers.

Annie: From Michael W Smith.

Phil: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

Annie: They were singers. I only knew singers.

Phil: Through the rare... certainly there's no route for me. And I think this very strange thing that has happened in what technology has done and what it's created, which is that I can become known and loved and famous from this kind of external position in my ability to follow Jesus. It's not to say that that is inherently evil, it's inherently dangerous.

And because we take it now for granted, it's just a way our life operates. We don't realize... Actually, it has so many pitfalls. Because the desire to be known and is in all of us, one of the things that secularism does is it, we live in the currency of value in a secular world is visibility. The more visible I am, the more valuable I am. So that's everybody. It doesn't matter whether you feel like you have two friends or you're a pastor of a megachurch. Both of those people are longing for an increase of visibility. And in different ways. But it's because that's what says... that's why we even... you know, it's this new phenomenon where boredom is crisis in people's

lives. Because what's actually happening underneath the surface of that is if I was really loved, I would be being constantly bombarded by invitation. And the idea of even being bored becomes this statement that my life is less than.

That's why we love when an Instagram post gets disproportionate likes and why we hate when one doesn't. Because what's actually on exchange, when I'm putting anything out there without really intentional spiritual formation, I'm actually testing the world to determine my own value.

And I feel the more seen I become by the people I want to... you're gonna define who you want to be seen by differently. But whatever your definition of that is, we've created that... visibility is the currency of value. And so then we'll start to become false versions of ourselves to increase our visibility.

Annie: Man, that's what you write about so well in the book is how you identified your own false versions of you and had to go, Oh, that's not who I actually am. I have built this in order to be. But you grew up in the church, like a lot of us did. So talk to the men and women who have grown up in the church and... the thing I kept thinking when I was getting ready this morning is I was like, the world is different, right? It's different than the 90s. It feels so different. So many of us who grew up in this either have this like... I hate purity culture and have this like I have rejected everything... It feels like. I'm sure they don't actually say this. I've rejected everything I learned in the 90s.

Phil: And many have really horrible stories from it.

Annie: Yes, understandably, exactly. And yet there's also this like, yeah, the church... something's different, Phil. This is not what it was like when we were growing up.

Phil: No.

Annie: And so there's this tension I feel sometimes of like, man, that was so much easier 20 years ago. It was so much easier when I was in college. It was so much easier. We just would go on a Wednesday night and do a Bible study and nobody talked about who they were voting for and nobody... And so something has shifted. Has there just been such an uptick in secularism? Because it's the end times, I don't know. Phil, it's the Lord coming back?

Phil: Yes.

Annie: But we don't know when.

Phil: No idea. But I've never had as many thoughts of like, man, it could be soon as I have. I've always been that person that goes, all of the reasons when people just to... when people are like, Oh, I think we're towards the end of the world, I'm like, man, the early church had it a lot harder than we do.

Most of the times we're saying that because we're like, oh, this is really hard. And I'm not saying it isn't really hard. I'm just saying that the church for 2,000 years has walked through a lot of hard.

Annie: People are being tarred openly. I mean, there are certainly Christians-

Phil: Being hard right now is not necessarily the perfect litmus test. But I think there's a lot of other things when you go, Oh. What we're walking into in the world that's, you know... the things that we're actually... You know, right now we're talking about cultural conversations around gender fluidity. It's not going to be long until we're having cultural conversations about human fluidity. We're going to be... I mean, where things are going, you just go.

Annie: I mean, Elon Musk just released these robots that look just like... and I literally thought, Someone's going to fall in love with their robot. People are going to fall in love with their robots. I think that's a movie. I think that's a movie that someone was in. But that's what I thought when I saw him. I thought, Oh, this is the beginning of, we get to shape the person we want to be with and dial them up. And then we have a... So we're getting to like, mail order a robot that serves us and that we fall in love with.

Phil: And the blended lines between what will be reality and artificial reality. And not being able to really care the difference between the two. It's all coming. Oh gosh. I think we have three podcasts. We need to do together that we're just-

Annie: I know, I know, I know.

Phil: So go back to that. I think technology has changed a lot.

Annie: Yes, certainly.

Phil: So I do think there's elements of when we look at just life, like, do you remember, do you remember? I'm sad that my kids will never know this. And I'm sad I've forgotten the feeling of it, of not being able to be reached. And nobody would have an expectation.

Annie: Even driving from A to B, you just thought no one's... I'm going to get there and then I can call my mom.

Phil: I still remember my first cell phone when they told me about the text messaging package and how much it would cost per text message. I'm like, why would I ever want to do that? You know what I mean? So I think technology has changed a lot of the church.

I would also say though, part of the challenge we're in right now is that the church we grew up in, while there were these elements that were the simpler and actually truer, I think it lost its core identity. And I think part of what we're reaping is the inheritance of a missionless church that didn't understand itself to be a counterculture.

Annie: Wow.

Phil: Because we view being a counterculture or an exile as circumstantial and you think about, you know, Christian America in the eighties or the idea of what Christianity was, there was such a sense of like, you know, I'm almost... I live in Israel in the sense of faith. Like, I'm a prophet in Israel. I'm a member of the... like, this is a Christian nation. That sense.

There was maybe some elements of truthfulness in that. Again, that's another larger conversation. But what it did is it lulled the church to sleep to think it wasn't an exile and it wasn't a counterculture and it became a missionless church. The only mission was somewhere else.

And so when you create a church that views spiritual formation as legalism and you create a church that doesn't understand its identity as a counterculture, then you begin to just marry yourself to culture. So if culture is Christian and I'm a Christian, then I can just be like my culture.

Annie: But that's still true in the South a lot, Phil, right?

Phil: You're living in the in-between of it. You're living in the in-between of it. This is why Atlanta is a city of prodigals because it's the undoing of it is happening.

Annie: Interesting.

Phil: And I think when you remove the core identity from the church, you are never going to immediately feel it. But I think I can say 40 years later, look what it did. Because what it did is set up an entire generation to have no skills to walk through I think what is the greatest cultural change maybe in history.

Annie: Wow.

[00:49:10] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Shopify](#). We've already talked about Thrive Causemetics. And when you think about them, you think about their viral makeup, but you probably don't ever think about the businesses behind Thrive Causemetics that help get their makeup in our hands.

The ones making selling and buying super easy for millions of businesses. The behind-the-scenes magic is Shopify. And that's definitely true for us at [shopanniefdowns.com](#). We don't get to put our 2024 advent study, *Stay Tuned*, in your hands without the help of Shopify. And it is so easy to use.

Businesses that sell more sell on Shopify. And it's home of the number one checkout on the planet. Plus their not-so-secret secrets is Shopify pay that boost conversion up to 50%, meaning way less carts go abandoned and wait more sales.

Upgrade your business and get the same checkout Thrive Causemetics and [shopanniefdowns.com](#) uses. Sign up for your \$1 per month trial period at [Shopify.com/SoundsFun](#), all lowercase. Again, that's [Shopify.com/SoundsFun](#) to upgrade your selling today. [Shopify.com/SoundsFun](#).

Sponsor: And one more incredible partner. I get to tell you about [Fatty15](#). Okay. It's pretty simple. Essential nutrients keep ourselves healthy, which keeps us healthy. If you want to get sciencey about it, studies show that C15 works by strengthening ourselves. It ends up many of us are deficient in C15, which results in weaker cells that make less energy and quit working earlier than they should. All of that makes us age faster, sleep poorly, and feel sluggish. No, thank you.

So Fatty15 is a science-backed award-winning vegan and pure C15 supplement. By replenishing ourselves with that essential C15 nutrient, Fatty15 effectively repairs cells and restores our long-term health. Let's go, science.

It comes in a gorgeous reusable glass and bamboo jar and refill capsules are shipped to your door quarterly in pouches made from recycled materials. 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](#), like That Sounds Fun, and using the code TSF at checkout.

Greer: Hey, I'm Greer. Host of the Unfinished Idea podcast, where listeners and I get to journey together to better understand the neurodiverse world. Together with my

husband, we have two boys and two dogs and raising a child with additional needs. Our day-to-day experience isn't being talked about in everyday life, and I see a gap in those leading people who are neurodivergent. Whether you're a parent, a friend, a teacher, or a neighbor, the neurodivergent world is all around us. So this podcast is for you.

I have conversations over a cup of tea or coffee, helping to bring awareness about how neurodivergent people experience the world, as well as families who are raising children with different needs. This podcast will share practical help, tips, and the joys, struggles, and differences in being neurodivergent or raising a child who is.

Each week, I will spend 30 minutes talking and interviewing others in the neurodiverse space and giving you the opportunity to learn and grow and feel seen and heard by how we interact with each other and the world. Search for the Unfinished Idea in your favorite podcast app and come learn about the neurodivergent world. I'm looking forward to seeing you there.

Annie: And now back to finish up our conversation with Phil.

[00:52:49] <music>

Annie: So, *You Are Not Alone* is really... It's very good. I wouldn't have had you on the podcast just because you're my friend. It is a very-

Phil: I know that actually.

Annie: Okay, good.

Phil: It made me feel very... not loved because I always feel loved by you. It made me feel very honored. Oh, good.

Annie: Well, I mean it. I think one of the things this book helped me with when I was reading it is it helped kind of be a Band-Aid or a medicine over that part of me that misses when it was easier. I just felt like, yeah, it's not going to go back to that. You just gave me this permission of like, a) you're not the only one who feels this, b) secularism has changed, the enemy's plans have changed toward the church, the church has changed, and here's what we get to do, but quick reminder, we're not going to go back to that.

I think there's something in me that always goes like, can we go find the best parts? Not the purity culture parts that hurt people, not the poor leadership that hurt people. But can we go back and get the simple parts and bring them here? So often

in *You Are Not Alone*, you're like, We're not. That doesn't actually serve us. We need to go forward into leading like this now.

Phil: But the beauty is, and I think something you are speaking to, is that what we don't know, and this is really so much of the whole heart of writing the book, is that so many of the normal complexities to our life, we can be free from them. And even though the faith I'm moving into is going to be a challenged faith, it's going to be... I'm always going to be the minority as a follower of Jesus. And in any environment I'm in, in the United States or Western culture, no matter how big my church is, no matter how, even in the South, how much there's still remnants of a past kind of culture, I will always have these challenges that are now in front of me.

But when I recognize that so many of the things that are destroying the faith of people's lives aren't the challenges, it's the hidden story of secularism, that's when you can go, no, actually, I can find a faith that isn't always just plagued by doubt, I can find a peace that isn't always circling in anxiety, I can find hope that isn't fake or disingenuous or insincere.

And so I think there is that place of going, what I can find is the inner life of Jesus that is real. That we have that inner wondering of like, can I really ever find that again? And so what I do think is when you find secularism, you find a challenged future, but you find freedom from the real terror, which is that the reason we're having a difficult time trusting Jesus isn't Jesus.

Annie: It's the lull of the sleep... the terror of being asleep. And then waking up and suddenly your bed is floating because the whole thing is flooded. And then you go, wait, why didn't I wake up sooner? And it feels like you are one of the voices that is kind of being like, wake up, you guys, wake up, you guys.

I saw a stat, maybe Tyson shared, I can't remember, that one in five pastors have considered self-harm or ending their life recently. In the last... I can't remember how long it said. Five years or three years or something. So what do we do for our pastors, Phil? They are pastoring. I mean, besides we're going to get them this book and pass it off. We're going to get them, *You Are Not Alone*. But what do we do for our pastors who are pastoring in a world they did not grow up in, they did not plan for? Seminary did not teach them in 2005 how to pastor in 2024. So what do we do for our pastors?

Phil: That's an amazing question. I think pastors need other pastors. I think one of the greatest things we can champion for pastors is how much they need covenantal friends with other pastors. There is just that place of where when you can be really known because there are people who are fundamentally... every story is unique, but they're in the same stories as you are, it opens doors that a lot of pastors... pastoring

is incredibly lonely. I think there's part of it that doesn't have to be that way. And I think the best version of it, it is.

Because within your local community, there's just a weight you carry that is real. It's a spirit... You know, Paul's whole thesis, 2 Corinthians 4 four is his belief on what ministry is. And he says ministry is a burden. He doesn't say that in a negative way. But he says this is what he carries. He carries a burden. Every pastor carries a burden. And other jobs are really hard. I don't try to make pastoring martyrdom, but there is a spiritual burden to pastoral life that we minimize and therefore I think we set our pastors up to fail. I think we-

Annie: Yeah. They can't clock in and clock out. I can't clock in and clock out. That doesn't work with what these particular jobs require spiritually.

Phil: Even the best life balance, the burden exists. It always exists. I think we pastors need to become followers of Jesus again. I think one of the greatest things pastors have to reclaim is there's just a part of my intimacy with Jesus that I'm doing because He's my master, not because I'm a pastor, not because of my vocation.

Annie: Because he's your boss.

Phil: I think what happens is the life of the church consumes you so deeply that next thing you know you have zero spirituality that isn't your vocation.

Annie: Oh, that can be true for missionaries. That can be true for teachers. That can be true for me and my... I mean, I will always have a little bit of an awakening when I realize the Lord and I have only talked about work three days in a row. Like, oh, sorry, we've only talked about work. We don't have to talk about work. I need to talk to you about work, but I need to make sure I have relationship with you where I am just trying to get to know God outside of how it serves our companies.

Phil: And I think what secularism kind of reshapes the church into is a consumable good, right? You know, I talk about this in the book, the phrase, how was worship? It's one of those things, it's like such a normal phrase to us, but it's actually such a terrifying phrase how normal it is to us. And we don't... right? So worship in its fundamental nature is an offering I'm bringing to a higher power, an offering of a gift to someone who I believe is worthy of it.

So when you think about it in its actual sense of idea, the value of worship, therefore, has zero bearing on how you feel about it.

Annie: Yeah. Right.

Phil: But yet our entire determination of what we believe about something like worship is what we feel about it. I think it's those places where when people begin to wake up and they're like, Oh, isn't that interesting that you've turned worship into an exercise of discovering some euphoria for yourself? And then you go, is it really then worship? Or how we view all things in that place of spiritual practices.

And so what I say, there's a lot of challenge in that. But when we're operating in that, what we're doing then is we're basically saying, Pastor, I will be faithful to you as long as you're a consumable good that I find good enough for me. And what I'm not saying is that there aren't times that are right to leave churches or not leave churches or that a mark of a pastor should be a capable teacher to some extent.

But when you judge your pastor by your favorite little TikTok clip, you're actually doing profound destruction. Because most pastors, most pastors are going to be good teachers, good enough teachers. And they're also going to be faithful followers of Jesus. But we trade in the good ones for the consumable good. And you want to know, I'd say the consumable good is never going to show up in your hospital. And the consumable good is never going to call you on your sin. And the consumable good isn't going to actually walk with you faithfully to help you become more and more like Jesus.

Annie: Consumable goods aren't coverings.

Phil: And that's not an anti-large church statement. One of the things I've learned as a church planter and a pastor, I have very little control over the size of my church. When there were six of us in a living room to what we are now, I kind of have done the exact same thing. My heart hasn't changed at all. So it's not even for me about... I think even a lot of people kind of when they look at the church, they want to talk about structures. And I think there are better or worse structures. But actually, the great need of a church, and what we have to find in a church is sincerity.

A sincere megachurch will change lives, and a sincere home church will change lives. An insincere megachurch will hurt people, and an insincere home church will hurt people. And so I just think we have to recognize. So just for people that are thinking about how... we have to allow a level of freedom to come into our own lives. So we stop turning Jesus into a consumable good. We stop turning church into a consumable good, and we stop treating our pastor like a consumable good.

And I think when we can liberate ourselves and our churches and our pastors from ultimately there's a currency of faithfulness, and that faithfulness is ultimately going to be determined by whether I like to consume what you offer or not, I think it is what pastors really need.

Annie: I'm so thoughtful about it, well, a) because we're the age where our friends are the pastors. And so I think it's different for me now because it's not older guys in most places. In a lot of places, it's guys in their late 30s to 50s that are now the lead pastor. So I'm looking around, and it's my bros. So I'm watching... I mean, you know this, you walked me through it. I watched up close friends throw away their lives and lose their pastoring. I mean, that wasn't an older guy over there. That was like my guy, my friend. And that's new. That's the last three years, but I think that's because of our age.

Phil: People who didn't start from disingenuous places. I think this is what you learn is you kind of have this idea when you're there. Certainly, there are some stories and some people are like, I think you were always a megalomaniac. You were just always off and had a way of controlling it. But even like most friends of mine as well, people known or unknown have been in lots of those stories. It's like, no, you really love Jesus. You were a real faithful follower of Jesus. And you loved people. It's that place of the pressure of pastoral life.

I think ministry is so deforming. It's so deforming that if a pastor is not intentional about the resistance to it, and therefore like intentional formation, you'll feel such a deep sorrow. I mean, this is part of the statistic of why so many pastors want to quit their job or why pastor one in five would be having potentially suicidal ideation is because in that system, despair is the outcome. But when you can't admit to anyone, you have despair. Because if you admit it, you're no longer a consumable good that's worth consuming.

Annie: That's right.

Phil: So then you keep it in and you try and you try and you try. And then you want to know... I mean, it's like... then I have this little thing in my pocket called a phone that has outlets to the most unimaginable escapes. A lot of my story was marked by sexual brokenness. But I even say this, when I was a kid, I had to steal porn magazines if I wanted to look at it.

Annie: Right. Right. We had to go find it.

Phil: And I did. It was a big part of my own story and journey and brokenness. But you even think like the horror of the normality of I can just grab my phone. And it's just one of the many false escapes. And so we have to figure out how to reimagine spiritual life together.

Annie: Okay, *You Are Not Alone*. This is for pastors, but it's for all of us at church. I mean, we can hand this to our pastor, but it changed my life too and I'm not a pastor in a mega church or a home church. It is available October 22nd. So it's already out by

the time people are hearing this. I mean, Phil, it's for pastors, it's for people in the church.

I think one of the things I'm curious about is what made you write this as your book? Why was this the right one?

Phil: What I would say is this. Why I wrote the book was that for the last 15, 16 years, I've had the privilege of being able to travel and teach lots of places, lots of different organizations or churches or missions movements. What I've spoken on more than anything else is how much we have to understand the culture that we live around. Because the reality is when we understand the culture we live around, it's actually the culture that has shaped us within. And the crisis that so many people are walking through, it's not the crisis that they think it is. The crisis of faith is a secular crisis. The crisis of can I trust the Bible is a secular crisis. The crisis of gender is a secular crisis. The crisis of sexuality is a secular crisis.

I think when we actually begin to understand that what's happening in our world has changed the way we view life, the cultural changes around us have actually changed so many things within us. What I want to say is that yes, I really believe where the church can understand what's happening in a secular culture it's going to be able to offer freedom.

And to anyone who's just like... if you just kind of find yourself never really being able to believe, you find yourself with a hum of anxiety, no matter what you do, can't really go away, if there are these tensions, because I actually think what happens in secularism is because there's two masters inside of you and you don't know it. There's this conflict within, it feels like it's pulling you apart. I think there's freedom.

And I think it's really interesting to... I never imagined that actually when I understood things like, you know, Western civilization and metamodernism and postmodernism and secular humanism, what I would find isn't cultural philosophies. What I'd find is me. I'd find the hidden parts of my own story I didn't understand, why I thought the way I did, the way I responded, the way I did, why I was trapped, why I was trapped in myself. And I think so many believers are trapped in their self. Pain becomes the story and they don't know what to do with it. And so I would say, if you find yourself there, I think this can be a blessing to you.

Annie: Would you stick around with us to talk for just a minute about... to our Single Purpose League friends about the promises of God? So we'll do that.

Phil: I'd love that.

Annie: Phil, thanks for being on the show.

Phil: Annie, thanks.

Annie: Oh, I super appreciate it. I just love you. I love your voice. I love your family. I love your pastoring. So I'm really, really grateful.

Phil: Love you a lot.

[01:08:51] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, isn't he great? Man, I love him. What a great pastor! I mean, listen, talk about bringing the truth and love. He did it. He did it for me. He did it for us today.

Make sure you grab your copy of *You Are Not Alone* and go follow Phil on social media, tell him thank you for being on the show. And if you are anywhere in or around Atlanta, I think you would love visiting the Square Church in Smyrna. If you are looking for a church home, if you do not already have one, the Square is a great place to check out. I love that church.

If you enjoyed this episode, I think you'd really love Episode 887 with our friend Jon Tyson. Jon and Phil are bros, as you hear us talk about. And I think you'd enjoy hearing that.

If you have any questions from this episode, drop them in the Q&A box on your Spotify app, if you're a Spotify listener like me, or send them straight to us at Instagram @ThatSoundsFunPodcast. Make sure you're following there. You do not want to miss out.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. You know what? Anywhere you need me, that is where you can find me.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you, and I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me is meeting up with some friends for tacos for dinner. That is the plan.

So y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday with our good pal, you know him, you love him, Eddie Kaufholz. We'll see y'all then.

[01:10:12] <music>

Annie: One of the things we love about Single Purpose League is that it has become this community of friends that we get to process with and ask hard questions together and encourage one another. And as Advent approaches, the question we often wrestle with is how to wait with anticipation for the birth of Christ when we're already waiting for God to answer our prayers. This is why we created this year's Advent Study, *Stay Tuned: An Advent Series For Those Already Waiting*.

As I wrote this study, I was thinking about how so many of us have unanswered prayers and how long we have been waiting. Whether you're married or single, you have unanswered prayers is my guess. And I was specifically thinking about our single friends and our friends in Single Purpose League. It's time for us to talk about the unique challenge of entering the holiday season without your prayers answered and with your hope on the line.

Stay Tuned is for anyone who's waiting for God to answer their prayers. But there is specific attention and heart in this study for our friends who are not married today. So if you are single today, this is your invitation to grab our *Stay Tuned* Advent Study. It's available in digital and in print this year. And come join Single Purpose League because we're going to go through this study day by day together. It's audio. It's video. It's a guidebook. I think you're really going to love it.

You can find all the information about Single Purpose League at singlepurposeleague.com and all the information about Advent at anniefdowns.com/Advent.

Micah: Hi.

Sarah: Hello.

Micah: Oh no, I was talking to them.

Sarah: Oh.

Micah: Yeah. We're supposed to be telling them about our podcast.

Sarah: Okay, can you start again?

Micah: Yeah. Hello, we are Micah and-

Sarah: Sarah.

Micah: Hosts of the Fortitude Podcast. You may know us from TikTok or Instagram where we love to have fun and bring joy to people.

Sarah: But we've also been through some life experiences that have tested and strengthened us as individuals and as husband and wife.

Micah: Yeah, like grief, addiction, gay husband, miscarriage.

Sarah: And that's just to name a few. But we believe we are called to share about the ways our faith has pulled us through difficulty and the lessons we've learned along the way.

Micah: We're going to be answering your questions and having guests on to talk about relationships, faith, mentality, ultimately all the things in life that make up the human experience.

Sarah: Because when you're in a tough season, it is so important to know that you're not alone and you are capable of making it to the other side.

Micah: You can follow and subscribe to us on YouTube, Spotify, Apple, or anywhere you can listen to a podcast.

Sarah: We love you all and hope each week you will come away encouraged, hopeful, and equipped with something that helps you grow.