

[00:00:00] <music>

**Annie:** The post-holiday sugar crash is real in my life. And let's be honest, finding snacks that have clean ingredients can be tough. But that's why I'm so grateful for [Thrive Market](#). They make it simple to find healthier swaps. And Thrive Market takes the guesswork out because all of their products are 100% non-GMO and free from over a thousand harmful ingredients.

Ready for a junk-free start to 2025? Head to [Thrivemarket.com/ThatSoundsFun](https://Thrivemarket.com/ThatSoundsFun). And my friends get 30% off your first order plus a free \$60 gift. That's [Thrivemarket.com/ThatSoundsFun](https://Thrivemarket.com/ThatSoundsFun).

**Intro:** Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun: The Seasons. I'm your host Annie F. Downs, and I'm so happy to be with you today.

Today on the show, we are answering the question, where is God in the winter? And I get to talk with someone I've been longing to have on the podcast, Pastor Tyler Staton from Bridgetown Church in Portland, Oregon. He's also the national director of 24-7 Prayer USA. And you know we love to talk about prayer around here, particularly the Lectio 365 app. I love it. I love it. I love it.

Tyler is such a deep well on the topic of prayer. We're going to talk about: where is God in the winter? And as we do, we're going to talk about his relationship with prayer and how he's navigated praying in the middle of pain and a lot of unknown.

We also talk a lot about the Holy Spirit because Tyler has a new book releasing about the Holy Spirit. It is so good. Y'all, it is so good. It's called *The Familiar Stranger*, and this is one you are really going to love. I'm telling you, Tyler Staton's books are not to be missed, but *The Familiar Stranger* was a great read.

If you're taking notes in your TSF Seasons guidebook, we are on page 15. So here's my conversation with my new friend, Tyler Staton.

[00:02:11] <music>

**Annie:** Man, I am... I mean, we can roll. I am so thankful for the Prayer Room at Church of the City.

**Tyler:** Yeah.

**Annie:** When you make a place... y'all done this in Portland, too, and this is Lectio 365, too, Tyler, is when you make a place for people to pray, they practice praying.

**Tyler:** Yeah, agreed.

**Annie:** You know, the question we're answering today, particularly in this podcast, is where is God in the winter? Will you talk a little bit about your relationship with prayer and how prayer has served you in all the seasons?

**Tyler:** Yeah, absolutely. I think prayer is, in my opinion, and the opinion of church history, the foundational spiritual practice. It is what holds our relationship with God most profoundly.

Most people, when they say prayer they think of one expression or practice of prayer, and it's usually grounded in the tradition that you grew up in. So if you grew up in an evangelical tradition, when I say prayer, you probably think of like listing off requests and intercessions before God. If you grew up in a Catholic tradition, you probably think about praying prayers scripted for you by other people that you've committed to memory. Maybe if you're more from the Eastern tradition of the church, you think about silence and contemplation and learning just to be before the Lord.

But the truth is, prayer is all of those things and so many more practices. It's this beautiful, full-color palette by which we get to paint.

I would say different practices have become important to me during different seasons and different ways of being with God in prayer have been important to me in different seasons. But what hasn't changed is that the only way that I know how to live for joy at any particular chapter in my life is to find a way of communing with God, because life and life to the full is connecting every gift and pain to the giver of good gifts and the suffering servant. So my experience must be profoundly tied into the God who indwells my very being, or else I don't know how to live. And prayer is the medium by which I sort out how that all happens.

**Annie:** Yeah. So, particularly, I mean, you were very public about that you just went through a pretty significant cancer battle. You and your family moved across the country. I mean, you have had some... and things you haven't shared. You've had some winter seasons in your life. How do you keep praying? I mean, in your new book, *The Familiar Stranger*, you talk about a time where you couldn't pray or read and people were just sitting by you when you were getting chemo, praying and reading over you.

So I'm thinking about our friends right now who are like, man, I'm in the middle of winter, and the thought of praying feels like going to the one who's causing this. What do you say? How do you keep praying in the middle of the pain?

**Tyler:** I would say maybe just to give a quick bio. My family moved from New York to Portland. My wife became pregnant with our third child. She was pregnant when we showed up. That child was born with the most severe heart condition a child can be diagnosed with in utero and potentially survive. Survival is a coin flip. So we ended up living in the neonatal ICU for a month.

One of us would be living at home with our two children, two older children, the other at the ICU during our first year here in a brand new community. I went through a cancer battle at the most advanced stage that was attached to multiple vital organs and progressed very, very aggressively. So it was a very significant cancer battle as well.

So just a lot of things have come at us in these three years. If you were to say, how do you pray through that? I would say, how do you not? I don't know where else to turn to for hope or perspective or instruction or guidance than to God.

Theologically, I don't have any issue praying in the midst of pain. I don't believe that God was causing my son's diagnosis or my own. I know biblically speaking that God created a world without any death, mourning, crying, sickness, or pain. I know that in Revelation, the story ends with a world without death, mourning, crying, sickness, or pain. So I know that Jesus' kingdom, which was full of physical healing, is one of the renewal of the body, not the decay of the body. Therefore, my diagnosis was a consequence of the fall. It's not the divine will of God.

And God is so good that He redeems everything we face in this life that we bring to Him. And sometimes He redeems it in the miraculous way that I taste right now. Like being healed from cancer miraculously or instantly or in a non-medically explainable way.

But even when God doesn't heal that way, He always heals by, if we're willing to bring to Him our deepest pain, He redeems, which is a deeper level of healing. Which is to say, this was so awful that I never want to experience it again, and God did something in my soul so significant as I went through it that I can't imagine who I would be had this never been a part of my story.

So I would say, if you're in the midst of a winter season and you bring it to God, there are occasions where He just turns winter to summer in the snap of a finger. That happens all over the New Testament. But even when He doesn't, the new life that comes every spring is so good that you wouldn't have traded not walking through the winter.

And I know to some people, what you're going through at the moment, that will make you want to turn off this podcast right now and say, "You're ridiculous. You

don't understand." And maybe I don't. I'm just sharing what I believe to be what the Apostle Paul is talking about when he says in Philippians that we identify with Christ's resurrection and with His suffering and when he says in Romans 5 that God makes even our sufferings glorious, or we also glory in our sufferings, because we know suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, peace, you know, so on and so forth.

**Annie:** That Philippians verse, I've been thinking a lot about it and being like, "Yeah, I want to know Christ. I want to know Christ. I want to know Christ." And then you sit there... I mean, so many times in the last couple of weeks, Tyler, I've sat with the Lord and been like, "Okay, that's what I'm going for for 2025. I want to know Christ." And the Lord's like, "Keep reading." If you want to know Christ, the second half of that verse is to know His sufferings. I'm like, "Yeah, yeah, I don't want that part. Sorry, I just want A. I would like Philippians 10:3a or whatever it is.

**Tyler:** Sure.

**Annie:** Because it is hard to want to choose that. But you're right, that like first spring day when we get to go outside feels miraculous.

**Tyler:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Annie:** So your new book, when this came across my desk... I also loved your book on prayer, by the way. It was incredible.

**Tyler:** Thank you.

**Annie:** I read it last year in Hawaii and just cried my way through it. I thought it was really well written.

**Tyler:** Thank you.

**Annie:** *The Familiar Stranger*, your new book that comes out this week about the Holy Spirit, I was like, Oh, this is perfect. Because I would love for you kind of do the big vision of the Holy Spirit of like, Who is He in all of this? And when do we call to Him? When's the Holy Spirit part of our faith?

**Tyler:** When you say in all of this, do you mean in the winter seasons of our lives?

**Annie:** Yeah, do in the winter season and kind of just... we haven't talked as much about the Holy Spirit as we've talked about God and Jesus. So I also just want Him to get a proper introduction to His power and His work. And I feel like you're the dude to do it.

**Tyler:** Cool. Yeah. So let me try to answer that-

**Annie:** That's a lot. You're welcome.

**Tyler:** Biblically and personally. You know, biblically speaking, I would describe the Holy Spirit as the conduit between everything I already believe, and the experience of everything I already believe. In John 14 through 16, Jesus does His most extensive teaching on the Holy Spirit. It's the last night of His life. It seems really important to Jesus that He really hammers home what the apostles should expect on the other side of resurrection, and why it's an improvement to Him just sticking around with them.

And Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit five distinct times in this one explanation by the... the term is typically translated as helper or comforter in English and our English Bibles, but it's parakletos in Greek, which most literally means advocate. Another advocate, I will send to you. And Jesus more names the Spirit an advocate.

And so who is the Spirit advocating against? The deceiver. So all of us ultimately have this issue that we believe lies about God, lies about ourselves, lies about other people, lies about the very creation itself. And we know that the enemy of our souls is a creature, not a creator. So He has no clay to make things with. All He can do is warp and distort the clay that God has made things with. And we know that Jesus has defeated the power of sin over our lives.

And so the only trick the enemy has left is to deceive me from the full experience of all that Jesus has won for me. The Holy Spirit is the one who is advocating for me to go on working out my salvation until that becomes my full experience.

So a very practical example would be this. Most people, when they think about the Holy Spirit, think about the conduit of a set of magical powers that God gave the early church to show how legit the message of Jesus is. And the Holy Spirit really is the conduit of prophetic ministry and supernatural healing and all those sorts of things.

But the primary mechanism of the Spirit is to deepen your experience of the basic things that you believe, but have trouble living into the reality of on a given week. So if you were to say, Tyler, do you believe that your standing before God is based on His forgiveness and grace or your merit and perfection? I would say it's absolutely based on His forgiveness and grace.

Last night, I had a moment parenting my middle child that I really wish I could do over because I think I just didn't handle it great. If you were to ask me, in that

moment of my failure, when I could see my sin come out of me and affect my son, did I feel close to or far from Jesus? I would say I felt very far from Jesus. Now, that's antithetical to the biblical story where Jesus draws nearest to us in our weakness. And yet, my emotions and my day-to-day experience are not always in line with what I think and believe.

I'm someone that doesn't just believe in the forgiveness of God, I am attempting to perfect the art of teaching about it. And yet still, I struggle to know it in my day-to-day experience. So who is it that when I woke this morning and sat in prayer on my porch, reminded me His mercies are new every morning? And that when I come before God, God is not saying, man, we really need to talk about how last night went with your son Simon, but is saying, I want to wash all of your failures and I want my grace to outrun your failure as a pastor and as a disciple and as a parent. And that is your great hope, is not never stumbling in a moment with your son. It is that if you just keep throwing yourself on me, my grace will ever lap at the shores of every part of your life.

And so that's who the Holy Spirit is. The Holy Spirit is the one who is that conduit between belief and experience, if that makes sense.

**Annie:** That's beautiful.

**Tyler:** That is why biblically... and the first third of the book is all about how the Holy Spirit's in the background of every last turn in the biblical story. Even some of the most familiar passages to so many people, they don't realize this is actually a profound promise being made all the way back in the Old Testament Torah, or, you know, this obscure biblical prophet or this profound moment from the life of Jesus that I've always read in one way. And now I'm saying, oh my goodness, He's pointing to the promise of the Spirit the whole time. This whole story is like a swell in the ocean that's like building and building and building toward the shore. And you can barely see when it's way out. But the closer it gets, the more the wave is about to crest and just turn over.

So the experience that we're having right now as believers indwelt with the Holy Spirit is something that God's been working on for a long time and one He desperately wants us to live fully into.

[00:17:24] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [DailyLook](#). Listen, if you're wanting to get some new winter staples for your wardrobe or you have some special occasions coming up and need specific outfits, you've got to check out DailyLook.

When I got my box, I genuinely, hand to heaven, fell in love with every single thing they sent me. I think you see me post pictures in almost all of it except for this black and white skirt. But that's just because it hasn't been warm enough yet. But the clothes I got have become staples in my outfit rotation lately. I truly fell in love with the jeans my stylist picked out. I wore my Nashville sweater yesterday.

Here's how it works. You just go on their site and fill out a style quiz. You know we love a quiz. And you get to tell them what you're looking for, what your typical style is, what colors you gravitate towards, and then an actual person, not AI, styles you. What up, Esmeralda? Grateful for you. You can drive to 12 premium pieces. And I'm telling you, you're going to love having someone pick fun clothes for you.

It's time to get your own personal stylist with DailyLook. Head to [DailyLook.com](https://DailyLook.com) to take your style quiz and use the code ThatSoundsFun for 50% off your first order. You guys, that's so cool. Once again, that's [DailyLook.com](https://DailyLook.com). You'll get 50% off your order when you use our promo code THATSOUNDSFUN. And that's how they'll know you're a friend of ours and that we sent you. One last time, [DailyLook.com](https://DailyLook.com) and the promo code is THATSOUNDSFUN.

**Sponsor:** And another incredible partner I get to tell you about, [Hiya Health](https://HiyaHealth.com). Okay, all of my friends who are parents, have you heard about Hiya Health's new Kids Daily Greens and Superfoods? It is a chocolate-flavored greens powder designed specifically for kids that has 55 plus whole food ingredients in it. I mean, thank goodness it's chocolate-flavored. Which kid would not be interested in that?

And it supports brain power, development, and digestion. So if you're always making negotiations at every meal to try to get your kids to eat healthy whole foods, this is a great way to help them get the nutrition they need.

My MiniBFFs have been fans of Hiya's chewable vitamins for a long time. And we love that it doesn't have any sugar in it. The Daily Greens plus Superfood is the same. It tastes like chocolate but has zero sugar. I bet you can make hot chocolate out of that. That'd be adorable.

We've worked out a special deal with Hiya. My friends get 50% off your first order. To claim this deal, you must go to [HiyaHealth.com/ThatSoundsFun](https://HiyaHealth.com/ThatSoundsFun). Again, that's [HiyaHealth.com/ThatSoundsFun](https://HiyaHealth.com/ThatSoundsFun), and you'll get your kids the full body nourishment they need to grow into healthy adults.

Okay, now back to our conversation with Pastor Tyler.

[00:20:08] <music>

**Annie:** In the book, one of my favorite quotes, — I like to do little tabs here, Tyler, so I don't forget where things are — you said, "According to Jesus, the Holy Spirit is a particular kind of teacher, one that helps you remember." I mean, that's what you were just talking about like grace and... There are times in my life, too, when I'm thinking about my own story of like... I'll go, "There's a verse about this. What is it? What is it? What is it? Or where did I put my keys? Where are my keys? I could not, for the life of me, find my laptop yesterday to try to come to work. And I've just learned over time, and even your teaching here, going like, Holy Spirit, will you tell me? Because you actually know. How often are you involving the Holy Spirit like that in your day? Is that appropriate to do? Am I doing that right?"

**Tyler:** I mean, God's all about relationships. I think, Annie, in every way you invite Him into your day-to-day experiences is totally appropriate. You know, "remember" is the most frequent command in the entirety of the Scripture, or "fear not", followed by "remember" in a close second.

And really the core problem with the nation of Israel throughout the entirety of the Hebrew Bible is that they keep on forgetting the faithfulness of God.

**Annie:** And we think, If I was there, I would not forget. Yeah, right.

**Tyler:** Of course you would. Yeah, we do all the time. I mean, God is faithful in our lives. And then new circumstances produce a new opportunity for anxiety. And anxiety tends to make us forget. So the Holy Spirit is one who hopefully... like you're going to build your life on one thing or the other, right? You're either going to build your life on the house of cards set of circumstances that makes you feel at peace, and then every new little breeze blows it over again, and you feel anxious until you get it reconstructed, and it holds until the next thing blows it over. Or you're going to build your life on the faithfulness of God in the last time is only indicative of His faithfulness this time, which is only indicative of His faithfulness next time.

In this world, you will have trouble, Jesus promised us. But the Holy Spirit is the one that allows us to say, my story is going to be built on the foundation of God's faithfulness, not my fear.

**Annie:** Oh, that's it.

**Tyler:** And we only get to choose those two foundations. We're either going to build a life on my fear, which usually comes at legit cause for fear, it's not small, or we're going to build it on God's faithfulness. And I think that's the primary thing the Spirit is helping us to remember, is enabling us to build our life on a better story than our fear.



**Annie:** When you're sitting down to pray, like you were talking about this morning, or if you're in a corporate prayer setting, how often and when are you directing your prayer to God the Father, to Jesus, or to the Holy Spirit?

**Tyler:** You know, I've never really thought super hard about that. I don't know that I have such a theology of the Trinity, that there are certain prayers that are meant to be directed toward each member of the Trinitarian God. However, I do often... I will say, when I do find myself directly addressing the Spirit, it's usually when I'm listening to God. So it's usually when I'm saying, Spirit of the Living God, I am feeling this way today, and I want to ask, what do you have to say to me about that? So Spirit of God, I feel like I made a mistake with Simon last night. What do you want to say to me about that this morning? And then I wait. You know, that kind of thing.

Or search me and know me. Show me if there's any offensive way in me. Uncover my sin, because I want to be freed from it. So Holy Spirit, come and search me. Show me what I don't see. Those types of things. So it's usually when I'm inviting God to speak to me, and I'm going to be pausing to listen after this invitation.

**Annie:** So going back to the conduit idea of, if you're ready to listen, it's a good time to call on the Holy Spirit. I think it's so fascinating. In my freshman year of college, one of the questions my disciple asked me was, what is the difference in my relationship between God the Father and Jesus and the Holy Spirit? And I was like, what are you talking about? So I really like hearing people's thoughts on that. I mean, you talk about prayer a lot. And I like the freedom of, hey, there isn't a right and wrong of who you're talking to.

**Tyler:** Yeah. And I think it's helpful to remember that the Holy Spirit is called a counselor by Jesus in that same discourse we were talking about before. If you think about a really good counselor, they say little, but they ask pointed questions that draw out your own self-revelation that you didn't see, right? Like a good counselor listens to you and then just asks the next pointed question and the next pointed question until you say something out loud that surprises you.

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

**Tyler:** Recently in a counseling appointment, I was talking to my counselor about this meeting I was really nervous about because I knew that I had offended someone and I was scared to talk to them about it. You know, we were tracing that and tracing that and tracing that. And then I eventually said out loud, I'm afraid of needing God's forgiveness. And then I thought, Oh, I didn't know that was within me.

And then suddenly when I say that out loud, it opens up this whole conversation that me and God are going to have. So then I'm talking to the Father, you know, because it's like, Oh, I didn't know that there was this thing that lives not in my head, but somewhere in my gut that is afraid of needing your forgiveness, God. Often I feel like I'll verbally process with the Holy Spirit.

**Annie:** Yeah. We were all snowed into our houses this weekend in Nashville. As you know. Your family's down here. I went on a walk the other day and as I was walking, I was just talking out loud and I asked myself a question and then I was like, "Oh, that's not for me. Oh, that's the actual problem, isn't it? That's the actual problem."

But you're right, the counselor in the Holy Spirit is the one who goes, well, why are you pursuing that over that? And I was like, why am I pursuing though? My gosh, I am pursuing that over that. No wonder this is all going sideways. But it was all in conversation that you're right, I've never thought about how often the questions are what come back to me versus the answers.

[00:28:01] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Thrive Causemetics](#). Listen, if I ever do a get ready with me video, you always see Thrive Causemetics Liquid Lash Extensions Mascara included. I literally just threw away a bottle I emptied and started a new one. Do not sleep on this mascara. I love it so much. It makes my lashes look long. It almost looks like I have lash extensions and it does not smudge or flake. Nobody wants that. I'm sure you've seen Thrive Causemetics all over social media. It's the one in the teal packaging, but truly, I am such a fan.

All of their beauty products are certified 100% vegan and cruelty-free and made with clean skin-loving ingredients, high performance, trademarked formulas, and uncompromising standards. It's easy to see why their best sellers have thousands of five-star reviews. Plus for every product purchase, Thrive Causemetics donates products and funds to help communities thrive. Thrive Causemetics is luxury beauty that gives back.

Right now my friends can get an exclusive 20% off your first order at [ThriveCausemetics.com/TSF](#). That's [ThriveCausemetics.com/TSF](#) for 20% off your first order.

**Sponsor:** I am so hoping some of you got a [Helix Mattress](#) for Christmas because I need you to experience the level of deep sleep that comes with their mattresses. I love mine. I love mine so much. Y'all have heard me say it, I sleep so hard on that thing. So I'm

out here making sure everyone knows they need a Helix Mattress. Also, their dream pillows are amazing too.

The mattress I had before this one was old and I really needed an upgrade. And I'm telling you the first week I got my Helix mattress, I overslept every day.

And their sleep study stats show us I'm not the only one sleeping better. Helix measured the sleep performance of participants after switching from their old mattress to a Helix mattress like me, and they found 82% saw an increase in their deep sleep cycle, yes, and participants on average achieved 39 more minutes of overall sleep per night or in the morning, as was my case.

Get up to 25% off and two free pillows with a mattress purchase. My friends can go to [HelixSleep.com/ThatSoundsFun](https://HelixSleep.com/ThatSoundsFun). That's HelixSleep.com/ThatSoundsFun, and you'll get 25% off and two free pillows with a mattress purchase.

**Sponsor:** I recently got some new sunglasses from [Pair Eyewear](https://PairEyewear.com) and they are so fun. So you pick out your base frames, I got the twain frames and then you pick out top frames. And you can get as many as you want because you can change them out. I got three different sunglasses, top frame options and I am so happy about it.

You'll need to go look at all of their collections. They have everything from a Sparkle Collection, yes please, to Marvel, to Disney. You get free shipping on US orders and you can also save by using your pre-tax FSA and HSA dollars.

You've got to check out Pair Eyewear you guys because not only do they have a ton of really cute options, but for every pair purchased, the Eye Alliance provides a pair to a child in need. I love that.

Show off new sides of yourself this year. Get it, girl. Go to [PairEyeWear.com](https://PairEyeWear.com) and use the code TSF. And my friends are gonna get 15% off your first pair and you get to support the show by mentioning that we sent you in your post-checkout survey. That's [PairEyeWear.com](https://PairEyeWear.com), code TSF.

And now back to finish up our conversation with Pastor Tyler.

[00:31:45] <music>

**Annie:** Okay, Comforter, Advocate, Counselor are the three. I cannot wait. I mean, since I've read the book, I've had two phone calls where I told other people to read the book. So just so you know, you owe me royalties for like three copies.

**Tyler:** Perfect.

**Annie:** No, I'm just kidding. But will you talk for just a second... Let's finish up here. Talk about Comforter, Advocate, as well as Counselor. Like, are there times where you ask the Holy Spirit to be your Comforter? Are there times where you ask Him to be your Counselor? Are you that direct about his three roles? And is it always a He?

**Tyler:** I tried really hard, even in writing the book to avoid using the male pronoun as much as possible. I use the male pronoun just because it stays consistent with Scripture. And that has everything to do with the Greek language at the time Scripture was written, or the Hebrew language at the time Scripture was written, and nothing to do with the actual identity of God who is neither male nor female.

So I guess I don't think really hard about that. I definitely don't think of the Spirit as a "he" or a "she". I'm totally agnostic on the Shack's portrayal of the Spirit, you know? But I would say-

**Annie:** It's fun to think about. The Shack was fun to give us stuff to think about.

**Tyler:** Totally. So I would say, yeah, I do. I do call on the Comforter to bring me comfort and to bring others comfort, you know? I do ask the Spirit to counsel me. And an advocate, I think of like a courtroom setting, who's pleading my case? Who's speaking for me when my voice is silenced?

So I would say I feel less like I ask the Spirit to be my advocate, and more like I find great assurance in that I have one who is always advocating for me. But yeah, I mean, there's times when you're in circumstances in your life when you feel like the thing that you need most deeply is comfort. You know, there's things you go through, particularly to return to the winter season idea, where a wound is... it's usually when a wound is fresh, the night you get bad news, the day you were let go from your job, the whatever, you know, another negative pregnancy test, where you're not really ready for like a counsel conversation about this, you just need to be hugged and held. And so I'll ask God that, like, will you just hold me?

And then there's other times like this morning where I'm ready to process this with God and say, what is your invitation in this? How should I live? What are you saying to me? Can you help me see what I'm not seeing?

But I would love to say this, something's coming to mind about the role the Spirit plays in the winter seasons of our lives. So really interesting thing that happens in the Psalms when it comes to the winter, which I would say the primary biblical motif for the winter seasons in our spiritual lives is the wilderness.

There's three major wilderness narratives in scripture, but it's a metaphor for those times where God feels distant and trouble feels close. There's the 40 years of wilderness wandering that Israel goes through in the Exodus. There's Jesus's 40 days of temptation and testing that begin his gospel ministry. But in between there's David's seven years at En Gedi where David is commissioned as king, but then lives as a fugitive being hunted by Saul for seven years in the wilderness of En Gedi.

And something really fascinating, Eugene Peterson points this out, it's where I learned this. Something really fascinating happens in the Bible during David's wilderness years is that the Psalms and particularly the Psalms that are traced back to and believed to have been written during those seven wilderness years are the first place in the first time in the Hebrew language that we see the word "refuge" being applied abstractly. So the word "refuge", which is frequent in the Psalms in the Bible up to that point is only used to refer to a geographical location.

So it's like, you know, there's a war going on and we need to seek refuge, referring to a city where we can be safe. David in the wilderness Psalms starts to pray things like, God, you are my refuge and strength.

**Annie:** You are my refuge, yeah.

**Tyler:** And so David starts using this term of safety and protection in the midst of the wilderness. So what I would say is there are things that we can discover about God in the winter that can only be discovered in the winter. And that doesn't make the winter good, but it does redeem the winter in the sense that we talked about when we began the podcast, that God can give us gifts.

Even Isaiah, he talks about "you have hidden for me treasures in the wilderness". So God can give us gifts that happen in the winter of our lives that we can only receive in the winter of our lives that are so profoundly good and important to us or so valuable to us that we would say, I don't want to go back through that wilderness, but man, what would I do without having ever received this? Who would I even be?

And one of those is the discovery that God is our refuge and strength. That the place that I can hide, the place that I can find comfort, the place that I can feel safe is not in a particular set of circumstances or an assurance about my immediate future or the realization of my dream and longing, even if it's a good God-given longing, but is in the person of God Himself. And when I discovered that He is the greatest gift, that He is my comfort, that He is my security, He is my protection, that's when God can become our refuge and that can only happen in the wintertime. Who is the conduit of that realization, that experience? It's the Holy Spirit.

I'm currently in remission and I have monthly appointments with my oncologist and still regular treatments. And if I go in this month and I've got a tumor growing again and I'm going back into chemotherapy, I'm gonna be profoundly disappointed, deeply sad. I do not want to relive that season, those six months.

And if you ask me if I could go back and change the last year and erase that from my story, would I? I would say I wouldn't. I wouldn't, because way too slowly for me to notice at any one given moment, but so certainly that I do know this side of that wilderness, there were treasures hidden for me there.

**Annie:** That's it. Tyler, thank you for doing this. I'm really, really grateful.

[00:40:07] <music>

**Outro:** Okay, y'all, isn't he awesome? I know, as promised, it was worth the wait to get to have Tyler Staton on the podcast. Go grab your copy of *The Familiar Stranger* wherever you love to buy books. It comes out tomorrow. Go follow Tyler on social media. Tell him thank you for being on the show.

If you don't already have the TSF Seasons guidebook, it is not too late to grab it and jump in and take some notes. You can find that at [Annedowns.com/seasons](http://Annedowns.com/seasons).

If you enjoyed this episode, I think you're gonna love going back and listening to any of our previous episodes with Hall of Fun member, John Mark Comer. That means he's been on more than five times, so it is real easy to find his episodes.

If you have any questions from this episode, you can drop it in the Q&A box on your Spotify app if you're a Spotify listener, or 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, TikTok, for as long as it's here. Anywhere you need me, that's where 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. Listen, today what sounds fun to me is one of my friend's birthday parties tonight that is piano karaoke. Listen, I don't know that I'll sing, but I will have a great time.

Y'all have a great week. We'll see you back here on Thursday with, you guessed it, our pal Eddie Khaufolz. Here is the January episode of Annie and Eddie Keep

**Episode 955: The Holy Spirit is our Advocate, Counselor, & Comforter... Even in the Winter with Tyler Staton That  
Sounds Fun with Annie F. Downs**

Talking. It's coming on Thursday, and who can know what it's about? It's loud.  
We'll see y'all then.