

**[00:00:00]** <music>

**Anne:** 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.

**Intro:** Today on this show, y'all get ready because I get to talk with my friend Ellen Skrmetti, one of my favorite follows on Instagram. Listen, I was a fan before I was a friend. I bet you love her too. She's the one that does those, Hey Jesus, It's Me videos. Oh my gracious. She is so funny.

And she is just as funny in person as she is online. Her Southern humor is just spot on in that "bless your heart" kind of way. I laughed so much during this conversation.

We did a real deep dive on how her comedy career got started and that behind-the-scene politics of a church potluck. You know we talked about it all.

And we get to talk about our brand new book, *Hey Jesus, It's Me*. Y'all hand to heaven, ask my coworkers, I laughed out loud multiple times reading this book. It is so funny. If you need a funny book, this is the one for you today. Or if you got to give somebody a funny book for Christmas that loves to read, this is the one. And she brought us a caramel cake. What a gift!

So I cannot wait for you to hear this conversation with my friend, Ellen Skrmetti.

**[00:01:22]** <music>

**Anne:** All right.

**Ellen:** I have chills.

**Anne:** Oh wow. The seller picture, I just saw it.

**Ellen:** The seller picture. And when you said we don't want numbers. Because that was my prayer too. It was, you know, Lord to send the right people to my page. Send the people to my page that can elevate this. That would see that we'll see what I'm doing here. That's part of the reason why never followed trends because I wanted to be seen as a writer. And I thought, you know, the people in the business will say like, "Oh, this girl can write sketches, this girl can write things" as opposed to just being the voiceover artist.

And there's nothing wrong with that. Everybody has their own path. But my path was I wanted to be a writer and a comedian.

**Anne:** Of books or of... I mean, when you're thinking that, are you thinking SNL?

**Ellen:** I wanted whatever the Lord put in front of me and-

**Anne:** Nothing else.

**Ellen:** Nothing else. People will say, Oh, this time next year you're going to be on tour or about this time next year, you're going to be here. And I'm like, I'm going to be wherever God puts me. I have enough experience, the Lord and I, to understand that if this time next year if I'm not on some major blockbuster tour, there's a reason. And it may be years down the road that I realized.

Because now I realized the reason why when my kids were so little, this never could have happened. They needed me. We had moved. We lived in Jackson, Mississippi. We lived in Nashville for a year.

**Anne:** I love you writing about Nashville in the book.

**Ellen:** Yes. And then we've lived in Birmingham. My kids were little and my husband was traveling, building his sales career and he needed me at home so he could travel. Now he is in a position that he can call... He called his boss, who's a very good friend who came to see my show in Fort Worth, "Hey, Mark, look, Ellen's book is coming out. She's got these stops to make. I really want to be there on the book tour with her, with the family." "Okay. No problem."

**Anne:** Wow.

**Ellen:** Whereas years before he was lower on the totem pole and would have had to really work to maneuver that. And they were able to say, "Yeah, go, go have a good time." He managed to get the work done. So we're just in a much better position that now Tim can stay home.

People always ask my husband, "What do you think of all this? What do you think of Ellen traveling?" And he says, "She held it down for me and I'm holding it down for her now."

**Anne:** Wow. Do you ever watch Fortune Feimster? I think.

**Ellen:** I love her.

**Anne:** She's so funny. When she does her Southern woman, her husband's name is Tim.

**Ellen:** Yes.

**Anne:** Tiem.

**Ellen:** I was like, I can't remarry. Sometimes I will go, "Tim, I need some turquoise." Tiem.

**Anne:** It's so funny.

**Ellen:** It's so good. I'm like, of course, her comedy husband is a Tiem. I've got a Tiem. I love it.

**Anne:** I found you on the internet. You were served to me in discovery feed. Bless God. I'm thankful. I'm so curious. You write about it a little bit in the book. The book's called, *Hey Jesus, It's Me*, which is what your videos, audio videos are. But you're not usually talking on a banana. You're just talking on a channel changer.

**Ellen:** That is true. Every picture we took, I would bring my remote control. Our art director, they said, Listen, let's just try a couple. So we would do the shots that we thought we'd got the shot and then we'd go like, "Oh, great. Hand me the banana." And then we had a leapfrog phone and we would take it with a leapfrog phone. We left thinking that the cover was going to be me in a pink top, yellow background. We loved these pictures in the black. As we were leaving, she goes, "You know, that's not going to make it because when you came out, everybody said, Ooh, look at this Manhattan mom. You look so sophisticated."

But when the pictures came-

**Anne:** That is true. That is like a Manhattan mom vibe.

**Ellen:** Yes.

**Anne:** Fascinating.

**Ellen:** But when the picture came out and they started putting things together, the pink background, the black, and then the yellow, it just popped. I wish everyone knew that I used a remote control. But they were like, not everyone can tell that that's a remote and not a phone. So they needed something that would automatically resonate that-

**Anne:** This is not a phone.

**Ellen:** And this is a funny book and we're using a banana.

**Anne:** There you go. One of the things I love about what you do, and this is true of Leanne Morgan, and other friends of ours, but I'm thinking about the recent conversations we've had, is what makes you so beyond funny is you are just talking about what you know.

**Ellen:** Yes.

**Anne:** I mean, your comedy is so perfectly Southern. It absolutely kills me every time. Every time. How did you decide that was funny? How did you know that would be funny to the rest of us?

**Ellen:** It took a lot. I think there's really not a lot in life I've realized it's harder than comfortable being yourself.

**Anne:** Say that.

**Ellen:** And figuring out what yourself is. A lot of my journey was trying to figure out what was my comedy persona. And I had this idea that I had to have a persona. When COVID happened and Second City had to transition into online classes, I started to take those. And it was those Second City teachers that I would write for. You had homework just like any other class. And they just said, "Ellen, you're enough. Your stories, you just tell your stories, and let's throw in some AB3 and some list. Just work on your timing. Let's work on that. But honey, you've got a well of stories."

The first reel that went viral was, "Grandma's not doing too good. So let me just go ahead and put that bug in your ear." Well, I just thought I had heard-

**Anne:** And what's viral? How many is viral? When did you start going, Oh, this is different?

**Ellen:** A very good thing for anyone who's listening, who's doing this, you have to determine what does "viral" mean to you. For me at one point it was getting 5,000 views. And you celebrate 5,000 views. You celebrate that. For this one, when that happened, it got 100,000 in a day, which was huge.

**Anne:** Oh, and then you knew.

**Ellen:** You were like, "This is going gangbusters. So TikTok, it got about a couple of million. And then Instagram took a minute. It took a few days for them to figure out like everyone to share it and the word to get out. And then it got well into the millions.

- Anne:** What were you thinking watching it? How do you put your phone down? The two times I had blog posts go viral, it's all you're looking at. You're like, what is happening?
- Ellen:** You're so consumed. It's crazy. And then you have to stay grounded because all of a sudden, just like in my Jesus Take the Wheel sketches, this feels good. This feel good, Jesus, you don't want to turn. No, you don't want to turn here. You start to kind of think that it's you. So you have to stay grounded and you've got to just keep doing what got you there.
- Anne:** You still got to make dinner for your family that night instead of being like, "Serve yourselves. I'm watching how viral I'm going."
- Ellen:** Right. 1 million views would just not supply dinner.
- Anne:** That's right. That's right. Now, did you get haters all of a sudden too?
- Ellen:** Oh, I had people tell me I was being so disrespectful.
- Anne:** And that didn't hurt your feelings or it did?
- Ellen:** It did. In the beginning, the hurtful comments would put me to bed.
- Anne:** Yes. Say that. People do not realize that "going viral", quote-quote is not all it's... I mean, I'm never pursuing that.
- Ellen:** Yeah. And I had a girlfriend once tell me, she said, I don't think I would ever want to go viral. And I said, "I'll tell you this. You do want to go viral for your craft. You want to go viral for doing something you love. You don't want to go viral for slipping downstairs and your underwear showing.
- Anne:** That's right.
- Ellen:** That is not good for anybody. Nobody needs to see that. Including your mama and her Sunday school class.
- Anne:** Thank you.
- Ellen:** But going viral for your craft is exhilarating. Going viral for doing something that you love, something that you wrote, something that you put out there. Because you were swimming... And I tell people, when you do this, you were swimming in the deep end of the ocean. And then when people start to make reels with your audio-

**Anne:** Does it make you lose your mind?

**Ellen:** It's a thrill. It was the goal. That was one of the goals was that I wanted to be the audio. And I don't write in terms of, oh, people will use this. It was just, wow, this would be really fun if somebody would use this. And it's so fun to see how different people will use it and what setups that they'll do. Like we have the audio, so now we can be a little bit more creative with it, you know? Or maybe they're full-time influencers so they have more than an iPhone and a pair of sunglasses, which is all I have.

**Anne:** You don't have a light or anything at this point?

**Ellen:** Um, no.

**Anne:** Well, you're just walking out on your back porch either way.

**Ellen:** You know, yeah, we've got that good Alabama lighting.

**Anne:** That's it. Man, that is so interesting. So you watch them go viral and then you go... in the dating world we're having a similar conversation as what you're saying. Not about going viral. Not interested. But of going like, The thing... I sat with teenagers this weekend and a 12-year-old asked a 13-year-old, "What are guys looking for?" She said, "No, let me change it." They're brother and sister. And she said, "I don't want to know what guys... I want to know what makes you crazy." And he said, "Whenever a girl is like trying so hard and just as everything and just pushing." And I was like, "Oh, you mean me until about three years ago". In every area.

But what you're saying is the most success you've seen is when you were fully you. And I would tell you the most success I've seen professionally, relationally, emotionally is when I'm just being Annie.

**Ellen:** Yes. In this world, I just made a decision that I was not going to follow trends. I don't care about trending audio. I know that maybe Instagram likes it when you do this and then put your stuff here and then do your hashtags here. I'm just trying to find crazy women and the men who love them. They'll find me and I'll find my audience and we'll all have fun together and let everyone else do the trends. And so, yeah, it's really fun just to be yourself.

The other thing is that the reel that got me, my book agent, who I call my book mother. I would tell anyone this, I tell everyone this, it is a reel that I first created in July. And it's the advanced maternal age where I tell Jesus, I don't want to be one of

them granny mamas. And at the end I say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. What if I don't want to?"

**Anne:** Oh God. When I tell you that got me so good. What if I don't want to?

**Ellen:** In October, I had been just creating new content every day, you know, just feeding the beast of Instagram with new content and I was tired and I needed a day off. So I reposted that. Once I had an audience, that original post got about 10,000 views and now it's gotten three and a half million.

**Anne:** Wow.

**Ellen:** So when I reposted, my very book mother's sister, she saw it, she sent it to her and then she sent me a DM. So check your DMs, everybody.

**Anne:** Everybody. Yeah, literally.

**Ellen:** Check her DMs. And she said, "I think you're very funny. I'm a book agent. Would you be interested in writing a book?" And my first thought was, "This woman better not be like Barbizon." I was like, "Lord, I'm 45 years old and if this is the Barbizon of book publishing for \$500 a month, you can be a model."

**Anne:** That's exactly right. Oh my gosh.

**Ellen:** And you're going to go to the mall-

**Anne:** It's at the mall. That's right.

**Ellen:** Ellen, we're going to sell your books at a mall. If that is what this is, help me just... we got to keep moving. We've got a lot to do and I don't know how long we have to do it. But I talked to her. She is one of the best in the business. I mean, she reps so many amazing people. But what she loves to do is find people on the internet and help them have a career. And she's the reason why I got in front of the top four publishers.

It's still so funny. And my friends laugh that the day I met with publishers was supposed to be a field day for my job. And so I would pull over and write in sales calls.

**Anne:** Oh my gosh. While you were talking to them?

**Ellen:** Yeah.

**Anne:** Oh.

**Ellen:** Because I had to come from Birmingham-

**Anne:** Do you still have a day job?

**Ellen:** No.

**Anne:** I mean, you do have a job, but you don't have a job in a career.

**Ellen:** Yes. This has been able to replace my career, but I was so worried because I didn't have a job that would be understanding or you don't know. They all say that they are until it's time for you to ask them to be understanding. So you just don't really... you can't... I don't trust them.

**Anne:** Long and short of it, Don't trust them.

**Ellen:** Don't trust them. Just be prepared. Try not to steal their time, but then also make sure that you're not letting them steal yours. So I would work on my book proposal while my children were asleep. And so, yeah, we still laugh about how I would pull over going from Birmingham to Nashville and would log sales calls.

**Anne:** It's incredible. What year was your first...? Was it COVID? I think people need to hear you're 45 and it's been... this has been the last four years?

**Ellen:** So I'm now 47. When I was 41, my husband gave me for my birthday stand up comedy classes, which a lot of people don't realize that comedians take classes or read books. I mean, it's a writing practice to learn how to take out as few words as possible and just to keep the funny, you know, between the setup of the joke to the punchline, you don't want a lot of words.

So he bought stand up comedy one, and then I took stand-up comedy too. And I had had stage fright when I was 18, I was in Miss Mississippi.

**Anne:** I love what you wrote in the book about pageants. So good.

**Ellen:** So good. They're so crazy.

**Anne:** They're so crazy. They're the best.

**Ellen:** Anyway, I'm so glad I was there to observe and report. But I literally prayed, "Dear Lord, if you will get me off the stage, I will never get on another one."



**Anne:** Oh wow.

**Ellen:** And I did my thing, I did my talent and I let that live.

**Anne:** Wow. Say that Ellen.

**Ellen:** Finally, I felt in my spirit. Because I remember people would say, you're so funny. You should do something. And I'm like, "I have stage fright. Can you believe?" And people go, "Can you believe this girl has stage fright?" And I was like, "Oh yeah, I can be funny for you, but I cannot get on stage."

And then one day I can still remember me driving in my car and I felt the Lord say, "I never took that bet."

**Anne:** Wow. I never took that bet. Oh, what a sweet sentence.

**Ellen:** That was the devil knew that if I ever got a hot mic and a bright light, I would give God glory. Then you get to deal with... so then you're like, okay, wait a minute, "Lord, you didn't take that bet. I don't have to be scared of that." So then if the devil can't get you one way, you know, it's like, I can't go over it. You can't go under it. You know, the devil's like, well, let me try this. "You're not Christian enough to talk about the Lord."

And I even had somebody, when I was reading the reviews of the book, which you should never read those unless they're like...

**Anne:** No. You're going to finish the story and I'm going to tell you my thoughts on reviews. I'm writing it down right now. Finish the story though.

**Ellen:** One said, "This book is overtly Christian. And then one person said, "If you watch her Instagram, it is Christian, but don't let that turn you off." I just had a lady the other day who said — she wrote a comment — "You used to be funny, but now you are a Bible-something wannabe influencer. Bye." And as much as we love to say that doesn't bother me, I've been thinking about that for three days. And you want to go, "No, that doesn't bother me."

**Anne:** That is me. That is what I meant.

**Ellen:** "That doesn't bother me." But literally I'm going, "You should have said that..." You know what you're thinking of all the things you should have said back. But on the other hand, I really can't say things back because as much as I don't like that lady, the Lord does.

- Anne:** Yeah, that's right. That's right. That's right. She matters to him.
- Ellen:** And so I can't-
- Anne:** And that tells you way more about her story than yours.
- Ellen:** Right. Just because you know how to write the words that will cut her off at the knees, you can't.
- Anne:** You can't. That's right. Did you grow up with sisters?
- Ellen:** No, I didn't. I have an older brother.
- Anne:** Okay. The benefit of growing up with sisters is you learn how to hone in saying the worst thing you could say in the least amount of words. And so I could do the same. I could cut the internet, slice it up, and set down one side and not the other. But we can't.
- Ellen:** We can't.
- Anne:** Okay. Let me tell you about reviews, new author. Editors are for authors, reviews are for readers.
- Ellen:** Thank you.
- Anne:** Because the reviews are important. We want our friends to write reviews. When they're done reading this, I want them to go write a review for you when they're done reading *Hey Jesus, It's me*. Because reviews help other readers know what they're getting into. Reviews don't help us. We've already finished the work.
- Ellen:** I can't go, Oh, well let me take out all the Jesus in my book called *Hey Jesus, It's Me*.
- Anne:** That's exactly right. So editors are for us. Editors are helping us create the work we believe in. Reviews are for readers.
- Ellen:** Yes. Perfect.
- Anne:** Don't read them anymore. I can't use Goodreads because I can bump into reviews when I'm not trying to.
- Ellen:** I was like, "Who sent my book to Goodreads, y'all?"

**Anne:** Thank you.

**Ellen:** Quit sending my book to these people.

**Anne:** That's right. That's right. I use Copper Books. I don't use Goodreads because I can't do it. Reviews aren't for us as the author. Reviews are for readers. So don't read those anymore. Don't serve you.

**Ellen:** Prayers for the lady that gave me one star.

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

[00:19:53] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Wayfair](#). 'Tis the season to be shopping all of the deals, so don't forget to add all the things you've been eyeing at Wayfair to your Christmas list.

Wayfair is the place to shop for all things home. They literally have everything from sofas at my house to spatulas at my house. You name it, they've got it. I have bought it from Wayfair. They also have styles that you can't find anywhere else. So you can make your home way more you, whatever your style is.

Right now, you can shop Wayfair's insane holiday deals and get up to 70% off during their Black Friday deals. You can also earn rewards and get the best savings in the neighborhood with Wayfair's new loyalty program, where you get 5% back on every item across Wayfair's family of brands, free shipping, members-only sales, and more. Terms apply.

Wayfair makes it easy with fast and free shipping, even on their big stuff. They'll even help you set it up. Listen, that has been a game-changer for me. There is a chair in my house in New York that I genuinely do not know how I would have gotten in my house if the Wayfair guys hadn't have done it for me. So don't miss out on big savings with Wayfair this holiday. Head to [Wayfair.com](#) now to shop Wayfair's Black Friday deals. That's [Wayfair.com](#).

That link and pretty much every other link you could ever hope for are in the show notes below, or we'll just send them straight to you on a Friday in the AFD Week in Review email. It hopefully is the best email you get week. So if you are not getting that yet, sign up today. That's also in the show notes below.

**Sponsor:** And one more incredible partner I get to tell you about, [Shopify](#). Advent is getting closer, and we're so excited to offer this brand new study this year *called Stay*

*Tuned.* Thanks to Shopify, we easily get to put the Advent guidebook in your hands, as well as all of the episodes and bonuses in this series that go right along with the guidebook.

You can find everything over at [AnnieFDowns.com/Advent](https://AnnieFDowns.com/Advent), where our e-commerce store is powered by Shopify. For millions of businesses, including a ton of other big names you know, like Allbirds, and Thrive Causemetics, and Magic Spoon, the behind-the-scenes magic is Shopify. Businesses that sell more sell on Shopify.

And maybe you've noticed when you're online shopping, one feature Shopify has is called Shop Pay, which boosts conversions up to 50%. What that means is way less carts go abandoned, so it equals way more sales. For business owners, especially small business owners like us here at AFD Inc., that matters a ton.

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

**Sponsor:** Okay, y'all, listen, my mattress at my Nashville home has lived quite a life. It had quite a life before it even came to live at my house. I got it from some friends who were giving it away, so it already had some use. And let's just say it is now sagging and lumping in all the wrong places. It's quite a tale you would really enjoy. So it was time for a new one.

I literally just got a brand-new [Helix mattress](#). I am so happy about it. I love Helix mattresses so much. It's amazing how good you sleep when you're not in a ravine in the middle of your mattress.

And you know I love stats, so listen to this. In a Westford sleep study using FDA-cleared clinical validated devices, Helix measured the sleep performance of participants after switching from their old mattress like me to a Helix mattress like me, and here's what they found. 82% of people saw an increase in their deep sleep cycle. Participants on average achieved 39 more minutes of overall sleep per night. Good gravy.

So y'all need to get on this. Get 25% off sitewide and two free dream pillows with any mattress purchase. Or you can get a free bedding bundle, which is two dream pillows, a sheet set, and a mattress protector with any Luxe or Elite mattress order. So start shopping at [HelixSleep.com/ThatSoundsFun](https://HelixSleep.com/ThatSoundsFun). That's [HelixSleep.com/ThatSoundsFun](https://HelixSleep.com/ThatSoundsFun).

Okay, now back to our conversation with Ellen.

[00:24:33] <music>

**Anne:** The start of your book, you make a list. We're just going to go through the list and I want you to do some expounding.

**Ellen:** Okay.

**Anne:** You said "this book is for you if." And when I tell you every one of these felt like my childhood and my whole life. First, you've ever said, let me put that bug in your ear. What does that mean? Do we put bugs in people's ears down here? No.

**Ellen:** No. I just want to go ahead and get you chewing on something.

**Anne:** That's right.

**Ellen:** Hey, Ellen... I can't remember how [inaudible 00:25:01]. Ellen, let me put a bug in your ear. Your daddy and I are going on vacation and we were thinking, would you maybe want to let us take the kids? You know, like something's coming up, I just want to go ahead and get you chewing on something.

**Anne:** Yeah. Yeah. That's right. Okay, the next one. You've heard who made the dressing, but it wasn't a compliment.

**Ellen:** Who made the dressing?

**Anne:** And what's the difference between dressing and stuffing?

**Ellen:** Okay. Stuffing gets stuffed in a bud and dressing is you take your... you have your cornbread and it is cooked in a 9 by 13. Yep. My mother would not know what to do if you didn't have dressing.

**Anne:** You know, we switched it up a couple of years ago. I just want to hear your thoughts on this. You don't have to love it. My grandmother's dressing is the recipe. So my mom knows it. My sister knows it. I do not know it. I do the dishes. I'm what you call a cups and ice person. And we'll get there. But my uncle and I really liked the crispy edges of the dressing. And so we did a muffin tins.

**Ellen:** Love it.

**Anne:** And it was great. Well, they won't do it again because everybody's stuck in the 9 by 13, but it was so good.

**Ellen:** It's like that special brownie pan.

**Anne:** That's exactly right. I need to get the brownie pan for the dressing this year.

**Ellen:** Yes.

**Anne:** That's 100% what I'm going to do.

**Ellen:** Get the special brownie pan.

**Anne:** Because I love crispy dressing. My mom and my sister loved the slushy.

**Ellen:** In the middle.

**Anne:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. But I love... okay, that's what I need. That's exactly what I need. Okay, you've ever sat in Sunday service and thought, surely some of these people won't make it to the sweet pie and buy with me? When you dig into this in the book and you rip up that man who had an affair and his wife came to church, surely you had to change your names, right?

**Ellen:** I had to change a lot.

**Anne:** Because you tell the story of like, it's-

**Ellen:** I'm going to tell you. And I let my brother read it. It's like three people combined.

**Anne:** Got it. So you have to do it that way. You have to do it that way.

**Ellen:** To protect the guilty.

**Anne:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. You know what Anne Lamont says. If they didn't want you to write about them, they should have behaved better.

**Ellen:** They should have.

**Anne:** But you also don't want to get sued.

**Ellen:** I have really heard a lot of times "I just wish he'd have found Jesus before he found her."

**Anne:** I've never heard that line before until I read it in the book. "I wish he'd have found Jesus before he found her." That is such a good line. But in that, when y'all are all

singing and they're singing along and you're like, there ain't no way you know these words.

**Ellen:** Yeah. Well, and then that also is a really great representation of a lot of times as Christians we forget that a church is a hospital, not a museum.

**Anne:** Wow. Wow.

**Ellen:** It's supposed to be full of broken people. It is not an exhibition of all the perfect. Oh, I tried a little chill there.

**Anne:** Me too.

**Ellen:** It's not an exhibition of all the perfect people. That's why at the end of the story I'm looking around hoping no one's saying the same thing about me. Because we are all imperfect. Some of our sin is more public and some of us have very private. Some of our sins are acceptable and some are not. Some people we can wrap it up in a bow and be like, Oh, it's not really that bad. But some of them break apart families and the whole town knows about it. Then also part of the... I'd always had... that's based on the sketch, you know, some of y'all. I said to a friend one time, "Oh, I just think he should be singing "when y'all get to heaven" because I don't think we had to worry about him.

**Anne:** Oh my gosh. Change the lyrics to "when y'all get to heaven" instead of "when we get to heaven". That's funny.

**Ellen:** And so I was trying to think like, how does that turn into a sketch? And it had been weeks. It had been weeks. And I go to church and the priest said, "Aren't we lucky that our cars have a huge window and a very small rear view." The other part of the message was about how aren't we also lucky that the Lord heals us in private.

I think sometimes when people do something awful or what we perceive to be awful, we want them in the town square and us to all be able to throw tomatoes at them until we think that they've suffered enough. But we don't know their internal struggle. Because we haven't seen it and we don't know what they've been through, we judge.

**Anne:** We want to activate justice.

**Ellen:** Yes.

**Anne:** Girl, I have never fantasized about a thing like I have fantasized about exercising justice on the women who've had affairs with my friends. And the Lord convicts

me of it every time. He goes, why do you know more than me? He's not that rude. But I mean, it is that feeling of like, hey, you don't know the whole story here. She's your sister too. Not my actual sister, but you-

**Ellen:** Still. And so a lot of times we want to be the person that does it and we-

**Anne:** So bad I can taste.

**Ellen:** There are people that I just like, Lord, just put them in front of me at the grocery store and I will hit the back of their legs on it.

**Anne:** I'll just clip their ankle. I'll just flat-tire them.

**Ellen:** Just let me clip their ankle one time. You know, I don't want to... And I'll go, "I'm sorry."

**Anne:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Ellen:** You know?

**Anne:** For me, it is probably one of... because I know I'm not perfect and I know I'm a sinner, obviously. I mean, that is 100% true. Everyone here knows that. And nothing makes me angrier than when I feel like justice isn't being served, particularly against people that I love. And so I want to clip them on the back of the heels too.

**Ellen:** Yeah, you do.

**Anne:** So when we get to heaven, we... yeah. I mean, the things we know are true is when we get to heaven, there's going to be people we are surprised to see there and people surprised to see us.

**Ellen:** Exactly. Exactly. So we just have to accept, we're all going to be like-

**Anne:** It's not all going to be running into Dolly and Reba. That's how it feels to me. I'm going to be like, I'm going to be friends with Dolly and Reba. And they're like, Also that girl from middle school that shoved you-

**Ellen:** She's going to be there too.

**Anne:** She's probably going be there too. So you have to deal with that. The next one on your list, your skills for uncovering the subject behind an unquote unspoken prayer request could be used by the FBI to solve. Listen, the people, the amount of people



who say unspoken. I wish you would think I didn't know, or I wasn't trying to figure it out.

**Ellen:** And now people just put them on Facebook.

**Anne:** And say unspoken?

**Ellen:** Yeah. "Please pray for me. It's unspoken." Uh-uh. Because I'm about to go, Mm-mm. I'm already on your husband's page.

**Anne:** "I'm already on LinkedIn. I don't think you and I get fired."

**Ellen:** Did you get... no, no, honey. I'm going to speak on it. I need to know. If you won't, I will.

**Anne:** "Speak on it." Lord, that's funny. Okay, you run fans in the dead of winter.

**Ellen:** Oh my gosh.

**Anne:** Now is that about the South or is that about our age?

**Ellen:** That's about the age.

**Anne:** Okay. Yeah.

**Ellen:** That is-

**Anne:** I'm 44. You're 47. Is that what you said?

**Ellen:** 47. If you're not doing fans yet, it's coming.

**Anne:** It's coming. There are nights where I wake up and I'm like, What just happened here? I was like, I wasn't going to wash my hair, but I had a marathon overnight.

**Ellen:** You did. And my husband has just accepted it. Like the first winter it happened, I think we're on our third winter of fans, and he was like, "Do you think like now that it's cooled down?" I was like, "No."

**Anne:** Is it just on your side?

**Ellen:** Yeah. It's just on my side. He's okay. But yeah, you just... You know, if you're perimenopausal, you'll enjoy this.

**Anne:** I went to my doctor recently, my primary care and I was like, We need to talk about perimenopause? She's like, no, just because the internet is talking about it does not mean we have to talk about it.

**Ellen:** Well, I will tell you, the menopause Bible by Dr. Mary Claire Haver-

**Anne:** Everyone's saying that's the one.

**Ellen:** It is the grownup American Girl's Care and Keeping of You.

**Anne:** Oh my gosh. Where's Molly when I need her?

**Ellen:** I mean, they should sell it-

**Anne:** Okay. Okay. The menopause Bible.

**Ellen:** They should sell it at the American Girls store.

**Anne:** Oh my gosh. For the mom. For the grandmas.

**Ellen:** For the mom. For the grandmothers.

**Anne:** For the aunts, the godmothers like me.

**Ellen:** Hey, just know you're going to... or just a, Hey, in the future, you're going to need this.

**Anne:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Go ahead and grab it. Why are both here? Oh, that is so funny. Okay, you brought a casserole to church social and have been cups and ice ever since. I'm telling you, I am cups and ice. Tell everybody what it means when you're the cups and ice.

**Ellen:** Well, cups and ice. Now, I can cook, but I am a cups and ice queen because I'm so busy.

**Anne:** Oh, okay.

**Ellen:** But cups and ice is just a very polite way of letting someone, please stop bringing your food.

**Anne:** Yeah, don't bring your food.

**Ellen:** Your dressing tastes like an eraser.

- Anne:** Your salads wilt too quick. Your potatoes don't have enough butter.
- Ellen:** We asked you to bring macaroni and cheese, you brought craft with the packets. No, ma'am.
- Annie:** I'm telling you when that happens at church, you've never seen a thing get left behind. You want to talk about left behind.
- Ellen:** We're all lucky that we just had a service, that we just had a service and we just had prayer because then you get... and my favorite too, is one time somebody just brought it and left it in the pot.
- Anne:** That is what I was just picturing that it did not even move to a thing. It's still in the silver pot with the black handle.
- Ellen:** Yes. They didn't even put it in a pretty dish. Like it was just kind of like, we're done.
- Anne:** And so then cups and ice it is.
- Ellen:** Well, good. We're going to put you on cups and ice.
- Anne:** I love being the cups. I'm like the cleanup person. I'm like, let me get every dish clean. I don't like being in charge of the food part.
- Ellen:** At my son's school, I am notorious because I bring on theme cups.
- Anne:** Oh, do you?
- Ellen:** Yes. Like we did a tailgate thing. I had tailgate-themed chili cups. I had cute little things to put the hot dogs in. I did everything. And I was like, I want to dominate cups and ice because I need this committee position.
- Anne:** Committee on committees, as you say.
- Ellen:** Yes. Committee on committees, bringing churches together. One committee.
- Anne:** So you got one more thing on this list. I did not know this was Southern. I thought this was always. Your granny died on a Monday and was in the ground by Wednesday. I thought you always had funerals right away.
- Ellen:** Yeah, no. Some people wait.

**Anne:** For what?

**Ellen:** I don't know.

**Anne:** And where is my granny staying that whole time? Just in the funeral home?

**Ellen:** Right. People are like, it takes us two weeks to call in the family. That was the great thing. I felt like I was bringing cultures together. Somebody said, thank you for pulling back the curtain on how y'all do this so fast.

**Anne:** Because then you just drop everything.

**Ellen:** Well, and your freezer's full.

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

**Ellen:** I talk about this in the book. I walked in on my mom one day after school and she had coconut cakes and pound cakes.

**Anne:** I love this.

**Ellen:** And I said, what are you doing? And she goes, somebody could be dying right now.

**Anne:** That is like so classic that there's... my mom had what she called the gift closet. And when you open this little closet at the bottom of the stairs, and there was four copies of this book and three candles.

**Ellen:** She's ready.

**Anne:** Always ready. If we're going to someone's house, if it's a teacher's birthday, just go get something out of the gift closet. It is the other version of having cakes in the freezer.

**Ellen:** Granny, her dress from McRae's is in the back of the closet. Her obituary's written. Both of my periods have already planned and paid for their funerals.

**Anne:** No.

**Ellen:** We just have to flip the switch. It's ready.

**Anne:** I did not know there were people who wait a week or two weeks.

- Ellen:** You've got to be sitting on ready, rocking on go. And somebody had said, they're like, this is so... you wouldn't say this if this was your X, Y, Z. I'm like, this is a 90-year-old grandmother. Like this is not a tragic... And two, I have learned that some people have an idea that the funeral is when the grieving ends. We hurry up and get you in the ground-
- Anne:** So we can move on. And that ain't it.
- Ellen:** No, no. The grieving truly begins after the funeral.
- Anne:** Because you have to hold it all together until that. That's the thing. I'm like, if y'all wait two weeks, are you just sitting in that awkward, terrible feeling for two weeks? Because I'm like, I'm so sad, but I'm about to have to hug everyone I've actually ever miss at this funeral.
- Ellen:** And that's how it was when Tim's mom died. His dad just didn't want to do it. And we sat there and listened to Barbra Streisand *You don't bring me flowers* for like nine days.
- Anne:** My gosh.
- Ellen:** It was so hard.
- Anne:** Yeah. Because the funerals I've been up close to, my family... You may know a story, but my nephew passed away two years ago, my grandparents, you get through that meal and then you start grieving.
- Ellen:** Fall apart.
- Anne:** You fall apart. But everybody's in the house and we got to get all this food and all the neighbors are bringing over and handing the castles, but someone's still gotta be standing there putting them in the right order because there is a right order.
- Ellen:** There is. Yes.
- Anne:** There is a right order at every, every spread.
- Ellen:** It ends with the desserts and it starts with appetizers. Like the deviled eggs, salads, meats, sides, desserts.
- Anne:** Bread after dessert sometimes.

**Ellen:** Sometimes. So to me, every single time I've been a part, an up close funeral, when that meal is done and you're eating leftovers for dinner is when everybody needs their space. It's when everybody's sobbing. It's when... I mean, that's when I've started sobbing to grief.

**Ellen:** I can still picture my mom when she got home from my grandmother's funeral, her mother, and I can picture her just falling into the chair. Her father passed away years before and she goes, "I am in my 60s and I'm an orphan." But she held it together. Like you hold it. We hold it together, straight-faced, we get through these next three days and then you can break up for that.

**Anne:** And then you can break up for that. That's what I thought. If you're waiting nine days, I don't have the constitution.

**Ellen:** I was not raised to break for nine days and then I can't wait nine days.

**Anne:** That's right.

**Ellen:** How about we just get them in the ground and let me break in three days?

**Anne:** That's exactly right. We'll be eating these leftovers for a while and everybody's dish has got their name on the bottom with tape and we'll get it back to them. We'll wash them and get them back. It is something else. This whole book, I just can't wait. I'm so glad people get to read it and it's out and available to them because it is so enjoyable. I need to bring up some of my favorite things. Oh, speed of funeral, done.

I need you to know, I cannot... I read every book of anybody who's on here and Lillian has not heard me laugh out loud. Like she was like, "You are giggling this entire book." I was like, "I cannot stop laughing." But one of your section titles is, *Can you ghost your family in heaven?* Can you ghost your family in heaven? Will you please talk about that? Can't we ghost our family in heaven?

**Ellen:** We're like, "Oh, I can't wait to go to heaven and get to see my grandma." Okay, but for how long? Can I go ride around with my friends after that? Can I go on a date? How long? Oh, I can't wait to see my grandma. You know, like, is she going to ask me about my weight?

**Anne:** Oh gosh.

**Ellen:** You know, is she going to do the hug where she touches my love handles in the back?

**Anne:** Right. Lord, why do they all do that?

**Ellen:** How reunited will we be?

**Anne:** What's it going to actually be like? What is your favorite story in here? Is there one that you're like, I'm so glad this is in the book?

**Ellen:** Where are my [hoes?] at?

**Anne:** Oh, gosh.

**Ellen:** I called my agent and I was like, You have to keep that in the book. Just because I love the title. I just love talking about the history of the pantyhose.

**Anne:** And how we used to... I need you to know I have this visceral memory of crossing from the second building of the church to the first building of the church. And I was in my growing years.

**Ellen:** Growing.

**Anne:** My awkward sixth to eighth-grade growing years.

**Ellen:** Yes, fun times.

**Anne:** And I had on pantyhose that I had probably bought in sixth grade and it was probably seventh and a half grade. And I'm walking and they are slipping down to my knees. Below the skirt I'm wearing was the top of the pantyhose when I was outside.

**Ellen:** That's so fun.

**Anne:** Can you picture that?

**Ellen:** I pictured it.

**Anne:** And I think they were control top. And so I think that was happening.

**Ellen:** I remember one time my mom was like, well, you do your pantyhose first and then your underwear so they don't come down. And that was the worst Sunday of my life. That was the hardest Sunday at church.

I will tell you there's a line in the book and it was about a week before it was time for me to turn it in, and I was feeling a nudge. And I remember saying, "Lord, I'm

going to go in here and write. But if you want something else, you're going to have to send the words." Because there was something I had taken out. Let me see. Let me see the book and figure out which one it is. It's a pageant one. And I wasn't quite sure how to do it because I didn't want to... When I wrote this line, I just looked up and I went, That's what you wanted in here. It was the line in the book where I say, And that's when I realized that being pro-life means being anti-shaming the mother."

**Anne:** Wow. Right.

**Ellen:** Because there was a young lady who was pregnant who had to publicly give up her title-

**Anne:** Because she was pregnant.

**Ellen:** Because she was pregnant.

**Anne:** Wow.

**Ellen:** She could have had that taken care of. None of us would have known. No one would have known. She would have gone on to Miss Mississippi. I just cry thinking about her. Because as if being a young unwed mother isn't hard enough, she gets to put on the Scarlet A and go, "Oh, Hey everybody. Let's make sure everyone knows what's going on." And she had her baby and she chose life.

So many times I see like we... if we want women to choose life, we have to understand that we all know that there's a line between celebrating and like, Oh, I'm so glad you did that. But we do have to love and celebrate a woman that has chosen life. That was the line that I was like, okay, that's it. We're putting that in there. We need to love these women.

**Anne:** That is one of the gifts you offer in this book is it is so... I mean, as I said, I laughed the entire time and also you preach. You preach at us. But I think you do it in the sneaky Jesus way.

**Ellen:** I call it "I like to hide the medicine." You know?

**Anne:** Yeah. You do that really well.

**Ellen:** Thank you. Thank you.



**Anne:** Why? Why doctors don't hide medicine? Why do you want to hide medicine? I agree with you, by the way. I'm not pushing against you. I want to hear you talk about it more.

**Ellen:** Someone asked me one time, they said, okay, had you rather be on a comedy stage with, you know, Chris Rock and Kevin Hart, Shonda Pierce, or whoever? I was like, oh, I mean, I love Chris Rock. I would love to do that. And they're like, Why? I said, Because I want to go in there and I want to make you all laugh and then I want to tell you about the Lord. So I want you to buy my book and I want you to go... Oh, and by the way, I'm having a really good time. Like all of this is because of my walk with the Lord.

I started the Hey Jesus, I did the first one and I was like, that was really fun. And I thought, "You know what? This could be a good way to show people that you can have fun as a Christian. Because so many times we see people who haven't had fun. And I know that there are people who've had church trauma. They've had people who have told them like, yeah, you're a Christian, but you're living this way. So you're not really... like you're not enough. Or they've just been told that they're too much or they're not enough and all this stuff. And I just wanted people to see someone who is delighting in the Lord, who's having fun and living their life.

So it is just I do worry that I'm not enough, but I have to remember and just ask, okay, but Lord, am I doing enough for you? And not worry about the person who sees one isolated reel and says, Oh, she calls herself a Christian.

**Anne:** I've had to come to terms pretty painfully with how much I love serving the church and I love, I love doing work for Christians and I really want people to get saved. I really want people that I love and that I don't know to experience Jesus through the work we do. And sometimes those are at odds with each other. And who you lose are the Christians. And that has been so painful to have my teammates be unhappy with me for decisions that we feel like we've made that will draw people who don't know Christ closer to them.

That doesn't mean I'm always right but it's the decision we hope we've made. So there are times when I've done this wrong, but it is so heartbreaking to feel like I've upset my own people when the heart behind it was to reach people who don't know who Jesus is.

**Ellen:** So were they wanting you to keep with a status quo?

**Anne:** Yeah. Just to probably to be more overt and to like not ask some of the questions and push into some of the curiosities. And that's okay. That's okay that they feel that way. That is the thing that makes me the most sad. People can be mad at me

over the internet for things and that's okay. But when it's our own sisters and it is, I'm disappointed in you, you know, it's very, "I'm really sorry. I'm trying my best. I don't know."

**Ellen:** I mean, Annie, I'll tell you one of the scariest titles and the title I run from is Christian comedian.

**Anne:** Though it feels like that genre really is doing well. Does it keep you from reaching people who don't know the Lord?

**Ellen:** I prefer to call myself a comedian who's also a Christian.

**Anne:** Yeah, that's it.

**Ellen:** I feel like once you say I am a Christian comedian, there's this idea that maybe like all of your jokes are supposed to be based on the Bible. Everything's supposed to be that. But I'm telling jokes on my life and sometimes the joke comes from going to school and my humor just comes from everything. And also, in most cases, no one's tougher on a Christian than another Christian.

I don't really get booked into... and I may now, I don't know. But I don't get a lot of calls to come to churches.

**Anne:** You don't?

**Ellen:** Mm-mm.

**Anne:** Dear churches, what are you...? Let me tell you, every woman pastor listening to this is going to your website right now.

**Ellen:** But if they do, they're like, we know that you do stand up and we know that you do this, but can you see a film? They're like, can you give us a... we need a reel of you at a church. And I'm like-

**Anne:** Oh, interesting.

**Ellen:** No. Do you see me on Instagram? Do you see this? I can tell you like these people who also really like me and they just-

**Anne:** Endorse me.

**Ellen:** Yeah. I've got endorsements from people of other places that I've been. Or I give them my rate and then they ghost you. Which is fine. I only have... and this is for

anyone out there, and you know, this too. There are only 52 Saturdays a year and I have two kids. So if I'm not going to be with them, I want my rate-

**Anne:** And it's your job.

**Ellen:** It's my job. This is my job. My rate is based on what I get when I do a show. I didn't pull the rate.

**Anne:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I didn't make it up. I mean, that's why we have agents for all that. It's because they tell us.

**Ellen:** Like I didn't just make it up. This is what I make when I go and do a thing. Obviously, I can do my standup set. I can talk about praying bold prayers. I can talk about pivoting your life. But I'm like, that's okay. Like they may never want me and that's okay. I'm still going to love them. It's still going to make them laugh through books and internet, like no matter.

And that's the reason why too, why I say like, I don't know where I'll be in a year. The Lord... this could be what opens the floodgates of talking to women's groups or the Lord could be like, no, I want you in the clubs or I want you to go on a comedy tour because you're going to hit people that don't know they're coming to church.

And that's what I told my friend, Jody Burt. I said, you know, Jody, I like a comedy club because people come and they know they're going to come laugh, and we're going to slide in a little bit Jesus.

**Anne:** Yeah, that's right. You're in good company of clean comedians right now who are doing really good work. I mean, Nate, obviously is such a great example, but-

**Ellen:** Leanne Morgan.

**Anne:** Leanne, John, I mean, Dustin Nickerson, Mike that went on tour with me. I mean, there are so many really funny people that are doing work that matches what they believe.

**Ellen:** And I felt like I needed to do comedy that my mom could bring her Sunday school class too. And she does.

**Anne:** So good. They still live in Mississippi.

**Ellen:** Yeah. Yeah. They're in Ripley, Mississippi. So in Birmingham, I can get to them in about two and a half hours. It's perfect. My mother's so proud. We were doing a

book signing at White's Mercantile and I did a live. I was like, Mom, whose book is this? And she goes, It's our book.

**Anne:** Oh, that is so sweet.

**Ellen:** It's ours.

**Anne:** That was so sweet.

**Ellen:** She's so sweet.

**Anne:** That is really kind.

[00:51:03] <music>

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And now back to finish up our conversation with Ellen.

[00:55:00] <music>

**Anne:** I got to teach at Cross Point a couple of weeks ago about where your faith and your work meet. And that lights me up. I love talking to people about being in the mainstream, being in the marketplace, but being a fan. I'm like, we are the aroma of

Christ. Every club you go into, it smells different because you're there. And that is so fun.

**Ellen:** And when you go there... like I pray before I go on stage. And I would have to say that every comedian you just mentioned is saying a prayer. And I'm just like, Lord, if there's something that somebody needs to hear, make that come out of my mouth. Because make no mistake when you're doing stand up, you are driving 60 miles an hour down the highway. So once you start stuff just comes out of your mouth. And I love it when it's over and a woman comes up to me and goes, "I needed to hear that. You said this, and this is what I needed." And I love that. And they had a great time and they joked and then they're going to tell their friends and they're going to come and just more people.

And we have this idea. I have a niece and a nephew who are nurses. My nephew everyone thought he should go into the ministry. I love that he was steadfast. He is a nurse and he was working on his nurse practitioner. He's a minister. He is a nurse. He is right there where people need a Christian. And he has led people to Christ. He has prayed with people. So you don't have to be in a church to let your light shine.

**Anne:** That's it. That's it. Isn't that the best? Aren't we so lucky? I mean, I love the idea that we change the atmosphere where we go. I think that is so fun. I'm like, I want to go into places that where the smell changes because we showed up. I love it.

**Ellen:** And then I also love that someone said, "Ellen, I am a gay Jewish man and I love you." And I said, "I am a straight Christian woman and I love you right back."

**Anne:** That's it. That's right.

**Ellen:** And people are like, "Is it okay that I'm of this religion and I love you?" I'm like, "It is absolutely okay."

**Anne:** For sure.

**Ellen:** It is okay. Yes.

**Anne:** Yes. Okay, here's how we're going to finish.

**Ellen:** Okay.

**Anne:** For starters, we're going to make sure people get, *Hey Jesus, It's Me*. It's so good. I'm telling y'all, I read it in the afternoon. It is not like a research-level read. It is a friendly conversation read and it is laugh out loud, funny. You and Sophie to me are sisters from different Mississippi misters.

**Ellen:** Yes, we are.

**Anne:** I love y'all. So we got to end like this though. Football season is on us. Everybody's watching games. You're Ole Miss.

**Ellen:** Mississippi.

**Anne:** Oh, you're Mississippi state. Oh yeah. You and Sophie, exactly the same Mississippi state.

**Ellen:** I will talk kindly about their tailgating. I know that they have a better tailgate.

**Anne:** That's what I want you to talk about. What is our recipe this year? Have you launched anything new? What are we doing at tailgates that we need to talk about today?

**Ellen:** Okay. Something we need to talk about. People are putting, and I agree with this, people are putting a little bit of pimento cheese in their sausage rolls.

**Anne:** Are they? What are you talking about? We're trading out the shredded cheddar for pimento cheese?

**Ellen:** Honey, we have a little devil-may-care attitude-

**Anne:** Are we full out subbing out the cheese or is it a [inaudible]?

**Ellen:** There are just a few women of the Lord who are subbing out pimento cheese for the shredded cheese in there. And you know what?

**Anne:** Wow.

**Ellen:** Here's the thing too. With a sausage ball, that's got to be a spirit-led decision on the cheese. You just got to look at the consistency. Do we need a little bit more?

**Anne:** That's right. That's not measured. But that's fresh shredded. I'll tell you that much.

**Ellen:** You gotta do fresh shredded.

**Anne:** Don't you dare.

**Ellen:** Don't you come at me with that bug stuff.

**Anne:** Come on. And then people say they rinse it off. I'm like, Disgusting.

**Ellen:** Why? You could have just shredded it.

**Anne:** You could have just shredded it. Keep going.

**Ellen:** So yeah, I feel like that right there.

**Anne:** I'm writing it down. I have never thought of that. I bet that's delicious.

**Ellen:** It's got to be delicious. I'm seeing that. The other thing is I feel like, you know, we have all this TikTok food and we have all of these grocery stores, but people have just forgotten the simple art of equal parts, cream cheese, sour cream, throwing a little ranch, throwing a little bacon, throwing a little tomato, you know, just the simple art of let's just throw that together. Turn it into a taco dip. Put in a little taco seasoning.

I know that TikTok is not celebrating a block of cream cheese and eight ounces of sour cream.

**Anne:** They're celebrating cucumbers. Cucumbers are having a moment.

**Ellen:** A moment.

**Anne:** And I'm like, I've never had that at a tailgate. I've never seen a cucumber that I wanted at a tailgate. I've seen the Kroger container of broccoli, but that's because the mom had to have that at the game.

**Ellen:** We have to keep the flame, Annie, because right now too, this started last year, two years ago, where people are trying to tell us that if you're in charge of the dessert at Thanksgiving, you can go buy a Costco pie and you can cut it out with your cookie cutter. And you could just serve that with ready whip on top. And that is awful.

**Anne:** That's awful.

**Ellen:** That's not religious.

**Anne:** That is awful.

**Ellen:** That is awful. Straight to jail.

**Anne:** You can eat that if you want. Just don't call it your Thanksgiving dessert.



- Ellen:** And what is this dessert singular? It's Thanksgiving desserts.
- Anne:** Thank you. Thank you. That's exactly right.
- Ellen:** Desserts.
- Anne:** That's exactly right. It's more than one every time.
- Ellen:** We are 20 people coming, we need 20 desserts.
- Anne:** I need you to know that sausage balls are our Christmas breakfast. Sausage balls and monkey bread. I'm doing this. Nobody's going to see it coming because none of my family listens to my show. No, my parents do. My parents do.
- Ellen:** But don't y'all compete?
- Anne:** Do you have an idea of what we should do this year? Someone suggested flatbreads. I think I'm uninterested in that. We've done dips. We went Merry Dipmas last year and we have done... we did a butter board, which I thought I was going to do very good on because I kind of did a croque madame butter board and I lost. I came in last.
- Ellen:** Have you thought about an icing, a buttercream board?
- Anne:** No. Well, some people did do dessert that year. The winner that year was a cinnamon spread.
- Ellen:** Okay. Do you always do monkey bread?
- Anne:** Every Christmas morning, monkey bread and sausage balls.
- Ellen:** Okay. That's what I think you should do. You need to take the yeast roll recipe in my book because it's the...
- Anne:** Oh yeah. You dropped recipes on recipe cards. That was a blessing.
- Ellen:** You need to take the recipe card recipe. Call me if you have any questions. The editors tried to like Food Network TV it. And I was like, these recipes are not for everybody. Some of y'all need to be on flowers. And there's nothing wrong with flowers. You know, sometimes these women who take these things... if you know your zone, if you know what zone you live in and what kind of azaleas you can do, please stop baking. Please do that. The church needs you on that.

- Anne:** We need someone to bring us flowers.
- Ellen:** I don't know my zone, but I can make my mama's yeast roll from this recipe in the book. So I think you should do my mother's yeast roll recipe.
- Anne:** Okay.
- Ellen:** How about this? What if y'all did a cinnamon roll competition and you could use the cinnamon roll? And then you could do...
- Anne:** Do we give everybody? No. What's the control? Everybody's got to have a control. Like the butter year, I gave everybody two sticks of butter. What's our control? Do they all have to use cinnamon? Does it all have to be savory?
- Ellen:** It all has to be cinnamon.
- Anne:** It all has to be cinnamon. So I give them the cinnamon sugar and then they can add whatever else.
- Ellen:** Whatever else. But then you're going to make it with my mother's yeast roll recipe.
- Anne:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's going to take me ahead.
- Ellen:** And then you're going to roll it out. You're going to do more butter and cinnamon sugar than you think you need and you're going to roll it out. And then you're going to do a homemade buttercream on top. Okay.
- Anne:** Yeah, that's it. That's what we're going to do. I'm kind of in charge in some fashion of portions of our holidays. This won't surprise you, you know, my personality. I'm in charge of the pajamas and the tournaments. So these are my categories. Actually, I'm in charge of the gift draw too. I'm in charge of the fun stuff. The food? Couldn't tell you the first thing besides the tournament.
- Ellen:** I know you're trying to wrap this up, but I'm also thinking, would you also want to maybe... You're going to need to do a dry run. I'm thinking a little orange run. I'm thinking you get a little orange zest.
- Anne:** And put it on top or put it inside?
- Ellen:** Inside.
- Anne:** Inside. I'll do a test run of that.

- Ellen:** And then maybe you could also do a little bit of orange in your icing.
- Anne:** I'm only in a hurry because you brought us a caramel cake that I'm going to get to eat.
- Ellen:** Because, well, you can't come empty-handed.
- Anne:** Your caramel cake story in here about your grandmother not teaching anybody because she wanted someone to be with her. My same sister who knows my grandmother's... My grandmother's sister, Aunt Mary. Aunt Mary's caramel cake is the one. And Tatum is the only one who knows how to do it. I've heard grandchildren may know, but of our family, Tatum's the only one who knows how.
- Ellen:** I was so stupid. I was 19 when I went and I'm like, You're going to live forever. You're never going anywhere. And then she died. And truly I was like, ma'am, where is it? And she was like, "It's in the red folder. You'll be fine. It took me 17 drops."
- Anne:** Wow.
- Ellen:** And I'm like, "Okay, yeah, we'll be fine." We get to her house and there's like a gazillion different recipes. But thankfully, sweet Miss Bonnie Jones, she went to my mother's house and she wrote everything down. And I will do real...
- Anne:** That's what Tatum did too. Tatum wrote down how Aunt Mary did it.
- Ellen:** Then the copywriters were trying to like food TV this. And I was like, I am giving you the actual letter that Miss Bonnie sent to my mother. And these are Miss Bonnie's directions. And I promise you that if the Lord means for you to be the caramel cake lady, the first time will be a mess because you've got to learn your oven. It's a dance.
- Anne:** You have to learn your oven. You have to learn your stove.
- Ellen:** And you've got to figure out like, oh, that is the softball stage. I mean, you've got... these are things that you have to know that TikTok food has us thinking that we don't have to know that. Here's an easy way to make caramel. What if we just...
- Anne:** What if I don't want to put that can of condensed milk? Get out of here. I can't with that stuff.
- Ellen:** What if we just learned to do things in a softball stage?

- Anne:** That's right. That's right. That's right. I need to make my sister get on making those again. She has not made the caramel cake in a while.
- Ellen:** So what's in there is truly the letter... That is the letter that Miss Bonnie Jones sent to my mother after my grandmother died. And she talked about that event, like let her take the cake home, asked her about her family, the best afternoon ever. And I'm like, that's my grandmother. That's it. That's her.
- Anne:** I got to tell you, my mama made a family cookbook. Now we are all Georgia, Alabama. We're all Georgia, Alabama. That's it. That's everybody. So the whole cookbook is Southern. I'm going to get you one. It is beyond. It is so good. I love it. I gave it to some friends in California and the husband said, this has a lot of mayonnaise and shrimp.
- Ellen:** You're welcome.
- Anne:** That is one of my favorite quotes is that my mother's cookbook, lots of mayonnaise and shrimp.
- Ellen:** My mother did one. It was her Christmas present. My dad paid for the printing.
- Anne:** Oh, wow.
- Ellen:** Because it was all of her friends. It was her and her friends cook recipes. Because I talk about, I can remember people calling wanting one of my mom's recipes. And all of her recipes are things that either came from Southern living or her friends. And she's like, I don't want to make money off my friends. So my dad paid for the printing. So then that way my mother could donate all the money to the My Choices Pregnancy Center in our town.
- Anne:** Sweet.
- Ellen:** Sometimes we'll do a screenshot and my friend was like, "I can't remember the last time I saw accent." Were you watching Sophie Hudson when she was teaching, when she was Weeda Wednesdays, and doing her mother's recipes?
- Ellen:** No, but that sounds-
- Anne:** It was beautiful. She would show the ingredients and it was half dairy every time. Shredded cheese, cream cheese, sour cream. Every time it was half dairy.
- Ellen:** I'll take it all.

**Anne:** It is the best.

**Ellen:** My mother always said that if she ever wrote her a cookbook cookbook that it would be called You Start With a Pack of Cream Cheese.

**Anne:** There was a guy on TikTok when I used to be able to have it and have some self-control, I've never had self-control with it. And he would pair with a recipe, a crock pot recipe. And he'd say, I'll talk to you until the cream cheese gets here. And then it would cut off as soon as the cream cheese bucket, he dropped in, he'd say bye. And that was the end of the video. It was so good.

**Ellen:** That is genius.

**Anne:** It was so funny.

**Ellen:** One time I wanted my mom to do... you know, when food TV... I love you food TV, but Food TV had us thinking that you were supposed to do an entree, three sides, and a dessert at Thanksgiving, you know? And it was all beautiful. One year I came home from college, I was like, Mom, what if we did just not so much, you know, because I'm reducing and you're reducing, everybody's reducing? And she just looked at me and went, "I love my family."

**Anne:** Are our mothers the same? When I tell you, Ellen, we had the same conversation a few years ago. Mother was like, "What would I cut? Well, there's just so many leftovers-

**Ellen:** "But your daddy loves this."

**Anne:** "But your daddy."

**Ellen:** Your brother.

**Anne:** Yes. Y'all always eat it the next day.

**Ellen:** "And he'll eat all that squash. Honey, what am I going to tell him if I'm not going to have him in his squash?"

**Anne:** And we're just always like, "Pam, you are feeding 19 people and there's seven of us here." And it was offensive when we asked her to step down a little bit.

**Ellen:** "Well, Evan likes green beans. Allie will do this."

- Anne:** "Every year I make that exact same squash and zucchini casserole. What am I supposed to do?"
- Ellen:** Tim and I like artichokes, Ellen. So I'm doing some artichokes for me and Tim. Tim.
- Anne:** That's exactly right. Oh, Ellen. I love you so much. Thank you so much for coming.
- Ellen:** Thank you.
- Anne:** Please come back anytime.
- Ellen:** 55 will t-
- Anne:** Nobody cares. Everyone's having a great time.
- Ellen:** Okay, good.
- Anne:** You are so fun. Thank you for being here.
- Ellen:** Thank you for having me.
- Anne:** I appreciate it.

[01:09:03] <music>

**Outro:** Oh, you guys, isn't she the best? Oh my gosh. She just makes me laugh so hard. She is so funny and her heart is so pure and she is just the kindest. She is the kindest. So go get your copy of *Hey Jesus, It's Me* and go follow Ellen on social media, tell her, thank you for being on the show.

If you enjoyed this episode, I promise you're going to love Episode 922 with Leanne Morgan. So make sure you go listen to that one next. If you have any questions from this episode, just drop them in the Q&A box on your Spotify app, if you're a Spotify listener like me, or you can send them to us on Instagram @ThatSoundsFunPodcast, 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. And guess what? We're on TikTok, Annie F Downs TSF. I know, I know, I know. So if you're on TikTok, you can follow us there. Anywhere you need me, this 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. Today what sounds fun to me is being back in Nashville with my people. I've got to get some Baja burritos. So that sounds fun to me. I'm ready for Baja burrito.

Y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday with a really important conversation with our friend Lisa Bevere. We'll see y'all then.

**Eric:** I'm Erick Stakelbeck, host of the Stakscast podcast. If you want truth and a bold take on what's happening in our world, then listen to the Stakscast now. From thought-provoking conversations about the current state of America, the impact of global events, and issues facing the body of Christ, this podcast brings you today's biggest topics that affect your life. Make sure to follow the Stakscast on your favorite listening platform and join me every Tuesday as we have candid, thought-provoking conversations on issues that matter to you.

**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.

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