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Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you today. I'm so happy to have our guests. Y'all are going to love this episode.

But before we dive in, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors. This show is sponsored by [BetterHelp](#). In a month where we are thinking a lot about what we're grateful for, what comes to mind for you? If it feels hard to come up with something, I get that. But have you thought about why? It may be that therapy is the breakthrough you need to process this year and to find moments of gratitude again.

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Intro: Today on the show, I get to talk with my friends, Dallas and Amanda Jenkins, and y'all are in for a treat. Now, they've both been on the podcast. I know you love them, but who else loved the book *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* growing up? It was one of my favorites.

Tomorrow it is coming to the big screen and we get to talk about it today with Dallas, who directed the movie, and his wife, Amanda. It is like a co-dream of theirs. Oh, y'all are just going to love this conversation.

Y'all know them and love them. You already know and love Dallas. He's the director of *The Chosen*. Amanda was on a few months ago, maybe a year ago now, talking about the resources around *The Chosen*. We'll have all their previous episodes linked below. But I'm telling you, I've gotten to see *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* twice now. I cried both times I've seen this movie. Cried real tears that I could not stop.

You are going to love it. They've done a beautiful job with this book that we have grown up loving. Yeah, you're just going to love it.

So here's my conversation with my friends, Dallas and Amanda Jenkins.

[00:02:16] <music>

Annie: Dallas and Amanda Jenkins, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

Dallas: It does sound fun. Already. Already sounding fun.

Amanda: Doesn't this sound fun?

Annie: Of your two, you're 50% in-person, 50% virtual. So well done. Welcome back.

Dallas: Thank you.

Annie: I'm so glad you are here.

Amanda: We're so glad to be here.

Dallas: We love you so much. And we're in Nashville together.

Amanda: Yeah, I'm excited to spend time. I'm always like, sure, we'll do the thing. Can I just like hang out?

Annie: Do I get to be with you? Listen, you know I said on InstaStory today, I was like, "I'm flying back to Nashville for Amanda Jenkins and Dallas is going to be there."

Dallas: Story of my life.

Annie: "It'll be great."

Amanda: It's no joke, literally. How can I see my friend?

Annie: Okay. Talk to me... One of my favorite things about y'all is your co-workingness. When you got married... I mean, I've heard you tell that story a little bit, but you can share that again. But when you got married, did you think it would be this kind of professional partnership as it is? Did you picture that, Amanda?

Amanda: No. For sure no. I mean, we can't even paint a wall together. Like if we...

Dallas: That's funny. We don't co-labor together well when it comes to actual like we're doing something. Like we have a house project or something like that. Or even if it's like, we're going to work together on one of our projects side by side, it doesn't tend to go well.

Amanda: We are better at passing a baton than we are...Like you see commercials sometimes of people painting. I always say painting a wall because I always see commercials of couples painting walls and smiling and listening to music and whatever. No. So many different opinions. So much control between the two of us that we just... that doesn't work.

We parent well together. We do marriage. We work at marriage well together. But again, it's...

Dallas: For example, the stuff she does the most with the show and with the movie, any casting she has, and I've said this before, I think women have a unique kind of instinct about people in terms of personas that they can inhabit. So I'm looking for acting ability. And she's like, that person's a great actor, but they don't inhabit this person.

Annie: Oh. You're like, The vibes off.

Dallas: Yes. And so that's why 95% of casting directors are women. I just think they have an intuition about the persona that's better. She has a huge role in casting, read scripts, watches rough cuts. She's the harshest critic that I have to deal with. And she's horrible at brainstorming. That's another reason why we don't work well together. I imagine you're probably...

Annie: Are you like a maximizer? Like once you see the thing, you can make it better, but you're not at the brainstorming.

Amanda: No, no, I can't make it better. I can criticize it.

Dallas: She can criticize it.

Amanda: I can just tell you why it's not good and then be like, "It's not at all my job to make it better. That's your job. I'm just telling you it doesn't work."

Dallas: And I'm guessing you're probably a pretty good brainstormer with your team. Because that's how you create things is you throw awful things against the wall, but you go, "Oh wait, that part actually isn't awful. What if it was combined with this part?" She just goes, "No, no to that." I'm like, "Man, that brainstorming means it's kind of a... it's like "no, but" or "yes, and..." And she's just like, but-

Amanda: "Please stop saying things that aren't good. Please stop."

Annie: We have a meeting right after this. And if you say, "Please stop saying things that aren't good, I'm going to shrivel up and die."

Amanda: That's what he says.

Annie: It's really good.

Amanda: He's like, "Because now I'm leading teams." And so he's like, you have-

Dallas: You can't shut down people's ideas. You got to let them flourish and grow and blossom. But it's not good.

Amanda: I'll be like, now... and now this is me doing that. "Thank you for that idea. No. Also we'll do it my way."

Dallas: She's very difficult to please, which is helpful for me. Because it's kind of like, if you can get past that, you know that it's going to be... the audience will definitely like it because she's hard to please in that regard. So we do work well together on that. And then on the writing, because she does devotional books and the Bible studies and stuff like that. And so I'm able to sprinkle fairy dust on that sometimes or support. But for the most part, we really were able to help make each other better, but we don't necessarily sit in the pilot seats together unless we're doing stuff like this, like talking with you or if we're going to present something on stage or something like that.

Amanda: I mean, we genuinely like each other too. So that helps. But for sure, we don't pilot together. For sure.

Annie: That's interesting. Because when you were on the show last time, it was all about the written part, like the new devotional, the new Bible study that was around *The Chosen* Season 4, right?

Amanda: Yeah, correct.

Annie: Then I guess my question for you, Amanda, if you can label... I'm so interested in this because then, how is y'all's calling similar and how's it different? How's your calling different than Dallas', but it's under the same umbrella of this particular work?

Amanda: My calling was to be a support to him in his career for a long time and to be a mom, full-time mom. And then this came around and I will say it was so interesting. It was clarified in... I became a writer before *The Chosen*. I was doing a couple of things. But he had his calling really clarified in Season 1, Episode 4, which is the miracle of the fish.

We had been doing the show for a little bit and there was some negative feedback about being too inclusive. I mean-

Dallas: Well, we work with some LDS folks and Catholic folks and non-Christians and stuff like that. Occasionally we would get accused of, even though this isn't accurate about the content, but about who we're working with about... like fans would come in, people would watch the show, they'd come to the fan club and you'd see people going like, "I love the show." And someone else would go, "I love the show." And the person would go, "Well, wait, you're not supposed to be here. You come from a different belief system."

Amanda: "You don't believe what I believe about this doctrine or whatever." And so we were dealing with a lot of that. So he's working on editing this scene of the fish and how Jesus had said to Peter... He had been preaching a parable to everybody and then he clarified it with Peter, "Do you know what I meant by that parable of the fish where some fish are good and the fishermen keep them and some are bad and they toss them?" And he's like, "Did you know what I meant when I was saying that?"

Dallas: Your job is to gather fish, right?

Amanda: Gathering fish. And Peter was like, "No, I didn't really get it." And He's like, "Well, I want you to gather. I want you to gather men and I'll throw... at the end of the age." What's the line?

Dallas: "I'll sort them out later."

Amanda: "I'll sort them out later."

Dallas: He's like, "Fishermen, catch fish. They throw the bad in the water... bad water. They keep the good fish." And he's like, "That's how it's going to be at the end of the age. You're supposed to be fishers of men. Your job isn't to sort them out."

Amanda: "I'll sort it out."

Dallas: "Your job is to gather."

Amanda: He came back with that experience.

Dallas: He's like, "That really crystallized for us with this show is an attempt to gather. And we're gonna show-

Amanda: Well, you said, "I know my calling is to... I'm supposed to gather people, not judge them. I'm supposed to gather people to Jesus. That's my job through this show. It

was really clear for him." And it became really clear for me that through the Bible studies and devotionals, my job is to disciple the ones who choose to stay. So I feel very comfortable kind of behind him in a role of like, for those who want to go deeper, for those who want to be disciplined, like we have content for that. And that's become my calling, which is different than my first calling, I would say.

So I loved being his sounding board and his cheerleader and all those things. I never saw myself being a part of the work itself. Our skill sets just dovetailed and our callings just dovetailed. And so it's been a neat discovery.

Annie: Talk for a second to the moms listening. Could you have done this when they were little?

Amanda: No, no, no, no. Super no. It's too full-time. I have to have kids in school. I can't even do it when they're home for the summer and they're adults, you know?

Annie: I was talking with Jennie Allen a few months ago and we were talking about me having kids. I'm not currently having kids. This isn't an announcement that y'all need to know. We were just talking about in the world, were I to decide once I got married, okay, blah, blah. And she said, "Just know that it will change your ministry from external to internal for the foreseeable first decade or so.

Amanda: Absolutely.

Annie: And she said, "If you and your husband choose that, you need to just recognize that's going to be a shift that your most intense discipleship is in your home for at least a decade." And so I thought, 2025 to 2035. Okay, well, that is a different thing than what I've done the last 10 years.

And I think there are often my peers who are raising elementary, preschool-age kids feel this loss of what they could do before and this hopelessness of, am I ever going to get to be in ministry again?

Amanda: Well, there's an invisibility to what you're doing. Like you don't see the fruits of your labor as a mom for many years because you don't know if what you're doing is actually working or creating good care. Like you've got a good guest and you're getting good counsel, but you don't actually know, am I turning out a person who's going to love Jesus and who's going to be...?

Annie: Right.

Amanda: So you don't get the immediate feedback that sometimes I think. I know that for me writing, it's like I've accomplished something and this sold and this, you know,

check, check, check. It's a little bit more cause and effect in that sense. So I think it's hard in that way too. I think moms do invisible work a lot of the time.

Annie: My guess is there's a lot of friends listening who get the opportunity to do some version of ministry together. Like you are doing. Y'all's is like the job. Like it's also your job, not just like we volunteer at the same thing. And then I'm thinking about our single friends who like... like y'all know me really well. Like this is fun to me. I'm like, Oh, I hope I get to do this. I hope we're going in something.

So maybe, Dallas, for a second, you talk to the single people. What are we looking for when we're looking for a partner who we can run with? Because you didn't plan like, well, when we do a TV show, I'm going to pick a woman who can write the discipleship materials.

Dallas: I think it is essential that whoever you choose as your spouse, they do not have to have the same interests, they do not have to have the same calling specifically. But they do have to have the calling to be aligned with and supportive of and cheerleading towards whatever calling that is.

To her credit, when we first got married, she was raised by a dad who is a just... I mean, he knows how to do stuff, you know? Like he can fix a car. He can fix... I do not know how to do things. But she was used to stability, a dad who's like...

Amanda: Predictability.

Dallas: Her vision of what dads and husbands are as stability, the nine-to-five, very responsible. I'm much more of an artist. I'm much more of a creative. My calling is towards this industry that is not stable, not secure-

Annie: Not nine to five, for sure.

Dallas: For sure. So I have met couples and I'm still speaking to the single person listening right now who sometimes you might fall in love with someone or think someone is right for you because you have the same interests, but that's different from calling or from a job or even a ministry is that sometimes people just aren't built for the type of ministry or calling that it is. I've seen pastors, I've seen authors or whatever, who their marriages are so strained because the spouse doesn't get that approach.

She started to understand, okay, Dallas is up till three in the morning. And that's not necessarily irresponsible. He's getting just as much sleep as my dad did. It just shifted.

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

Dallas: You know, sleeping in till nine o'clock or 10 o'clock or whatever. It feels awful. It feels lazy, but yet, okay, he was really working hard till three o'clock in the morning. So you see that with... you know, just to use an example of a police officer. We were talking about earlier is, a police officer has odd hours or it is a job that can be dangerous. I would say it would be incumbent to marry someone who has a higher risk tolerance, you know? And if not that you as a spouse are thinking, what do I need to adjust about myself to make our marriage more whole?

Annie: The older I've gotten the more the "do we like the same thing" just lowers in importance. I mean, I cared a lot about being with the Georgia bulldog when I was 22, but now I'm like, well, no... Like I met someone the other day, I met a single guy the other day and he really likes this type of food that I do not like. And I was like, Well, yeah, but he really... in my head, I said, that actually doesn't matter at all. He can eat that whenever he wants. You don't ever have to eat it. He really loves Jesus. Let's just stay up. The main thing is the main thing. It's okay. You don't have to eat the same restaurant he eats at for his whole life.

Dallas: She really does hate baseball, for example, and I'm a baseball obsessive, some of those things. And so we don't watch the same sports together, of course. But to your point, I know this sounds obvious, but that is so, so far down on the list of importance compared to, can she tolerate YouTube videos being released about me and how I'm a heretic or a horrible guy or the shows are crazy or some controversy or whatever, or even the YouTube videos that say I'm the greatest thing ever. And neither one of those are true.

Those are the kinds of things that maybe not everyone can identify with, but that's the kind of thing that you're looking for is can someone hang with, and can I learn to hang with their thing? And if we can, it can become a really beautiful experience of refinement.

Annie: Those people make those videos don't realize that you're a ride at dawn kind of woman. They should not be messed. I'm always like, "I would not mess with Dallas or Amanda Jenkins because of Amanda Jenkins. It ain't no world. How do you have self-control?"

Amanda: Oh, I actually really don't care about social media. I genuinely don't care. I don't care about the opinions of strangers. There's one thing. It happened the other day in a different application. But there's one type of thing that drives me nuts and will get me to publicly respond is when people are not only criticizing him, but they'll say if Amanda saw, thus and such, she wouldn't like it. Like this assumption-

Annie: Like he's doing something behind your back.

Amanda: Yeah. This assumption that I don't know, this assumption that you-

Dallas: "What does Amanda think of the fact that you just said X, Y, Z?"

Annie: Yeah, yeah. And then she's right here.

Dallas: You should ask. Trust me, that's going to go really well for you.

Amanda: This is going to be fun. You want to know? That drives me crazy. Other than that, it's really hard to get my temperature to rise, good or bad. In fact, sometimes even the good makes me uncomfortable because I never want us to lose sight of what we're doing and why. And so sometimes when the praise comes in, I'm like, meh, we don't need to worry about that. We know who cares about that. Because I don't want to get us off task.

I find it fascinating that so many people care about the negative. If the negative we're dragging down the actual work, then I can see caring about it. But if it's just the noise, I'm like, you know what? You can just turn that volume down. You literally don't have to look at it. It's not there. It doesn't affect your life. It doesn't affect the work. So I just genuinely don't care about that.

I do think that I'm not super sensitive in that way about what other people think, which is a part of our pairing.

Dallas: That's another example of a Mount Rushmore key trait. A trait that belongs on the Mount Rushmore of key things in a marriage is, again, her being able to handle public criticism makes her uniquely qualified to be married to someone who does this kind of thing for a living. Again, that's not always the case. Some people are like, I wouldn't be able to handle something untrue being written about me on social media or my spouse.

Amanda: I think the application, because our situation is so unique, but the application is to find people who share your core values. I mean, beyond Jesus, right? Jesus, obviously, is the non-negotiable. But then somebody who shares your rhythm and your values. I feel like I'm for some degree of risk, and so I can vibe with him. But also I feel like he is super committed to when I don't feel safe or secure or seen, he's really responsive to that. And so he's like, I know this life is crazy. You're telling me you need something. I'm going to make an adjustment. He's really responsive to that, too. So that's the partnership piece of it. But I do think you have to find somebody who has those really similar values.

You're being so excited about work. It's hard for me to imagine you giving up your work because it's a part of you. It pours out of your eyeballs. And so I think that's the kind of thing, somebody who can vibe with you on your passions about interests in the world.

Dallas: It also really helps to be awesome.

Annie: And y'all got...

Dallas: I can't speak for her. I'm saying...

Annie: You're like, just for me, that helps.

Dallas: No, no. It's helpful that I'm awesome because it makes it easier for her.

Amanda: Like I wake up and I'm like, Oh, that really irritated me. But he is so great.

Annie: "Yeah, he's awesome. And I can just overlook everything else that happened."

Dallas: So I would encourage that.

Annie: To find someone that's just awesome.

Dallas: Or in my case, to be awesome. To be awesome.

Annie: Okay. That's your dating tip. Just be awesome.

Dallas: Just be awesome.

Annie: That is the main character energy. That's some FOMO for me.

[00:20:06] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Factor](#). Okay, listen, Factor meals are our new favorite around the AFD Inc. offices. And I have them in my fridge in New York right now. We keep them stocked so we have easy lunches to grab. And they're genuinely so good.

They're pre-packaged meals that aren't frozen. You just heat them up for like two-ish minutes and you are ready to go. And get this, Factor is cheaper than takeout or dining out. Trust me. I know. That's why I have them here in my house in New York.

You can choose from a weekly menu of 35 options. Check out some of these. Homestyle chicken and gravy and loaded mashed potato pork chops. And then vegan options like sweet potato and chickpea curry and globally inspired flavors like Peruvian shrimp and red pepper cauli grits. We genuinely, hand to heaven you guys, we have not found one that we did not like.

Head to factormeals.com/TSF50. And you can use that code TSF, like That Sounds Fun, TSF50 to get 50% off your first box and 20% off your next month. Again, that code is TSF50 at FactorMeals.com/TSF50 to get 50% off your first box plus 20% off your next month while your subscription is active.

That link pretty much every other link you could ever hope for are in the show notes or remember we'll send them to you every Friday in the AFD Week in Review. So you can sign up for that in the show notes below as well.

Sponsor: And another incredible partner I get to tell you about, [Hiya Health](https://HiyaHealth.com). 'Tis the season where germs are flying and I want my MiniBFFs to stay as healthy as possible. So many kids' vitamins are filled with five grams of sugar and can contribute to a variety of health issues. So we love Hiya Health because it's the pediatrician-approved chewable vitamin that is made with zero sugar and zero gummy junk.

Hiya is designed for kids two and up and sent straight to your door so you have one less thing you have to worry about. It also comes in these really cute glass bottles that are reusable and your kids get to decorate them with stickers. Currently, their bottles are available in Barbie pink, which is so cute. It comes with a limited edition Barbie unboxing experience that includes a Barbie bottle and Barbie stickers.

We've worked out a special deal with Hiya for their bestselling children's vitamin. Receive 50% off your first order, you guys. To claim this deal, you got to go to Hiyahealth.com/ThatSoundsFun. That's Hiyahealth.com/ThatSoundsFun and get your kids the full body nourishment they need to grow into healthy adults.

Sponsor: You know I've been on a bit of a hair journey lately and went for a fun fall dark brown hair color, but I never actually have to worry about the health of my hair because [Prose](https://Prose.com) custom care has been a game changer for me. I love it so much I keep it in both my Nashville and my New York apartments.

Since 2017, Prose has transformed traditional hair and skincare with a made-to-order custom model. They combine the expertise of their team of in-house cosmetic chemists with an advanced AI algorithm that personalizes your formula

based on 80-plus unique factors so you're truly getting a custom-made for you product.

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

Prose is so confident that they will bring out your best hair that they're 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 formula and see the difference that custom hair care can at half the price, you guys. 50% off at Prose that's Prose.com/ThatSoundsFun.

Okay, now back to our conversation with Dallas and Amanda.

[00:24:06] <music>

Annie: Okay, let's talk about *The Chosen* for a second, speaking of things you're working on together, because Dallas, one of the questions that our friends asked, Don asked, when *The Chosen* is finished, which will be seven seasons, right?

Dallas: Mm-hmm.

Annie: And you're?

Dallas: Season 5. I'm wrapping up the editing of that right now, comes out next year. Then Season 6 is what we're filming next year.

Annie: So five is Holy Week. Six is the crucifixion. Seven is the resurrection.

Dallas: Spoiler alert.

Annie: Sorry, everybody. So what comes after? Apparently, you've announced this, and I am a bad friend that I didn't hear this announcement. But we already know what's coming after these seven.

Dallas: Yeah. At our big fan event that you were at last year, ChosenCon-

Annie: Yes, I loved it. I had so much fun. Well, mostly you and Amanda Gunderson and I just rolled around everywhere.

Dallas: But we did a ChosenCon again this year. You were not able to come. But we announced...

Amanda: I cried a little, by the way.

Annie: Sorry.

Amanda: I was a little upset about that.

Annie: Given the chance, it will not happen again.

Dallas: No. But we announced our Chosen universe, what's going to be happening over the next five-plus years or so. And so yes, she's asking about a lot of people are very eager, are you going to continue the story with the Book of Acts? And so I will say this. At the end of the seven seasons, I am taking a bit of a break. I love Jesus, I love the Bible, but I need to take a break from Bible stuff for a moment, like I did with my movie that we'll talk about here soon.

But I'm going to tell the story of Moses. So we're going to do a three-season show called *The Chosen* Book of Moses. So we get to explore a lot of the great stories that we've used as examples in our own lives, Red Sea Moments, Mana Program, and all these things.

Annie: Oh my gosh, am I just going to sob the whole show?

Dallas: Yes.

Annie: Yes. You make us cry in every episode of everything you do.

Dallas: Well, thank you.

Annie: Right now between Best Chosen Special and every episode of *The Chosen*, you have 100% tears for me.

Dallas: Oh, good to know. Well, that's going to be the key though, is how often would you watch a Moses... like you've seen the Ten Commandments or you've seen Exodus or whatever. And I would imagine you probably never got emotional. Maybe Prince of Egypt a little bit. But-

Amanda: It's always so big.

Dallas: Bible projects are rarely emotional.

Amanda: They're pointing to something big or making a big announcement.

Annie: And it's two hours.

Amanda: Right, that's it.

Dallas: But when you are in the mind and spending time with a guy who's underqualified, who was raised as a... I was going to say fish out of water, but I mean, raised as a Jewish person in an Egyptian home, as a person whose people were enslaved, who had to cover up murder, who's living out his days comfortable and God comes to him and speaks to him through a burning bush and tells him he's going to go do the scariest thing imaginable. I mean, making that personal, making that authentic, making that intimate is something we're really drawn to.

And the story of Moses is actually very much... We draw from that a lot in our own lives because we've experienced it in our own lives — being underqualified for something that was big, that was happening or being stuck at the edge of the Red Sea waiting for the waters to part, not knowing if it's going to happen. So we love that story.

I also think it's going to be good to give cast, crew, all of us, even the audience, a little bit of a break from the disciples. We're going to go back in time a little bit, show the connection between Moses and Jesus. Of course, Jesus was in many ways the new Moses, the better than Moses. Moses turned the water to blood. Jesus turned the water to wine, all these great things. So we're going to really explore that.

Amanda: It's rich.

Dallas: Once that's done, I'll be three seasons. And yes, we have a project that we're calling *The Way of The Chosen*. That's the book of Acts because they referred to it as The Way. The birth of the early church was known as The Way. And so it's called *The Way of The Chosen*. We will pick up the story, take you to the birth of the early church.

Annie: And animated starts soon, right?

Dallas: *The Chosen Adventures* is a project we've been working on for two years now and developing even longer than that. That comes out early next year. So yeah. And then I'm going to New York, Lake Placid to film an episode with Bear Grylls.

Annie: I did see you say this.

Dallas: The Chosen in the Wild.

- Annie:** What are you doing? And isn't he making Jonathan do it too?
- Dallas:** Yes.
- Amanda:** We've had a handful of others do it as well. They've already all filmed and they are eager to see Dallas experience this.
- Annie:** I feel like you're going to do great.
- Dallas:** Well, I'm a rugged indoorsman. So you need to understand that about me. So this right now, this is how I like to converse. An air-conditioned room, there's walls, there's not wind, dust, anything like that. So I'm really not an outdoorsman.
- Amanda:** He is fearless.
- Dallas:** I'm not scared of things and I'm physical. I'm willing to climb. I'm willing to jump. Not willing to set up camp for the night. Not willing... Well, if he forces me to eat things off the ground-
- Amanda:** I so want him to have to eat things off the ground. I would love that.
- Dallas:** She pulled Bear Grylls aside backstage and she's like, "Kick his butt." He goes, "No, no, the wild is tough. I'm there to support." She's like, "No, no.
- Amanda:** No, no, no, no, no. You didn't accept. We're so excited.
- Annie:** How many days is it?
- Dallas:** I think it's like one. It's like a 24-hour period. It's like one day. I don't know exactly yet.
- Annie:** So you can just start the clock and be like, I only got to do this for 23 and a half more hours.
- Amanda:** Yeah. That's part of it.
- Dallas:** I'll hang. I'll do it. I understand the assignment, but it's not my jam. But anyway, *The Chosen* on the Wild is another show that we're doing with Bear Grylls that allows some of the actors and myself to not only experience challenges, but to talk deeper about the characters in the show to talk deeper about the purpose of the show and what God's doing in our lives. It's like Annie Downs' podcast, but out in the world.

Annie: Yeah. Things you're not getting. I'm also a rugged indoors woman. So this is about it. At ChosenCon, people were worried that Jonathan was in the hospital.

Dallas: Oh, that's so funny. He couldn't make it. No, he had another project that was overseas. He was filming overseas and couldn't get out of it. And so a rumor started spreading that-

Amanda: He sent a greeting and everything. I don't know where that was-

Dallas: Oh, he sent the greeting. And people were like... the rumor started to spread that fakeness-

Annie: Do you ever worry about what people put on him?

Amanda: Hmm.

Dallas: He worries about it for sure. Honestly my job sometimes, and I'm not saying this in a condescending way is sometimes therapist because-

Annie: I would imagine.

Dallas: I'll tell you this quick story. Season one, we're filming Episode 6, which is the lowering of the man through the roof, right?

Annie: I'm impressed you remember this.

Dallas: Well, I just-

Amanda: Numbers

Dallas: ...what I've been doing for that. But I also have 32 episodes that have been out. You've had what? 300 and... it's like-

Annie: Oh, on That Sounds Fun?

Dallas: Yeah.

Annie: 900.

Dallas: Yeah, exactly. So it's a little easier for me to remember episode titles than for you. But anyway it's the first time in the show that Jesus preaches. So I don't know if you remember the scene, but they're in the streets of Capernaum at Zebedee's house

and a crowd starts to gather because he's teaching. And so he's teaching around the table, people start showing up at the window.

Then of course there's so many people that someone has to get lowered through the roof to see Jesus. And so it was Jonathan's first time as Jesus preaching. And when he showed up, he was clearly glitched. He was clearly a little bit down and wasn't quite as gregarious with me as he normally is. A lot of times we kind of tease each other because the work is so serious, sometimes you just have to screw around and make fun of stuff. He wasn't really cooperating with that.

And then we start to film in the first take, he starts pulling me aside and I'm kind of in a rush and I'm kind of blowing them off a little bit. And he just stops me and says, "I need you to understand how difficult this is." And so when an actor tells you that, you go, "Okay, you know what?" I wish I was this empathetic with my wife sometimes. But with Jonathan, I'm like, "Okay, something's off."

So I pull him aside, I go, "What's up?" He gets emotional and he's like, "I don't feel worthy to preach as Jesus. Like there's a hundred people here. We had a hundred extras all standing around and they're going to be listening and in character absorbing these words of the Messiah in capturing a gospel story that's famous for the fact that people were gathering because the preaching was so great. His preaching was so impactful, people were walking to join... to hear it." And he's just like, "I don't feel worthy."

And I was able to kind of instantly say, "Oh gosh, welcome to the... I mean like none of us here are worthy. I'm not worthy to do this." I'd been living with it a little longer than he had been because I'd actually experienced the calling. For him, he got a phone call from me going, "You want to put the sandals on again?" Because we've done short films before and vignettes before together. And I was, "We're going to do a show." And so I had plenty of time to kind of wrestle with what this was going to look like and what was going to happen and he's an actor playing a role. And it started to really hit him, "People are seeing me as Jesus."

Again, that's a long answer to your question, but it's, it really is... he wears that weight. And it's gotten a little easier as time has gone on for him to make sense of it because he's now able to-

Amanda: He has ways of bearing the weight.

Dallas: He's able to articulate now the difference between Jesus and Jonathan. And of course he says all the time, he's like, In order to play the role, I empty myself of who I am as much as possible. But all I can ultimately do is bring my own humanity to it. And so it's a heavy weight for everybody. I think of even just some

of the actors, you know, who are representing Matthew and Thomas and little James, people who in some countries, they're icons and saints because they planted churches there, they birthed the church there. And these actors who are now changing people's lives all over the world. Some of them weren't believers, aren't fully aware of what's going on. Jonathan because he is maybe is more aware, but-

Amanda: One recently shared with me the feeling of not only is it a weight to play it on the screen, it is also a, what if I disappoint people in my real life? So to both things, to Jonathan of like, "I don't feel worthy to say these words or in that situation, I feel like I'm going to fail the fans, I'm like, You will. You're not worthy. You will fail. Let's fast-forward to that. And just embrace the fact that we're all-

There are so many times where Dallas has had to say to fans, "I'm not even a pastor, let alone this God figure over this thing." Because sometimes people just keep putting you up and up and up. And you're like, no, let's just fast forward to the part where I disappoint you and I do something that could full-on get me canceled because like... you know?

Annie: Right.

Amanda: It's just such a strange thing to be thrust into. And so they definitely-

Dallas: We decided early on in the, from the beginning of this project, when it came to the actors, when it came to the crew and it came to myself, I was always like, "We're not going to have (a) religious litmus test for who's qualified to work on this show.

Now the content I have to control as a believer, because you don't want outside influences on the content. But the crew, the people who are willing to get this show to the world, this content to the world are welcome. And so I said, with our social media, we're just going to say right off the bat, from the beginning, five years ago, I released a video going, "All right, here's where we stand biblically. Here's who I am. Here's where I stand theologically. But I'm just telling you now, like I am a sinful, flawed human being. I will not bet a thousand when it comes to this project and certainly not in my personal life and on social media. You will hear me sometimes say things you don't like, or you disagree with, or whatever. I'm just telling you now that's going to happen. And the actors are going to post things politically that you don't agree with, or they're going to say a bad word."

Annie: It's the character you love. I don't want to give an example because I don't want to accidentally do something I don't know. But they do something and then you go, well, that's not how I wanted Jonah to be, you know, or whatever.

Dallas: The cast will say... they'll get a direct message saying, you know, "How dare you post that? You're working on a Jesus show," or "you are representing this godly character." And some of them are like, "I don't even know what you mean. I don't even know what the difference is about that. I'm a normal person." That piece we just, from the beginning, gave ourselves and cast and crew the permission to be flawed, sinful human beings.

And I think that's important also because if we tried to be something that we're not, or tried to put on a shine over our public personas, I do think that that could more easily confuse the show with who we are, right? If you start to see me, because you never see my mistakes, you never see my humanity, you just see the creator of *The Chosen*, it can almost start to confuse the two and go, he's inspired by God, he's like a holy man who's been granted this prophetic word. And I'm like, we post on our social media all the time, screwing around on set. We post the actors acting out other things.

The point is to go, There is a difference between the character and the person. And you need to know that for spiritual reasons, not just pressure on the cast reasons. You need to recognize that we understand the difference between the Bible and the show, Jonathan and Jesus, Dallas and God. There is a big difference and we're going to remind you of that frequently.

And that's one of the things about your show too. I started hijacking it. But one of the reasons why your show is so appealing and why so many people have been impacted by it is because you are not putting on airs. You are not trying to be authentic or trying to show it. In many ways, you've removed some of the things that a lot of podcasts put on.

Amanda: Who you are when the camera comes on is who you are when the camera is not on, for better or for worse. I think people desperately need that.

Dallas: When I listen to your podcast, people just take a breath. They're like, yeah, okay, good. We can relax because Annie's relaxed and Annie's comfortable in her own brokenness before God, so we can be too.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. Thank you. That's very kind of both of you. As you're thinking of casting Moses, I feel like now you have some things you've learned about putting a person in a role like that.

Dallas: Little easier though with Moses than Jesus.

- Annie:** Certainly. Jonathan will never not be Jesus to somebody. I mean, that guy is stuck with that for actual ever. But Amanda, will you talk a little bit about why Moses and how the Red Sea story has mattered so much to you?
- Amanda:** I mean, that is where God had me laser-focused for years in Exodus. It started with actually going into this new job, i.e. the wilderness with no money and no plan. He really had to do so much work on me in particular because I'm the one that pays the bills, I'm the one that likes the planning and the steadiness. And so he really had to work on my heart. There was some other contributing factors at the time-
- Dallas:** Well, as you know, I talked about this on our first time, which I'm sure there's many listening right now who don't remember this, but we were coming off of a big career failure. So my movie had totally bombed. I ended up resigning from my full-time job to pursue what was happening with *The Chosen*. There was also things going on at the church. It's a well-known story at the church that I was part of.
- Amanda:** It was a mess. Let's move on.
- Dallas:** Yeah, a lot of mess. But anyway-
- Amanda:** So anyway, we were doing this thing-
- Dallas:** We were relying on this little short film that I did on my friend's farm in Illinois as the launching of a potential show, but no money, no real-
- Amanda:** With four kids and no... We were going in not only with no salary, but no medical insurance, all the things you think about, obviously. And I was so willing to follow. You just need to provide the money and the job and then I'll go. Happy to go, Lord.
- Annie:** You may follow the Lord not-
- Dallas:** I mean, I'll happily follow as long as you have stability.
- Amanda:** As long as the Lord gives us the stability. And he was like... the phrase I remember in my head was, "No, I'm going to need you to go without a net. I'm asking you to go without a net." And he had had me in this thing of like, you're... so the picture was we're walking into the wilderness. And the only comfort in that is His presence. Because they were there for 40 years. I thought we are-
- Annie:** Here we go.
- Amanda:** It didn't mean it was going to work. It meant you are going and you're just going to follow Me every day. And what we saw was this manna of like... we immediately

upon having no money and no plan, had medical crisis after medical crisis. And within six months, it was over \$100,000 of bills. We watched those get paid. We watched every... we did not miss a mortgage payment-

Dallas: We did one of those health shares. You know, health share.

Amanda: We did health share. And we would get notes from other people. So not only were bills being paid, we were getting encouragement from the family of God. I mean, it was a day-by-day experience of God in the wilderness. I was laser-focused, I continue to be laser-focused. This is where we lived in the... we were in the wilderness.

Dallas: We came up with the term "the manna program".

Amanda: Yeah, we're on the program.

Dallas: Every day hands out-

Annie: The manna program.

Dallas: Yeah. Every day hands out. The Father has actually said to the Israelites, "Don't store up."

Amanda: There was extra to gather.

Annie: That's when they got-

Amanda: "I'll make it rot."

Dallas: "I'll make it rot." He wanted them to be hand out every morning.

Amanda: So we did that.

Annie: Where's that book, Amanda?

Amanda: Yeah, I think it's coming. As soon as I can breathe and sleep for a minute, that'll come. But I got so comfortable in that space, because the manna program is pretty sweet. Then he started really pressing me towards... This was before it all worked. We were doing kind of day by day. And all of a sudden, he started pressing on me to study what happened to the Israelites when they finally got to the promised land, and how they scattered to the wind. They, in prosperity, in success, when they finally, you would think, could just take a breath and praise God, they rebelled, they

sinned, they credited themselves, they blamed each other. They did everything wrong once they got into the promised land.

And I just started getting this heavy weight of like, watch yourself in success. So I kind of knew the show was going to work before we saw that it was going to work because God was warning me. And so that's why, I mean-

Dallas: You kept saying like, "I think God's warning us of success." I'm like, "That'd be nice."

Annie: "We'll see."

Dallas: "I will take those slings and arrows. Sure." But I was like, I certainly had no idea. I mean, obviously, we were... you know, and I'm the provider. And I'm like, we're relying on other people for half a year.

Amanda: Longer than that. It was a full year. So that's why. I mean, that's why I'm so passionate about now because I just feel like the journey that they embarked on is similar to the journey that we've embarked on. I see myself in them in their rebellion, in their blame, in their grumbling, in their foolishness. I'm like, I'm such an Israelite it's embarrassing. And yet, I'm so thankful for them because they, by the grace of God, go, I... And only with the grace of God will I go. So, yeah, I think there's no other story for us to tell. I think He's really put us into a space where He's like, There's no other story for you guys to tell at this point. This is very clearly the next thing.

Dallas: The other phrase that she came up with, besides Manna Program was Red Sea Moments, which is what we've experienced so many times. And you and I were talking about this off the air of how not only does God sometimes allow us to have trials or to have confusions or to what we say, be at the edge of the Red Sea where there's nothing left other than a miracle to get you out of this. But sometimes He actually puts you there on purpose. And He told the Israelites in Exodus 14, you know, he told Moses, "Tell the people to encamp." He said it three times. Encamp. As in set up at the edge of the Red Sea, you're going to be trapped in. There's nothing but desert in front of you and sea behind you and the Egyptians are coming for you.

Amanda: Which just-

Annie: And build your tents.

Amanda: Not for nothing.

Dallas: Like hang out there for a while.

Amanda: It's not that they kind of were like on a hike and then they landed there and He's like, Encamp here. He gave them the coordinates. If you read, that is a geographical location in that passage where He's like, "Go here. And it was a trap. It was go to the trap. He instructed them where to go. And so that idea of like, "I'm going to put you here. You're going to settle in. You will have no way out. So that when the seas part, you know, it's me.

We've kind of gotten into a space of like the worst that things get, which they do get, they get rough a lot, which is obviously God reminding us we're not in control and that He is, we are much quicker now to go, Ooh, okay. This is it. There's no way forward.

Annie: So then what do you do though? So then what do you do when there's no...? You go, Well, I guess we watch.

Amanda: You wait. And waiting can be this long or it can be forever. I'm really, really bad at the waiting. But I am better at recognizing the need for the wait. Isn't that a good baby step? Like, Oh, I need to wait now. I'm doing it terribly.

Annie: But that's the rejoice in your sufferings of like, I don't know if I can rejoice, but I can appreciate.

Amanda: But I can quote that Bible verse right now.

Annie: And that's a step.

Dallas: There's that piece too of the, whether it's telling Moses to strike the rock, telling the Israelites to go to these specific coordinates, asking for food at the feeding of the 5,000 because he needed five loaves and two fish in order to be multiplied. When He raised Lazarus from the dead, He could have just had the stone, while He was at it, just roll away on its own. He got the gospel record. He said, "I need people to go roll away the stone, remove his grave clothes. Like he still has us participate in this, and in fact, demands that we do certain things, typically the things we don't need Him for. Like we can roll the stone away ourselves. We can unwrap the grave clothes with ourselves. We can make five loaves and two fish. We can hit a rock. But there is that point where you've done all those things and it's not... that's where, okay, this, this could very well be a Red Sea moment because I actually have done all the things that I'm good at, and that God called me to do and now there's nothing left. So we gotta wait. And be quiet as it also says in Exodus 14.

Amanda: I do want to say also though too, sometimes coming from this place of like, and then we waited and the seas parted and it was amazing, not every story ends that way. So we really challenge each other to like... we are genuinely not assuming results. I do feel like I've gotten to a place in my life where I'm no longer assuming that A plus B equals C because sometimes God is lining something up for something way down the line that you don't know yet.

And it's not a prosperity thing. It's not a worldly success thing. It's a "know Me". "I want you to know Me". And so I'm putting you in this place and you're going through this piece of suffering or you're chronically ill, which is the one that we're going through right now with a kid, whatever it's not about I don't like the whole notion of like, so do your part and then he's going to feed 5,000. That is an assumption that you have to stop short of because it's just... He's in this moment. He's at the Red Sea with me.

If He ends up showing us a different path out and it's not through the waters, that's going to be as much of an experience with Him that He intended and cultivated and created as anything else. So to stop getting to the place where we, especially with you guys who are dreamers, I'm not a dreamer, I'm a soldier. So I don't struggle with this as much. But the idea of having a dream and needing to see it fulfilled is likely the thing you have to die to. Right? Because sometimes those coalesce, but sometimes they don't. And it's not just having the dream that means I'm going to get the dream. It's just a matter of when. It's not that it's a, where's God in it with you. And that's the reward, which so we're not so results-focused.

[00:48:59] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Ritual](#). I love analytics and data. They helped tell us a story. So that's why I appreciate that Ritual conducted a university-led human clinical trial for their Essential for Women 18+ multivitamin.

I was really curious to hear the results because I love their multivitamins. Get this. It increased vitamin D levels by 43% and Omega 3 DHA levels by 41% in just 12 weeks. You love to hear it. You just take two capsules a day of their Essential for Women 18+ multivitamin, which has nine key nutrients and the capsules feature a delayed release designed to dissolve later, which helps make it gentle on an empty stomach. You know, I love the minty essence in every bottle because it keeps things fresh and fun and helps when taking your vitamins.

Ritual's Essential for Women is USP verified. So, you know, you can trust what you're putting in your body. Only about 1% of the supplement brands on the market have the USP verified mark, which shows that their products contain the

ingredients actually listed on the label. Ritual multivitamins are also vegan, non-GMO gluten and major allergen-free, certified B Corp, and made traceable.

Ritual also uses scientific tools to select lower-carbon packaging, prioritize sustainably sourced ingredients, and set ambitious climate goals. They are a female-founded B Corp, meaning they are holding themselves accountable to not just their company's financial health, but also the health of people and our planet.

Ritual's Essential for Women 18+ is a multivitamin you can actually trust. Get 25% off your first month at [Ritual.com/ThatSoundsFun](https://ritual.com/ThatSoundsFun). Start Ritual or add Essential for Women 18+ to your subscription today. That's ritual.com/ThatSoundsFun for 25% off.

Sponsor: And one more incredible partner I get to tell you about, [Our Place](#). Well, y'all know, we had my friend Danielle Walker on the pod recently and talked all about her recipes to help us meal prep and have things to freeze and save. Y'all know I don't do a ton of cooking, but when I do, I love making a batch of recipes like hers that I can save and continue eating through the week.

Companies like Our Place have helped me be super mindful about the cookware I'm using to cook with too. I don't want toxins in my food and I don't want them in my cookware either. Our Place is non-toxic cookware and appliances that also make cooking and cleaning up way easier. Not to mention their designs are super cute. There are so many fun colors to choose from.

Our Places products are made without PFAS and Teflon. PFAS are also known as forever chemicals, and most of today's nonstick pans have forever chemicals in them. So go to FromOurPlace.com and enter my code TSF at checkout to receive 10% off site-wide. That's FromOurPlace.com and the code is TSF, like That Sounds Fun. Our Place offers 100-day trial with free shipping and returns.

Sponsor: I am always looking for easy snacks to keep around that have a lot of protein too, and I love that I get snacks like chomps, meat sticks, and protein shakes from [Thrive Market](#). I love that. I don't have to question what I'm getting from Thrive Market either. I know I can trust the ingredients of what I'm buying.

Instead of standing in the grocery store aisle, reading through all the labels to see if it's full of junk or words I can't pronounce, Thrive Market's already done all of that work for me. Certified organic is always their first choice. Thrive Market studies every label to search for the best wholesome ingredients that have been vetted for safety. They even restrict a thousand-plus ingredients that are found at conventional grocery stores.

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. Want to shop at a grocery store that actually cares about your health? Go to ThriveMarket.com/ThatSoundsFun for 30% off your first order, oh my gosh, you guys 30% off, plus a free \$60 gift. That's thrivemarket.com/ThatSoundsFun.

And now back to finish up our conversation with Dallas and Amanda.

[00:53:10] <music>

Annie: I was sitting with some friends this weekend and we were talking about in James where it says "humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and he'll lift you up." One of my friends said, the second part of that doesn't matter. You just humble yourself in the sight of the Lord. And then He will. But whatever you're going to picture is actually not going to be what happens. So who cares?

Amanda: And also interesting-

Annie: Just humble yourself in the sight of the Lord.

Amanda: Because He was lifted up on a cross. So like careful what you wish for, right? Because lifting up doesn't necessarily even mean what we think it's going to mean. So He'll do a thing.

Annie: Yeah, He'll do something.

Amanda: Humble yourself and He's gonna do a thing.

Annie: That's right. I mean, I couldn't even get the words out at lunch because I've been so moved by... here we go. I've been in a hard spot about a work thing, and y'all said to me, In long and short, this is a Red Sea moment for you. I told you at lunch, like I've quoted you to 20 people if I quoted you to one of saying like, Oh, I had to learn this this way, so that God gets the glory. Because I'm very good at accomplishing X amount of things and then I get the glory and I don't mean to. It's not my goal, but I'm fine when it happens. And you disciplined me out of that and it is still really painful and it is not fixed.

Amanda: Right.

Annie: But what y'all taught me about, if you've done everything you can do and you've even camped-

Dallas: Have you pulled the levers? Have you used all the things, all your tools, some of which God gave you some of which are uniquely qualified for, some of which are things that only you can do because you're good at it? You've done all those things, the five loaves and two fish have been handed over to God, this probably means this is a Red Sea moment.

Annie: And the thing I said to you is that I had to learn in failure what will save me in success. Like I've had to have these failures happen this year that have been behind-the-scenes, but deeply painful in order for any... were we to ever have a success again, that would be marked in some way like a Red Sea moment without what I learned for the first half of this year, I would have been very proud of myself.

Dallas: Why didn't God just not have the Egyptians chase the Israelites in the first place?

Annie: Right.

Dallas: Why not just let them go and then give them the path around the Red Sea and all things would be fine. He says it. He says it three times in one chapter. "I will get glory. I will get glory. So that I will get glory." Yeah. And so it's not easy camping out at the edge of the Red Sea.

What made that conversation that we had and put us in a position of discipleship was because it's been where we've been off and on. And here's the funny thing. When the waters part, that's the miracle, right, you get through it. The waters crashed down on the Egyptians. They killed Egyptians. Problem solved. This is great. The miracle's done. Oh, there's still 40 years of... so that day they got taken care of. When he fed the 5,000, okay, well, now they get to go home. They get to go home. They don't have like lamb waiting for them because Jesus also did that. It's the manna program. It's enough to get you through that day.

I think as we've seen with *The Chosen* and as we've seen with *Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, and even the story of that movie and how that came about has been a story of God just putting us in this position of like, can you believe I'm good even when you don't have the thing that...

Annie: Why did y'all pick to do that movie? I don't know this answer. Because I love that book. What made you decide to make it into a movie?

Dallas: I was reading it to our kids 20 years ago. So Amanda gets it at a pottery barn for \$3. She always talks about how she used to go to pottery bar, not to buy anything-

Amanda: Literally go in just to play with my kids. I was like one of those-

Dallas: We didn't have any money to-

Amanda: We didn't have any money. I'd sit on a couch, they'd play, I'd sip my iced tea and it was win-win.

Dallas: And then as you're walking you're like, Oh, none of this pleased me. I couldn't buy anything today.

Amanda: But they did have a little grab-and-go at the counter. I had read it growing up and I loved it. I was like, "Oh my gosh, I love this story. Three bucks. I could do three bucks."

Dallas: And I didn't remember a whole lot about it. But here's what's funny about this story, this book, is it's been read in public schools for decades.

Annie: Yeah. I read it as a student and a teacher.

Dallas: So that's why when she handed to me, I'm like, "Oh yeah, that's right. I remember this." But I didn't remember everything about it. That's why when I started reading, first thing is I'm laughing. It's very funny. It's very whimsical, very witty. I'm like, "Man, this is really smart and funny. I didn't remember that."

And then there's all these like Jesus breadcrumbs. It's like a Jesus story. And I'm going, I don't remember this being so overt because... and again, not because it, because the story faded in my mind, it's because I'd read it as a kid. But because I read it in public school, I never would have guessed. But it's just so good that it doesn't matter to the mainstream. I'm kidding. I keep reading, I get to the last chapter and I am weeping. Like I can't read. I'm literally like-

Amanda: Like ugly cry.

Dallas: Oh my gosh, I'll be back. And Amanda's like, "Give me the book." Our kids are just like, "Why is it dad-

Amanda: Because they were so little at the time.

Dallas: So she starts reading, she starts weeping. I've not recovered, so I take it back. So the Christmas tradition became, we're going to read this to our kids and we're going to pass it back and forth.

Amanda: And at one point our oldest got old enough to be like, "Just give me the book."

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Amanda: Now he's reading it.

Dallas: So the story of these six of the... you know, the worst kids in the history of the world from the wrong side of the tracks, scandalous, no one wants them around because they're mean and they're tough and they show up at church because they've heard their snacks at church. And of course, that's how you start to realize they're in poverty, they don't have parents around.

So they show up in church to get snacks and they announced the Christmas pageant that they've been doing every year for decades. And it's the perfect pristine Christmas pageant. Mary is always played by the little blonde clean girl who's all behaved and they take over the pageant-

Amanda: In a white [inaudible 00:59:36] and everything's pristine.

Dallas: So they take over the pageant. They want to play all the main roles just because they want an opportunity to be someone different than they normally are. They take over the pageant, take over the church. And the church is scandalized, thinks it's going to be the worst Christmas pageant ever, and thinks that this is just an awful thing. And of course, without giving much away, the title, you know, tells you.

They teach the church a little bit. Because of their outsider status, because of the fact that they are in poverty, they are actually closer to the truth of the gospel story and the birth of Jesus.

Amanda: And they didn't know the story. So you get to actually see the story that's so taken for granted by the church, gets retold to these kids-

Dallas: And they're asking all these questions.

Annie: They ask great questions.

Dallas: They wrapped them up and put them in a box, you know, and... The innkeeper couldn't find a room for a pregnant woman, you know? So they're asking all these questions and the church people are going, "Oh, interesting. I haven't thought of that before."

So anyway, I get to the end of the book and I'm like, I have to make this movie. I was born to make this movie. The combination of heart-

Annie: That's 20 years ago.

Dallas: Oh, yeah. So the combination of heart and humor is kind of my style. I really love that. I love a huge Christmas nut. You know, it's my favorite time of year, of course. *It's a Wonderful Life*, my favorite movie of all time. I'm a huge Christmas guy. And kids. I mean, I love troubled kids. A lot of our volunteer work has been with either troubled kids. I'm an adoptive parent. I mean, you know, we have... I say, I'm an adoptive parent. We are adoptive parents.

Amanda:

Dallas: And there's a lot of adoption-

Amanda: You also birthed the baby.

Dallas: So I just got it. So I knew that I knew that I knew that I needed to tell this story. So I Google who has the rights to this book. Turns out it's this group of guys that knew the author. So call them up and I'm like, "I have to make this movie. My name is Dallas Jenkins." I'm telling them who I am. I tell them why the story meant so much. It's like, "Well, that's really great. We love the passion, but it's already set up at a major studio and there's a big director already attached to it." The train has left the station basically. So every year I would check to see if the movie has been made yet.

Annie: There's a Deadline or something.

Dallas: Yeah, yeah. Like online. And then I would check in with them, I'm like, "What's the latest?" And hey, you know-

Amanda: He became a gnat, I would say, to those guys.

Dallas: And here's what I also did. I put in my calendar on my phone and my computer, three words, pray for pageant. And it would come up once a week.

Annie: Once a week. Dallas, you were praying this once a week?

Dallas: Yeah. So once a week it would pop up and I would go, "God, I care about your will and whatever you want is good, but please I have to make this movie. Don't let anyone else make this movie. You know that I just felt so like... it was so much a part of me." And when people would interview me like for the industry or whatever, and they'd go, "So what's up? You know, what's the project you really want to make?" every time I'd be like, "Best Pageant Ever. It's a story I'm born to make."

So I would check in every few years, nothing was happening with it. And then about five years ago I had an opening, the studio didn't renew the rights and the owners are considering me and I'm meeting with them and I'm sending them videos.

Amanda: It felt like some momentum.

Dallas: And they're really considering it. They ultimately called me up and they said, "There's a major studio that really wants to do this. They're really excited." I mean they were aspiring filmmakers themselves. They wanted the big opportunity. They said, "Ao we're making a deal with them." And so I went into Amanda and I said, "It's over. They said no. This new studio is really excited about it. They got a new filmmaker."

Amanda: And we pray.

Dallas: And yeah, it was painful. So I went back to my office and I sat down at my desk, Ping.

Annie: I do not know this story. That is unbelievable.

Dallas: Pray for Pageant. And I said, "I can't do this anymore." And so I literally... I can remember... I have a sense memory of moving the mouse, the arrow to the delete button on the calendar and I really felt God on my heart "Not yet. Don't do that". And I'm like, "Oh gosh, is this my own mind playing tricks with me?" Because of my hopes... But I just really felt like God was like, "No, don't do that. Pray for pageant." So I'm like, "So I pray that your will be done. I pray that I can rejoice in worship and whatever your will is." But I was like... was not in it.

Amanda walks in and she's like, "You know, I was praying and I was crying kind of, you know, really upset with the Lord and just praying and He just told me, just really put on my heart this isn't over. And I'm like, "Don't tell me that. It's only gonna..." And I'm like, "Well, it's funny because I feel like I wasn't to delete this calendar reminder I just got."

So fast forward another year and a half, I text them again, I'm like, "So just checking in. How's it going? It's my time for my annual bugging of you." And he goes, "Funny you should check in." He goes, "Just a week ago, the studio forgot to renew the rights..."

Annie: Oh, Dallas.

Dallas: "...and we're starting to get a little frustrated." And he goes, "So then the next day my mom calls me." She's in her 70s at the time. And his mom says, "Have you heard of the show called *The Chosen*?" And he goes, "Oh, that's funny. The creator of the show is always bugging me to try to get the rights to Christmas Pageant." And she goes, "You better give him the rights. He's the only one who can make this movie. What are you crazy? This is the guy who did *The Chosen*. He has to make this." And the guy's like, "Well, I have to listen to my mom. So I watched your show and it's great. Let's talk."

And so we ended up getting the rights to this book that I'd been chasing for so long because of *The Chosen*." Even this conversation that I'm having with you is in many ways like something we could never have imagined that I'm talking about. Like you've watched. I hope you liked it.

Annie: Dear everyone, let me tell you what I did. I sent Dallas and Amanda a video of me sobbing at the end of the movie. I could not even get my words out. I was crying so hard. I mean, we get to see it again tonight. I cannot wait. The book is wonderful. It is a better retelling of the book than I would have ever imagined.

Amanda: Oh, I mean-

Dallas: That means everything.

Annie: But the book is great, but it is a better retelling.

Dallas: The author's daughter actually... The author is no longer with us, but she reached out and sent me this text about it. And she just said, "My mom would be so proud and so excited." I was just like, "Oh, this is so great. because for 20 years I've been picturing this amazing story." So we got a chance to finally make it. It was the one project that we would have agreed to do in between seasons of *The Chosen*, because it's obviously very, very busy. It means I had to leave again to go to Canada to shoot this thing.

Amanda: It was a rough year.

Dallas: Yeah, that was part of the rough year was getting it done with our kids at home and stuff. But I ultimately got to make the movie that I wanted to make. And here's what's really cool about it is, you know, tomorrow, November 8th, right, it launches. I think some early screenings have started today, but from a major Hollywood studio, didn't mess with the content. Didn't water it down so that it wasn't Jesusy. It's coming out as a standard Christmas classic with trailers and advertisements and the cast have been on normal media hits and all this kind of stuff.

And I'm saying that just because it's like, for this story to be given to the world, we've used the term Trojan horse in some ways, because it's like, you think of it as this big... you see the big wooden horse and you don't realize that this is not... this is actually so much more than just a regular Christmas movie.

God put us in that place for so long. But when I think back on it, I'm like, "If I would have had the rights to this 10 years ago, a) it probably never would have happened because I had no clout as a filmmaker. You know, by the time I was able to do this movie, everyone was like, We'd love to make a Dallas Jenkins movie.

Annie: People are wondering what Dallas Jenkins is doing next.

Dallas: Because of *The Chosen*, right? I just will never forget that moment of like, I can't encamp at the edge of the Red Sea any longer. I can't pray anymore. God just was like, not yet. It was such a grace on His part to do it. This is a story that when you say... Your question was... I know you asked these questions and then we ended up answering really long.

Annie: No.

Dallas: You're like, "I've read this book. Why'd you choose this one?" I couldn't not choose it. It was a match of me with a story. I think you can see also the similarities between this and *The Chosen*, which is taking the old, old story, the greatest story ever told, but reviving it, not changing it, but actually removing whatever veil or thing that we've put in front of the truth of the story.

The Chosen, why I always consider when I tell people why, you know, what I'm doing, I'm like, I'm not... some people will say, "Oh, you're giving us an authentic Jesus. You're giving us a cool Jesus." I'm like, I'm not giving you something. I'm revealing what's already there. We've just put, including myself, I've put things in between us and the story, whether it's religion, stained glass windows, our own vices, our own sins, whatever it is, our own ego.

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever is about these outsiders kind of discovering and retelling the story, but in a more authentic way, and how everyone kind of goes, "Oh, okay. I'd heard this, but I hadn't really seen it." And that's what we're trying to do.

Amanda: And overtly in the film, there's a line about how Jesus came for kids like this. Jesus came for the least of these. And what I love about the film too, is that the kids don't ultimately have to get themselves cleaned up in order to do the thing. They came as they were. They were accepted as they were.

Annie: They didn't think to change how they dressed.

Amanda: Yeah. And so not only are you like telling the story of Christmas in a pretty overt way, but there's also this beautiful picture of what the gospel actually is, that it's come as you are and you don't have to get cleaned up first.

Dallas: Poor outcast might actually be a better choice to play Mary.

Annie: I'm not going to tell everybody the line at the end that I can't repeat without sobbing. But there's a line at the end about Mary that you're like, Haaaa. Do you have a favorite scene? We'll finish with this. Do you have a favorite scene?

Amanda: That's really hard for me. I love it. I love it all so much.

Dallas: I'm curious.

Amanda: Well, scene is the wrong thing. I would say... okay, I'll do scene. Because I could do lines. I could do lines.

Annie: You do lines?

Amanda: No. I'm going to do the scene. My favorite scene in this film actually ended up being the first organized rehearsal. And the reason is because they immediately are going into the motion-

Dallas: They're taking over the pageant and now they're-

Amanda: The kids are taking over the pageant.

Dallas: ...coming to the first rehearsal.

Amanda: And the mom has to figure out how to manage these kids. And yet what is supposed to be just organizing you into your groups and get over here and we're going through the motions, the kids are like asking questions about the story because they're so curious.

Dallas: Who were the shepherds? What are they about?

Amanda: Why are these gifts so stupid of like oil and whatever? I just loved that it was this vehicle of like... I'll tell you why I love it. We have precious kids actually that we cast in this movie. And as I was watching tape during the audition process where

lots of people submit in tapes and I tend to be a first tier, I kind of weed through a first tier and then-

Dallas: She watches the auditions first and then-

Annie: Yeah, and send you the ones that-

Dallas: Pass the Amanda chat.

Amanda: So I'm watching tape after tape after tape and I'm hearing... When a person reads, but especially a child, they're on camera and they're doing their audition on camera and there's a reader off camera doing the lines opposite them. And that for a kid is usually a parent almost always. And I'm hearing these auditions and I'm very in work mode. I'm very judgey. I'm criticizing. That's my job. And all of a sudden I'm arrested by the fact that everybody, almost everybody is mispronouncing words I've heard since I was a kid and took for granted like Christmas story names like Herod or the word frankincense or myrrh they can't pronounce any of them. And I'm realizing they've never heard the story. Like the whole thing is that they've never heard the story.

So many kids had never heard the story, which means their parents by default haven't heard the story because they weren't correcting them on that tape. I just all of a sudden started crying in the middle of a casting session. I've loved every level of this to see how necessary it is to tell the story of Christmas in 2024 and that we get to do it in this funny Dallas... Dallas just made such a funny, charming, beautiful Christmas film that like when was the last time we got a good classic Christmas film? But then on top of it, it is the story of Emmanuel. And I just... I can't.

Annie: I mean, schools are going to play it. In years to come, schools will just... I can't imagine being a-

Dallas: A public school teacher's going like, I've read this to my kids like you're going to take them to the movie.

Annie: I mean, that is-

Dallas: One of my favorite little moments... This is from the book. It's an underrated moment, but it's the first thing that made us cry when we were reading it to our kids. It's so funny, so funny, so funny.

Amanda: I wasn't going to be able to say this line without crying. Sorry. I went to scene.

Dallas: So the kids show up, the Herdman show up at church and they're in Sunday school for the first time and they took money out of the collection plate and they're drawing on the pictures and then they announced the Christmas pageant, and Imogene Herdman, who's the worst one goes, "What's this? What's a pageant?" She goes, "It's like a play that you perform on stage." "Oh, well, what's it about?" She goes, "It's about Jesus." And Imogene goes, "Everything here is." And I literally am going, Like a church where everything here is about Jesus.

Amanda: May it be said of us.

Dallas: I'm like, Oh my gosh. I just literally was like, Everything here is? And then she's like, Oh, grief is Jesus. Everything here is about Jesus. And of course she then ends up playing the part of the mother of Jesus and learns more about Him and stuff like that. But that's one of my favorite little moments of the whole story is that I would hope that our church would represent that. That when someone comes into like, man, everything here is about Jesus.

Annie: When she burps the doll of baby Jesus and says, "This is what I did for..." I think it's in a rehearsal, right? And she says, "This is what I did."

Dallas: Why are you burping a doll? She's like, "This is how I took care of [inaudible 01:14:15] when she was a baby.

Annie: That is the first time my eyes turned on and did not stop. Because you go, Oh my gosh, this little girl has raised her siblings and they have had no parental care. And she's like, Oh, I know how to take care of a baby because that little girl you see as the angel, I had to do this with her. Forget it. Forget it.

Y'all, it's unbelievable. I cannot wait for people to see it tomorrow and for weeks and years to come. But go to theaters is the thing, right? We want everybody to go to theaters.

Dallas: And don't just do it as a favor, as charity to me. If you do like what you're hearing and you want to see it, please do that. And I would just-

Annie: Do it as a favor to me.

Dallas: Oh, yeah, do it as a favor to Annie. I would say do it sooner than later because the movie goes out of theaters if people aren't buying tickets. So you might be thinking, Oh, I'm going to wait until Thanksgiving. Well, Thanksgiving is when *Wicked* and *Moana 2* come out, all these other family movies, which are great and there's room for all of us. But if by the time those come out, *Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, people are kind of still waiting until Christmas to see it-

Amanda: It won't be there.

Dallas: It won't be there. So see it sooner rather than later. And it's not too soon for... we're past Halloween. It's time to start thinking about Christmas. And this story, I promise it will hopefully do what it did for all of us. It's a wonderful tearjerker.

Annie: It messed with me so hard. For everyone listening and watching, there's a ham as a central character in the movie that was in the book. I actually said to Ryan, your Ryan that's in front of my... When he told me he was doing it, I said, "How are you going to handle the ham? Because in the book, it's a social worker that drops it at the house. And I was like, y'all will never get away with that. Because a social worker would never go, "Oh, there's no parents. I'm just gonna leave ham." But in the 70s or whatever, that was fine, I guess. The way y'all made that play through the whole... I can't... it is-

Dallas: I love it. It is-

Annie: May the ham sales go through the roof because of Best Christmas Pageant Ever.

Dallas: #ChristmasHam.

Annie: Yeah. Well, I love you guys. Thank you for doing this.

Dallas: We love you.

Amanda: We love you.

Annie: Thanks for the movie. The work you do we are also changed by it. So thank you.

[01:16:21] <music>

Outro: Okay, you guys, aren't they awesome? I love them so much. Man, I learned so much from them every time we talk. I just love them. Okay, go get your tickets to *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. It is out tomorrow. Go to the theater, take your family, take your friends, take your small group, Single Purpose Leaguers. Y'all get together, go see *Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. It is so great. And go follow Dallas and Amanda on socials. Tell them thanks so much for joining us on the show.

And as I said, if you enjoyed this episode, you can go listen to our previous episodes with Dallas and Amanda in the show notes. We'll give you the link right below. If you've got any questions from this episode, just drop them in the Q&A

Box on your Spotify app if you're a Spotify listener or send them to us on Instagram @ThatSoundsFunPodcast, and we'll try to answer them there.

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 how you can find me.

And 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. And today what sounds fun to me is heading home to Nashville to see my people.

Y'all have a great weekend. We'll see you back here on Monday with one of the funniest women in the world — y'all are going to love her — Ellen Skrmetti. We'll see y'all Monday.

Gree: 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.

Raj: I'm Raj Nair, host of the Can I Trust the Bible? podcast. Now did the events recorded in the Bible actually happen? Is the Bible trustworthy and reliable? Well, join me on this comprehensive Christian apologetics journey as we talk with experts and renowned apologists to provide compelling evidence that will strengthen your Christian faith. Make sure to follow Can I Trust the Bible? on your favorite listening platform and join me every Tuesday as we discover why you can have rock-solid trust in the Bible.