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Intro: Hey friends! Welcome to Girls Night. I'm Stephanie May Wilson and I am so happy that you're here. Each week I have a girlfriend over and we talk through one of the biggest questions we have about our lives as women.

We're talking about friendships and faith and relationships and self-confidence, about our calling in life, and how to live every bit of our lives to the full. Life is so much better and easier and absolutely more fun when we navigate it together as girlfriends. And I cannot wait to get started.

So, friends, I am so excited about today's episode. Today we're talking about how to have more fun, and why fun is so important. Now, let's be honest. Being an adult is hard. There is so much to navigate, so much to balance, so much to figure out.

We're thinking about work and bills and health insurance and our living situations. For so many of us, we wake up far earlier than we want to, anyone else? We work all day at school or at our offices, we eat lunch at our desk, and then we come home at the end of the day feeling totally and thoroughly spent.

The things we're doing are good and important and necessary. But as we're making time for all these important things, we also need to make sure that we're having some fun.

Our guest for today's episode is my new friend Annie F. Downs. Annie is an amazing author, podcaster, and speaker. She has a new devotional book called *Chase the Fun: 100 Days to Discover Fun Right Where You Are*. And that's exactly what we're talking about in this episode.

We're talking about why having fun matters. It actually matters for our brains and our bodies. And Annie and I would both agree that fun is an important spiritual practice. We're talking about how to figure out what sounds fun to us and how to actually do those things.

We're talking about practical ways to make more time for fun even with super busy schedules. We're talking about how to embrace the things that we find to be fun, even if those things aren't necessarily cool. We're talking about how to start a new hobby and so much more.

Friends, if you've been itching to add more fun and joy in your life, especially this summer, but you don't know where to start, this episode is for you.

But before we dive in, I have a resource I want to make sure to share with you. It's called the *Lipstick Gospel Devotional*. *Lipstick Gospel Devotional* is a 90-day devotional to help you consistently connect with God, hearing from Him, trusting His plans, and feeling His presence in your everyday life.

In the devotional, we talk about how to consistently spend time with God and feel connected to Him well beyond your morning quiet times. We talk about how to trust the plans that God has for your life and how to figure out what those plans even are. We talk about how to step into your God-given identity feeling truly beautiful and good enough in your skin.

We talk about how to keep your faith strong in the midst of uncertainty and transition and really hard days. We talk about how to add more joy and more delight and even more whimsy into your everyday life and so much more.

Friends, if you're looking to grow in your faith these days, I would love to share this with you. To pick up a copy, just go to stephaniemaywilson.com or you can click on the link in my Instagram profile. I'm [@smaywilson](https://www.instagram.com/smaywilson) over on Instagram.

Okay, with that said, let's jump into the episode. Here's my conversation with Annie.

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Stephanie: Friends, I am so excited for who you get to meet today. I'm sitting here with my brand new friend, Annie F. Downs. Annie, thanks so much for being here at Girls Night.

Annie: I mean, welcome from neighbor to neighbor. We are so close to each other right now.

Stephanie: We didn't realize that, but truly we are. We're like four minutes away from each other.

Annie: Oh my gosh, it's so funny. But hi, thanks so much for having me, Stephanie.

Stephanie: So for women who haven't met you, which I feel like there's no way, like they have to have met you, so they're just getting to know you or they're just getting to re-meet you, tell us who you are, what you do, and a fun fact about yourself.

Annie: Okay. So I'm Annie F. Downs. F as in fun or fancy. There's another Annie Downs. She is a quilt designer in Australia, and she's like the premier quilt pattern designer.

So that's why we have the F in everything because otherwise I am surrounded by cool patterns in my life.

So, Annie F. Downs, I am an author, a podcaster, I travel and speak and host my own tour. I also own the That Sounds Fun Podcast network with my business partner, Kelly Haywood. So we're part of helping about 15 shows exist out in the world that I am not on any of them. It's really awesome. It's one of my favorite things I get to do is help run the network. That's what I do.

And the fun fact about myself is that I sleep in socks every night. Full stop. Never miss. Never miss a night.

Stephanie: Has this been like a lifelong thing?

Annie: I don't remember not sleeping in socks, but I don't remember why it started. I mean, I don't remember... I just can't tell you. When I go to bed, Stephanie, I'm like, my feet are... Here's the other dumb thing. Three nights a week, I get in bed without socks. And then I'm like, "My feet are so cold." And then I have to go and get socks.

I should just keep them on my bedside table. I'm going to do it tonight. I'm going to put a pair on my bedside table. But I sleep in my socks every night. That's my fun fact.

Stephanie: This is so random. But my friend Hannah, she and I went to a conference together like a couple years ago. So we had like one overnight. And in this overnight, I got to find out that she wipes down her feet with baby wipes before bed every single night.

Annie: What?

Stephanie: She just wants extra clean feet when she gets into bed. And I'm not saying that I do that every night now, but I do it if I've been out and about, and I'm like, "I'm not dirty enough to shower or I'll do it tomorrow morning or something." I do that.

And I told her that recently, and she goes, "How do you know that I do that?" I feel like the socks is a similar thing. Like someone's gonna start sleeping in socks, and they're gonna say, "Annie, I sleep in socks, too now," and you're gonna go, "How do you-

Annie: Everyone talks a big game, about like, "Oh, I could never sleep in socks. I would get so hot. My feet need freedom." And I'm like, "Y'all, y'all, y'all, you are missing out because there's like a very warm, cozy experience awaiting you if you just..."

And it doesn't have to be like winter wear socks. It can just be your basic, athletic sock. So it's awesome. It's great. It's so great.

Stephanie: I feel like in my head I just started a club for you called like the Toasty Toesies club or something like that.

Annie: Oh, I love it.

Stephanie: Toasty Toesies night.

Annie: 100%.

Stephanie: Okay, I love this so much. That's a great fun fact.

Annie: What made you start asking people that?

Stephanie: The heart of the show is girls night and we have conversations about big things and hard things and silly things. Anything you would talk about at a girls night is fair game here. But since we're new friends, like since a lot of the people that I'm bringing on the show have never met my listeners before, I feel like it's nice to have sort of an icebreaker.

So that's kind of just a reminder that we're all human and we're all normal. And whether we're talking about something silly or big, you know, no matter what our... My favorite is when people have fun facts that you've never imagined. It's just so humanizing. So it's just a way to connect. It's really my favorite part of the show.

Annie: It's such a good reminder. There are so many times that we think of people whose books we read or that we see on TV or see in movies, or listen to their music that they are somehow other than us.

I recently had an experience where some of the internet got mad at me. And when it happened, I had this... I mean, it happens every six months to everybody, right? Like everybody who has a public thing, there's something that makes people mad. So it happened in the spring.

And I remember thinking, Oh, like actual celebrities, this happens to them all the time. Like people hate them all the time. And we forget they're humans who see what people say about them. This is the same thing of like nobody is other. We are all the same. We're all exactly the same. So that's a beautiful leadership thing you're doing just to remind everybody that we're not all that different from each other.

Stephanie: Oh, I love that. Thanks for saying that. So you have a new devotional that is coming out this week, right?

Annie: Yes! Yes!

Stephanie: It's called *Chase the Fun: 100 Days to Discover Fun Right Where You Are*. I cannot wait to hear about this. Tell us about the book and tell us about the story behind it. How did this come about?

Annie: So you would think that I would learn my lessons, but Steph, I did not learn my lessons. So when I wrote *Let's All Be Brave* a couple of years ago, I wrote a book about my own experience of these opportunities where I felt God had invited me to do something courageous.

Now, none of it was massive compared to what a lot of people have been through. But it was like when I moved to Nashville, right, and after I moved to [inaudible 00:08:37] I moved to Scotland.

Stephanie: Scary and hard.

Annie: Yes, scary and it's hard, and it's a change of your life. So after I wrote that book that was kind of telling the people that like, "Here's what I did and here is why I did it," after the book came out, and all these people start reading it and they were like, "Well, how? How do we do that?" And I was like, "Oh, my bad. You're right. I didn't tell you the how."

So I wrote a devotional called *100 Days to Brave* that kind of helped people take the concept of *Let's All Be Brave*, and actually put feet to it. So then I write *That Sounds Fun*. It came out in February of 2021. And in February of 2021 when it came out, I had accidentally done the same thing of like, "Here's what fun is, and here's why fun matters." And the readers believed me, and then they were like, "Okay, so how?" And I was like, "Annie, you dummy, you did it again. You forgot to tell people how."

But lucky for us there is a way to tell people how after they read the book. So we sat down and kind of went, There are three main sections of that sounds fun: the joys of being an amateur, the power of falling in love, and why you need a hobby.

So I just sat down, I went, Okay, let's split this up for 100 days. Let's do a month on why it's important to be an amateur, let's do a month on falling in love, and let's do a month on finding a hobby." And by the end of the 100 days could people's lives really be different?

That's where it came from. It's so fun to me, Stephanie. I mean, you'll appreciate this too as a person who creates a lot of content. It is really fun to make things for people that are just beautiful, and that are just good art. And then there's a different thing when you go like, "No, this is a thing that will help you. This will change your life in some way."

So it's really fun when I get to be a part of these kind of projects, like Chase the Fun. I mean, it's my words, I wrote it, but there's a lot of people involved in these kinds of projects. I'm like, "Man, what a gift to get to be a part..." Because it's a gift to me. I mean, as I'm writing it, my life is changing. So I absolutely love it.

Stephanie: I love that. I love that. I want to back up a little bit. So this is kind of backstory. But I want to hear why is fun important? Because fun seems like an extra thing. It seems like not even the whipped cream on the sundae but like the optional cherry or something.

It just seems like it's not really that important, or it's frivolous or extra in some way. But I don't think that that's true. So I want to know, why does fun matter?

Annie: I mean, the core of it is that we prioritize everything that we think makes us healthy. There's two things we run after as humans. We run after what makes us healthy and what makes us happy.

And sometimes those are same things and sometimes they are not. Because how I feel about Oreos is going to make me happy, but not necessarily make me healthy. Though I do not think there's good food and bad food. But I do recognize that I can run after Oreos when I'm trying to escape versus when I'm just trying to have two Oreos with my friends after dinner.

So when it comes to fun and why fun matters, we all are looking to be healthy and happy. It is just in us. It is why there is a gap in our souls is that being with God meets those needs. And there is a reflection of that in our everyday life.

And I know this is significantly more serious than like, "Fun is just good for your body." And it is good for your body. There's like real science around how fun matters to your physiological life. But I will tell you that I think fun is a spiritual thing and I think it is an emotional thing and I think it is a physical thing. It is this other thing.

We all sleep, we all eat, hopefully we move our bodies, we are in relationships, we are going to the places that make us healthy. So for me, that's counseling. And for me that's my family. And for me, that's church. There are these places that are... My peloton, and Burger Up, and my friend's houses.

There are places I prioritize and things I prioritize that I'm going to go to because they make me feel like the Annie that I want to be. And fun matters because I think for all of us that is actually true about fun. Fun makes us who we want to be; we've just forgotten and we just haven't prioritized it on our life list.

But what I keep seeing over and over again is if you don't prioritize... I'm like a self-proclaimed expert on fun, but I talked about it every day for the last... I mean, That Sounds Fun, the podcast, started in 2014. So for the last eight years, I've talked about fun multiple times a week if not every day.

And what seems to happen, Stephanie, is if we don't prioritize fun, it's a little bit like a pressure cooker and the top explodes off. And we do escapism behaviors if we don't say, "Oh, I actually made space in my life for a vacation, or for a fun dinner," or to go see Hamilton at TPAC or whatever. These like moments of fun, if you don't do that the pressure cooker blows.

Stephanie: So it's like instead of, you know, I'm going to take off with a girlfriend for a weekend, you're like, "I'm gonna quit my entire life. I have to get out of here forever."

Annie: 100%. And that's the question. Often when I'm talking to women in our age brackets, like you know, late 20s to early 40s, kind of that like I'm out in the world, I'm not in college, I may be dating, I may be married, I may be a mom, but I may be none of those things. Like there's such a wide variety. I'm a professional, I'm a stay-at-home mom, there's such a wide variety of what women in our age bracket are doing with their days.

Then the conversation is when you say a thing like Oreos or when you say a thing like a weekend away, where the road splits is, are you doing this for release or for escape? So if you and your girlfriends are going on a trip to Dollywood and it is just for fun and it is like you just want to ride the eagle ride and have some cinnamon bread and lay by the pool at the Dollywood Resort, great, DreamMore Resort, great.

If you're doing that because in your life you are in pain and you tell everybody that you accidentally left your phone at home but you know you really left your phone at home on purpose, and dinner that night you don't drink one glass of wine, you drink three because you just want to fall asleep faster, then you need to pay attention that you're doing one behavior for two different reasons. And one of them is fun, and one of them is running from your life.

Stephanie: Yeah, yeah. And one of them's gonna lead to good things and one of them is going to not.

Annie: That's right. It's two different trees with two different fruits. You know, one has good fruit and one... And I'm not anti-escapism, actually, Stephanie. I'm actually okay if you do that as long as you call it what it is. Like don't try to tell me you're just going on vacation. Tell me you're running from your life. My counselor says to me so often, she's like, "I don't care what you did. I want to know why you did it."

Stephanie: Oh, I like that.

Annie: And then it just removes the power of the bad behavior, and instead it becomes a motive conversation. Now I'm not talking about murder-

Stephanie: Right.

Annie: You know, just to be clear. I'm talking about Oreos or Dollywood, you know. So when we're talking about those things, it is going like... I had a really sad thing happened about four years ago and I just wanted to stop hearing from people saying, "I'm sorry that this happened."

You know, like when someone dies in your family or when there's a breakup, or when there's a word change, and everybody so lovingly, and thank God that we have community that says, "Hey, I'm so sorry." I was like, "I cannot receive another 'I'm so sorry' text message."

So I turned my phone off and I went and saw a movie. So for two hours, I escaped from my life. Now, if that had been two weeks, that's a problem. Two hours, okay. The question is, when you get back in the car, do you turn your phone back on?

Stephanie: It's so funny. I'm gonna butcher one of these. But two Anne Lamott quotes came to me as you're talking. And one about fun being holy. I love her quote that says laughter is carbonated holiness. It's just like one of my favorite things.

Then also I think she said something like, "Everything will work again if you unplug it and plug it back in." And I think that there's some real truth to that. I think that, like you're saying, there are healthier ways to do that.

Like turning off your phone is just maybe the best thing we could do ever. But like running from the people in your life who are kind of keeping track of you, keeping an eye on you making sure you're okay, checking in with you, running from those people is kind of a different thing. But I mean, also sometimes you just need to turn it off for a minute, kind of no matter-

Annie: That's right. And you know the why. Like it may be hard to even tell yourself the truth but you know the why—for why you're doing it. We know every why for why we're doing what we're doing. Right?

Steph, that's the problem is we can hide our motives from everyone else except ourselves and God. We can't hide our motives from ourselves. So I don't even care if you say it out loud. If you will just say to yourself, "I recognize that the reason I'm doing this as I'm running from something," or "I'm running to something," even that confession to yourself makes you tap the brakes of whatever you're doing. Because you're like, "Oh, I'm telling everybody that I'm just having fun."

I'm thinking about our friends who are still dating, but aren't married yet. And they go like, "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm just having fun. I'm just out there having fun." And you're like, "Okay, but you're making decisions that you said a month ago you weren't going to make." "Oh, it's just fun."

Okay, well, you can say that to me all you want to but when you lay your head down on your pillow, you have to tell yourself that you're just having fun, and you don't believe yourself. So tell yourself the truth that you're lonely or you're scared, or you are disappointed. I mean, how much... This is probably too serious for girls night. But girls nights get serious-

Stephanie: Girls night get serious. Yes.

Annie: Right? I mean, how often are we making decisions out of disappointment and out of frustration that we don't have what we want? And then you go, Yeah, I mean, someone on the outside would look in and say that looks really fun, on the inside we know that we're making decisions out of disappointment. So either do the thing or don't do the thing, but at least tell yourself the truth of why.

Stephanie: Yeah, yeah, I think when we're honest we can... I don't know, it just starts us on a level playing field. We can figure out what to do with that from there. I really like that.

Annie: The kindest thing you can do for yourself is be honest with yourself. Don't change your behaviors if you don't want to. Don't change your why if you don't want to. But it is a really... I mean, we love our friends who are truthful friends, who are honest friends. Like you're like, "Oh man, I know when she's telling me what she think she's telling me the truth. And I know that she doesn't lie to me."

So when we're being good friends to ourselves, be that good of a friend to yourself that you tell yourself the truth.

Stephanie: That's so good. We've talked about how the same road can split off and we can either be escaping from things or we can be pursuing really good wholesome, healthy, happy, fun. I think for a lot of us we've disconnected from what sounds fun to us. So how do we start to even figure that out again?

Annie: All of our friends who are listening, everybody who is here at girls night, I'm going to ask a question, and I want you, to yourself or out loud, everyone, to answer without thinking. That's the best way to do this. So if you have lost your fun, the question is, when you were 8 years old and you got home from school on a Tuesday, what do you do after school?

Stephanie: I think I hung out with my friends. Yeah, yeah.

Annie: Neighborhood. Everybody got off the school bus at the same stop. You probably went grab a snack and then ran back outside. Some people say, "I would come in and eat a snack and read the newspaper because I loved reading the comics." I would say, Read the comics.

So if you have lost your fun, the first thing to do is ask yourself, what was your childhood fun? What was it that was fun before the world told you that wasn't fun, or the world told you it's too busy for fun, or the world told you it's too hard for fun. And that usually happens.

There are some of our friends who grew up in homes that it was all of those things hard, scary, sad from the get. So for those friends who grew up in homes where there wasn't a lot of peace before Middle School, in my experience of talking to people, there are usually glimpses of like, Well, there was this one teacher and there was this one classroom that was different for me.

Or there was a volunteer with the youth group at church that was really kind to me. Or "I played this sport. And the reason I played the sport is because my next door neighbor's mom could pick me up and drop me off because he was on the same team as me."

So if you don't have a clear childhood memory of a lot of good things, look for what was your saving grace. One of my favorite counselors is a guy named Jim Cress from Charlotte. And I met him at Onsite workshops outside of Nashville. And he says, "The tools you needed as a child to survive are still in your toolbox. You just don't use them anymore, if you've grown up, if you're working on being emotionally healthy."

So when we talk about fun and losing fun, I say to people, Go back and look in your toolbox. What was it that helped you then that you don't really need anymore?

When it was thunder and lightning, I get under my covers, because I was afraid. That was a tool, right? I needed to feel safe. I don't need that tool anymore but I can remember that tool is there. And that when I feel unsafe, what I found safest was to get quiet and get small. I can pay attention to that as a grown-up and wonder and ask myself what that means. So that's really how you do it.

I mean, there's all sorts of... Steph, we could talk through all the like, Okay, let's five hobbies that you'd like to try and give them each a month. Or, you know, call your three best friends and y'all go out to dinner and ask each other what sounds fun to you.

And here's what will happen. Whether it's with your husband, or your boyfriend, or your parents or your roommates, or your best friends, you sit down and go, "What sounds fun to you?" And let them answer. And then say, "Why?" And then let them answer again.

And if you ask why three times, you're gonna get to the heart of why it really matters to them. And a lot of times, I mean, 90% of the time, it comes down to something about their grandparents or some memory from their childhood. And it's because everything felt easier. Everything felt easier when we were little and when we are quiet.

Again, there are people, sadly, raised in unsafe homes and so they have a different point of view than a lot of us. But there are still these moments of like, "Oh, yeah, oh yeah, that's why I love basketball is because my dad loved basketball." That's why I love cross stitching, is one of mine, because my grandmother taught me how to cross stitch. Or that's why I love gardening because I grew up on a farm.

Almost always, if we go back and look at those childhood tools, what sounds fun to us now is connected to them somehow. And if we will start that journey, that really will lead you to help find fun in a life that maybe you haven't prioritized that in a while.

[00:24:49] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! We have a brand new sponsor here at the Girls Night podcast, and I am so honored to have them because I just love what they're doing. Our new sponsor is [Modern Fertility](#). Modern Fertility is an easy and affordable way to test your fertility hormones at home with a simple finger prick. You mail it in with a prepaid label and you'll get your personalized results within 10 days.

Their tests will give you insight into things like your hormone levels, your ovarian reserve, which is how many eggs you have compared to other women your age, and other important fertility factors. If you want kids today or maybe one day in the future, this clinically sound information about your body can help you make decisions that are right for you.

So you may or may not know this, but one in six couples struggle with infertility. And my husband and I happen to be one of them. Carl and I, the planners that we are, spent years talking about every single aspect of what it would look like to have kids before we ever even started trying. We talked about how many kids we might want and when we wanted to start trying and how babies would impact our lives and how our lives would impact babies and so much more.

We did everything we could to gather all the information possible so we can make wise decisions about such an important part of our lives. I remember specifically asking my doctor if there was any sort of test or exam or something that we should do before we started to try, just to make sure that everything was working the way that it should.

And we were told, "Nope! Go ahead and start trying. And if it doesn't happen within the first 12 months, we'll start doing some tests." It didn't happen in those 12 months, and I really, really wish we had had more information sooner.

Friends, there aren't many decisions bigger than having a kid. But for many women, their fertility is a giant question mark. Modern Fertility believes that knowledge is power. And when you know more, you can have informed conversations with your doctor and make better decisions for your body, your health, and your future.

Right now, Modern Fertility is offering our listeners \$20 off the test when you go to modernfertility.com/girlsnight. That means your tests will cost \$179 instead of the hundreds or thousands it could cost the doctor's office.

Again, you can get \$20 off your fertility test when you go to modernfertility.com/girlsnight. Again, that's modernfertility.com/girlsnight. Modern Fertility, thank you so much for sponsoring our girls night. We just love having you.

Sponsor: Hey friends! I'm so excited to get to tell you about today's sponsor. This is a company I've loved for years and I'm honored to get to partner with them. Our sponsor for today is an amazing app called [Calm](#).

Calm is the number one mental wellness app with tools to reduce anxiety, improve focus, and help you quiet your thoughts so you can drift off to sleep. It was the middle of the night and my mind was racing. Anyone else experienced this?

I saw that they have these things called sleep stories and I figured I'd give one a try, and I fell in love. Honestly, I've never looked back. Friends when I tell you that Calm was a mainstay in my life, that is truly an understatement. I listen to their sleep stories almost every single night.

Side note, my favorites are always travel-related. These days I'm drifting off to sleep thinking about wandering through the streets of Dublin or trekking across Spain.

With two toddlers running around my house also tends to be a bit noisy these days. And so when I need some peace and quiet in the middle of the chaos or when I need to get some work done, I listen to Calm's soundscapes. They're like white noise, but better.

My favorite is called Rain on window and they also have this one that sounds like you're in a museum. It's like a little bit of noise but not too much. It's great for workday.

Calm has been this incredible tool for me in the past few years, helping me fall asleep at night, helping me quiet my mind, and tune out my toddlers on occasion during the day. There's over 100 million people around the world who use Calm to take care of their minds, and I'm so happy to be one of them.

I also love Calm even more because they have a gift for our Girls Night community. For listeners of the show, Calm is offering an exclusive offer of 40% off of a Calm premium subscription at calm.com/girlsnights. If you go to calm.com/girlsnight, you can get 40% off of unlimited access to Calm's entire library. In case you need to hear that again, that's calm.com/girlsnight.

Thank you Calm for being an amazing sponsor and for all the extra hours of sleep you've helped me get over the last few years. We just love having you.

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Stephanie: It sounds like if we can do those things, it kind of brings back, like you said at the beginning, like kind of help you be the Annie you want to be.

Annie: That's exactly right.

Stephanie: Like it kind of gives you back to the core of who you are and helps you just being that and shake away some of the stuff-

Annie: It pulls back some of the layers. Yes, exactly. It exposes you. I say a lot to people like, you don't find a lot of couples who go on a first date at an amusement park. And the reason you don't is because getting on a roller coaster next to someone that you're trying to figure out if you want to date them is incredibly vulnerable. Right? I mean, like you're gonna be screaming and you don't know how you feel.

Fun actually reveals you. So you're not going to do that on a first date. Very rarely. Or you might go to the fair in your town or something like that. But like you're probably not loading up in Orlando and going and riding the Star Wars rides with someone you've just met.

[crosstalk 00:30:13]

Annie: Right. There's just so many factors you can't control. And I'm still out there in that date life and I'm like, "Man, first dates I'm not trying to have a risk. The risk is already showing up. I'm not trying to have a puking risk or a screaming risk or a crying risk."

So I've got to tell you that the thing about fun that people forget is it really is revealing and it really is connecting with people. Even in a sporting event. Have you been doing Nashville Soccer Club match yet?

Stephanie: No. But my husband tried to talk me into season tickets when they first came out. And I don't know, I think maybe he forgot or something like that. But we almost got them. So no, we haven't been yet.

Annie: Listen. So I do have season tickets and there's a couple of games and the next couple of weeks I can't go to. So I would love for y'all to take my two tickets and go to one of those games. You just have to. You're gonna love it.

Stephanie: You are making me a hero in my house right now.

Annie: I'll tell you the two games I have. I know which ones I need somebody to sit in those seats and wear the gold and the blue.

Stephanie: I can do that.

Annie: But the interesting thing about sporting events is people yell and scream in a way they don't do anywhere else. They're having so much fun. But like these businessmen, they don't do that anywhere else. They don't do that at church. They

don't do that in their car. They don't do that in their work environment. When they are having fun, they let go, and they go nuts cheering for other people.

So you just go like, "Oh, yeah, this actually reveals something about me." So fun does that in a way that we don't give fun credit for, of going like, "Oh, that actually is letting me see the people that I love in a way I have not seen them."

Stephanie: Oh, I love that. I don't know if you've experienced this, but I feel like there were times when I was dating, or I mean, this happens with friends or family or something. But when you see someone in their elements, you get to see...

Like my husband played lacrosse in college, and I've only got to see him play lacrosse a handful of times because we weren't dating in college. But seeing him like put on the gear, do this thing that he really love, it's so... You could just see a different side of someone's heart. And it's so cool to see that.

Annie: Absolutely. I mean, it is why it can be scary to fall in love with someone you see when they're doing their job because you're like, "Oh my gosh, I'm seeing you and your moments." And then you see them not doing their job...

It's a Nashville problem, right, of like people who fall in love on the road. It's roadmances, right? Because you're like seeing them in their element. And then you get home and you're like, "Oh, you're boring. I didn't know you are boring. I only saw you in your element."

Stephanie: There's both sides, for sure.

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

Stephanie: That's so funny. A thing I've been thinking about when it comes to fun is, thinking back to what was fun when we were younger, it's like what was fun before people told you that you weren't good enough at it to really pursue it.

I think I liked art class a lot growing up, but I'm not a good artist. Like truly not. So I have no future in it. I didn't go to art school. I mean, I really truly... I just kind of like to paint a little sometimes. So kind of going back to that and being like, "Okay, so what if it doesn't have to turn into anything. Like you don't have to sell it on Etsy or something. Just do it because it's fun."

Annie: Listen girl, that's why we talk about the joys of being an amateur in the book. Because it's like stop acting like... to everyone not to you. I'm not like, "stop," at you. But stop acting like everything has to go pro.

Someone makes really great cookies, and they bring them to every baby shower, and they bring them to every wedding shower, and every gathering, and always someone will say, "You should sell these." And as soon as that switches, it's not a hobby anymore, it's a profession.

And you go like, "Maybe I should sell these. How do I sell these?" And then you get a booth at a farmers market. And then suddenly the grocery store has to carry them and now Nabisco bought you and you're a bazillionaire and all the things. And that's great.

And sometimes the thing you do as an amateur is meant to go pro. You and I would not have these jobs if our amateur thing was not meant to go pro. We went pro with what we were amateur at.

The problem is when we are told or believe if I can't be a pro I shouldn't participate at all. And that's art class, right? Or the other thing that happened to me, I wonder if this have ever happened to you, and it happens to a lot of us a lot of times, of if other people don't think this is cool, well, it probably isn't cool. I shouldn't love it. Like I shouldn't.

I mean, you know that I talk about fun all that time. And I tell people all the time, do not shame your fun and do not judge other people's fun. And I still sometimes get nervous talking about cross stitching because I'm like, "Oh, is that not cool?" And I'm like, "You love it? Who cares? Who actually cares?" No one cares. Because it makes me a better me. And that's what people love is when we're our best selves.

And it happened to me. In middle school, I loved the French horn. It's probably your art class story. I loved the French horn. And I can tell you where I was standing in the hallway in eighth grade when a...

I was the oldest kid in my family so no one went to high school before me. So a girl in line next to me in eighth grade said, "You aren't going to play band in high school, right? Because you know that's not cool." And I was like, "What? I didn't know. I didn't know that wasn't cool." Like, "Oh, okay."

And that day I switched lines and tried out for chorus instead of the band, and never played the French horn again. And it's all because someone else told me, "The thing you love is not going to make you popular." And I chose that.

A lot of my friends now in high school did not make that choice. They chose to be who they authentically were, and they're better adults for it. I chose to do what I thought was cooler and I missed out on what I think I would have loved. And I

think that still happens to us as adults, right? Where you want to go see a movie and your friends don't want to go see the movie, and then you feel silly about it.

I just saw a friend of mine on Insta story. She's like, "Bought a ticket to this concert by myself. If anybody wants to come, grab you one too." And I thought, "That's it." Go to the show you want to go to. Go to the concert you want to go to and see who else shows up there. It's a great way to build community.

Steph, sorry I'm saying so many words. I was down in Franklin a couple of weeks ago because I was missing this one color for microstitch. I was missing this one blue I needed. And when I'm down at the fabric store, the craft store, there's another girl in the same aisle picking out a color.

And I was like, "What are you doing?" She was like, "Well, what are you making?" So then we have this like five-minute conversation where if I'd been in a new town I lived in, we'd be friends.

Stephanie: You'd have been like, "Give me your number."

Annie: Yes, yes. So when you go after the thing you love and the hobby that matters most to you, you will actually find community there.

Stephanie: I love that.

Annie: It's true, right?

Stephanie: In high school, my friends were all really... We are living in Nashville. We've lived in Nashville for eight years now. I still don't know as much about music as I should. I definitely know more than I used to. But my best friend for my whole life is so into music. It's absolutely her main thing.

And when we were in high school, I tried to keep up with her. Like I went to all the shows, and I was into, I don't know, Dashboard Confessional.

Annie: Yeah, yeah, cool band.

Stephanie: Cool band. And I like tried to keep up. And finally I just gave up. I was like, I can't keep up with this. But it's been so cool because she's been able to make... I mean, she has this whole crew of friends who are so into the same kind of music that she is, and we'll go to the shows with her. And I get to be like, "I'll see you after." Or like I'll go to a show that I'm into, but like, "I'm not into that band. I'm not coming."

But I think that for me growing up it was less about me choosing to do the things that were cool. Like I was afraid to not choose things that were cool. An example is every Halloween everyone wanted to go to all of the haunted houses. I was scared out of my mind. And it was like such an uncool thing to be scared and just skip out.

And finally I had to just get over it and be like, "I'm either going to be scared out of my mind and not sleep for months because of this," or "I'm just gonna not be cool but I'm gonna get to sleep at night." and that's a hard decision too.

Annie: And live with peace. Yeah, it's super hard. It's a really funny thing. My coworker and friend, Ashley and I were literally just talking about this, about where courage and fun meet and about why it matters that you look for both. Because kind of one can be the engine and one can be the caboose. And they actually can switch.

Sometimes you can go after fun and you end up having to do something brave. So if in your head the... Haunted houses is a great example. If in your head that would have been fun but you were afraid, if you will take the steps and go with your friends, then you will be brave enough to do it and you will have enjoyed you did it.

Your reasoning was right for you. But I'm just saying other times courage leads the way and you go... Or other times fun leaves the way which is what you did where you went like, "You know what? Actually what sounds fun to me is not going to that." And what came behind is this courage to say you're allowed to be you. You're allowed to be you.

So there was still a train connected. You just let what sounded more fun to you lead, because that was the right thing to do. Where the other side is like, "Well, this could be fun but I'm gonna like courage-lead because I know what it could be. And either way, it's a win, but they often go hand in hand more than we realize.

Stephanie: I heard a podcast a million years ago and I need to figure out what this is. It was by some brands like a hammock-making brand or something like that. I'm like not outdoorsy. I shouldn't lead with that. But it was some hammock-making brand.

And they were talking about type one fun and type two fun. And type one fun is like just your immediate fun. So it's like sitting on a patio with your friends, having a drink, and watching a band or something. That sounds just immediately fun, kind of easy fun.

But then type two fun is something that requires something of you and in the moment. It's something like camping where it's like, Hey, that's uncomfortable. You're not gonna get you the best sleep of your life, you're gonna wake up sore, but

it's going to end up being more memorable fun than just going and getting drinks with someone. And I've started thinking about that more. I learned to scuba dive a couple years ago-

Annie: Oh, wow.

Stephanie: Which is like very outside my comfort zone. But that kind of thing where it's like... You know, of course, I remember time with my friends, you know, sitting on a patio. But I will never forget the deep sense of satisfaction and how proud I was of myself from doing this thing that kind of wasn't fun in the moment because it was scary but overall was like this really deep, powerful kind of thing.

Annie: This summer I got an inflatable kayak. A friend of mine gifted it to me because there's a couple of friends who all go kayaking together. And so they gave me one to be a part of it with them. And it takes so many things to get it out there.

Like you have to go to the lake, you have to put it in your car, you have to have a pump, you have to go to the lake, you have to blow it up, you have to get it in, then you have to deflate it and let it dry off and blah, blah. You know, there's just a lot of steps on either side. And yet it is so worth it. It is so worth it for the experience in the middle.

And that's exactly what you're saying about scuba diving. And that is often true about fun. I love the type one and type two. That's so true. Often, we need... Well, all the time, we need both. We need that little every day releases.

If you think about a whale, there are times where a whale goes really deep and then has to come up and will kind of surface repeatedly. And then there are other times where you see a whale come up once or twice, and then they're gone.

We need that in our lives too. We need to real deep dive, come up, do something wild like scuba diving, or a big trip or a vacation, or something that's a little bit outside of how we normally spend our finances. Because we need a big exhale after an experience.

And along with it, that same whale needs to take the daily breaths of like going to get drinks with friends or going to see a movie, or trying a new recipe. Like these basic everyday things that just bring joy to the life that you already have.

Stephanie: I love that. Talk to me about how to make time for this. Because that's like one of the things that we're thinking about is, you know, we all have our to-do lists. I'm looking at mine right now. Like how do we practically make this a part of our lives?

Annie: Well, the reality is we put everything on our calendar that we think matters most to us. So you and I having this conversation was a high priority to both of us in this hour and so it was on our calendar. So there wasn't a chance that there was going to be another one of these conversations on my calendar this hour, or that I was going to go to Old Navy in this hour because it was on my calendar.

So that's the reality about fun is even if it is going to be you and your husband and your three kids, and you're figuring out what to do Saturday, I say, put it on the calendar. Because everything on your calendar is what you have said to yourself, "This matters enough that I don't want anything taking this time."

Here's a perfect example. I got to office this morning and my sweet number two assistant, she's amazing. We call her the chief Annie officer Lilly. You've talked with Lilly.

Stephanie: I love that.

Stephanie: Lillian has a sheet for me every day that gives me my schedule. And we realized that we had left no time for lunch. Like it was just back to back to back all day. And that is going to happen some days. It is super busy. It is a busy season.

And the other thing is I'm like, "I can't live like this. We can't live at this pace." So if I want to eat lunch, we are going to have to start putting it on the calendar. Because whatever's on the calendar is what matters most. And when we don't put things like that on the calendar, the person who talks to me about 11 o'clock and the person who talks about 12 o'clock, they aren't paying attention to each other.

So they just are doing what they can do for us to get in the same place at the same time. That is absolutely what has to happen with fun. That is in my calendar. If I had it in here I would show it to you.

In my day planner, I use my iCal and I have a calendar that is one of those that always includes my personal life stuff. But in my work calendar, I outline in pink everything that is like, This is fun and it's on your calendar. Because I need to see it.

I also have my orthodontist appointment outlined for Thursday because I'm on my last trays of Invisalign. So it's like the last one. So that's fun for me, you know?

Stephanie: Yeah.

Annie: It's putting it on the calendar. It's saying to yourself, "Everything that keeps me healthy and happy is on my calendar. And I think I will choose to believe that fun is

that so I will add that to that my calendar just like add my workouts, just like I add meals with friends, just like I have vacations."

Stephanie: I love that. So I want to get some ideas. You know, we talked about looking back at your childhood and trying to kind of figure out what has brought you joy in the past? Can you give us some examples of like, I don't know, some things that are on your... that are like fun for you right now. It's summer right now. I feel like summer is such a good time for fun.

Annie: So easy.

Stephanie: So what are some fun things you're doing right now and what are some fun things...? Like just give us some ideas.

Annie: It's funny because our friends who live at... You and I are both southern gals. So we're both like, "Summer is the best." And people up north are like, "Don't you dare make me go outside in this." And they're like, "We're ready for winter sports." And you and I are like, "Please stop. Please stop."

Stephanie: It is.

Annie: It's just cold and dark. It's just cold and dark." Okay, so some examples, some things that people can do. In Chase the Fun in that last 30 days, we really kind of go through and help you identify what are the hobbies that you could try.

My suggestion as a self-proclaimed fun coach is give a hobby a month. Unless it's like a book club and they meet once a month, then give it three months. But you know, something like cooking out of a cookbook or getting together with a group of friends, or trying a sport, give all of those a couple of weeks to see if you love them.

You do not have to marry your hobby. You are allowed to walk away from your hobby after a couple of weeks if you aren't enjoying it, if it's not giving you life and fun and relaxation and vulnerability and all the things that we know fun allows for so.

So some of the things. Let me walk you through as I'm planning my fall. So I did a thing this summer called "the best summer ever," where I decided I was gonna have the best summer ever. And let me tell you why.

I love doing fun things but also there's some real hard things going on for my family and we're kind of suffering as a family. And we all knew that that would

happen this summer. So I wanted at the time that I knew there was going to be pain, I wanted to be intentional about joy.

The Bible is super clear like even in laughter the heart may ache. And we saw it in inside out, right? Like it's very theologically sound movie that actually joy and sadness go better together than apart.

So I was like, Well, I'm gonna be intentional about my joy this summer because the sadness hurricane is coming in whether I like it or not. So as I'm looking toward the fall, I'm just going to do this with you live. I haven't really done this a ton in my life. It's not like I have a list at home.

So when I'm thinking about what hobbies are coming in the fall, I'm thinking about what do I traditionally love about that season. Well, I think I love being outside still in the fall. Here in Nashville is beautiful. People get really excited. There's like things to go to.

So what that makes you want to do is it makes you want to Google what goes on in the fall in Nashville, because there's probably things I don't know about that I think would be really fun to try for the first time. For example, I know there's like a Fall Fest kind of thing down in Franklin that I've lived here 14 years I've never gone to.

So I'm gonna make a list either on my phone or on my... I use those big sticky notes on my wall a lot. So I'm gonna make a list. And I'm saying to you right now I'm gonna put that fall festival on there because I've never been before. And that sounds really fun and it cost me \$0.

So the currencies that our most important in my life are time, money, and humans. Like, your time with people really matters to me. So money is not the most interesting currency to me. I think time is far more interesting. Do we have time to do what we want versus do we have money to do what we want? So money we can be in charge of, time we cannot control. So I pay more attention to that.

So when I'm thinking about what sounds fun to me this fall, I'm thinking about stuff like that. I'm thinking about are there any trips that I want to go on that I haven't thought about yet? Because this would be the time to start thinking about that. I'm thinking about the holidays coming up and knowing financially that I want to give people gifts. So I may not get to go on a lot of trips in the fall.

So even as I'm saying that to you, I have to go, "Oh yeah, that's really true." So what would it look like to still scratch my travel itch in a real budget-friendly way? Because gas is incredibly expensive. So what's the way to do that?

If I was picking up a new hobby this fall, what would I do? I would probably sit with my... I'm having dinner with some girlfriends tonight. I would probably sit around and ask them if we could do one thing this fall once a month, what would you want to do? Just see what they say. Right? Just see what people say.

I mean, it's a great conversation to have with your husband or the guy you're dating, or the friend you're hanging out with of like, "Hey, if we picked up a new hobby this fall, what are three things you want to try?" At least start the conversation, right, and just see what people say.

So that's kind of where I would start. I think, always remember to look back at what you loved as a kid. And I get this quote from Matt Chandler, a pastor out of Texas, and he used this quote from a Jewish teacher that says, "If you work with your hands, you Sabbath or rest with your mind. And if you work with your mind, you Sabbath rest with your hands."

So let me kind of explain that. So for like doctors or baseball players, or farmers, they are spinning their bodies on their job. So their rest probably needs to look like listening to albums, sitting on the couch, going to the pool, working on a puzzle, doing things that slow their body down, reading books, let their mind kind of lead.

For people like me, and I think like you, who we work with our minds, I mean, we're typing all the time and we're talking all the time, but it's mostly our minds that work, it needs to be our hands that help us rest. So gardening, cross stitching, cooking, building, sports, going and doing, letting some energy out of your body.

And often I find that that really helps me. When I'm trying to pick what I'm going to do on my day of rest every week, I'm looking... I'm gonna read my Bible, I'm gonna pray, I'm gonna do that connection stuff with God, but I'm really looking for something to do with my hands and my body.

Stephanie: I've never heard that. And that is so good.

Annie: Ain't that wow?

Stephanie: That is so good.

Annie: It's so helpful. It is so helpful. For people to feel this release, for like athletes to feel the release of like, "Hey, on your day off, you actually should let your body rest and you should actually like read a book and watch a show, listen to a podcast while you're laying on your porch. Like, let your body rest and let your mind kind of have some exercise.

Stephanie: That's so good. Annie, tell me any last just piece of encouragement for women who are wanting to have more fun in their lives in general or this summer, but I think just life in general.

Annie: Life in general. Here's what is true. There's a counselor here in Nashville named Stephen James and he says: "Life is tragic and God is faithful." So that is what we get to hold going forward. That I can't promise you reading through Chase the Fun for 100 days and committing to that is going to make your life not painful.

In fact, what I can actually promise you is that there is going to be something that happens in each of our lives in the next 100 days that makes us cry. And maybe a big cry or a little cry, but something is going to be sad. And okay, we will survive it. The thing you didn't think you'd survive before this, you did. And so you'll be alright.

So my encouragement is don't expect the world to get easier. But figure out a way to love harder, and to connect more deeply. And then you are able to survive what you didn't think you could survive. I genuinely... I think you know this about me, Stephanie. But I mean, I genuinely think fun is kind of a life raft for us in a lot of ways.

So figuring out like, when do I need all that life raft and what does it look like to have that tool available to me I think really is going to help us grow into the women that we really want to be when we're in our 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s. I'm not even close to my halftime show yet, right? We have a lot of time left being an adult. And so I want to figure out how everything that makes me healthy and strong and happy works together. And that involves fun.

Stephanie: I just had this thought of like, "Oh, my gosh, you gotta do something awesome for your halftime show.

Annie: I know. I know. I really want to be 100 because I want to go from two digits to three digits. I kind of think that's cool. So when I turn 50, that's my halftime show. So, everybody, stick around. We got about a decade left. I've just turned 42. So I got eight years left. And then we're gonna have a great halftime show.

Stephanie: You're gonna do something awesome.

Annie: Oh, it's gonna be awesome.

Stephanie: Yeah, you're gonna have to have something awesome.

Annie: Everybody's invited. Absolutely everybody is invited.

Stephanie: Done. Annie, thank you so much. Thanks for coming on the show. Thanks for the work that you do. Thank you for helping us just be better friends to each other, to ourselves, and have more fun. You're right, it is a life raft. I'm thankful for your help in really building it.

Annie: Thanks, friends. I appreciate it.

[00:54:55] <music>

Outro You guys, isn't Annie amazing? Seriously, she's our new best friend, right?

Don't forget that if you ever want to find the links for anything we talked about in our girls night episodes, you can always find those over in our show notes. Just head over to girlsnightpodcast.com, and you'll find links for everything, including links for Annie so you can pick up her book, listen to her podcast, and follow along with all the great stuff she's doing.

All right friends, that's it for today's episode, but we have so much good stuff ahead this season. And with that in mind, now is the perfect time to make sure you're subscribed.

Subscribing to the show is the best way to make sure you never miss an episode. It won't send you an email or anything. It just makes sure your phone downloads the latest episode when the new one's released.

And I did want to take a quick second to ask you a favor. If you enjoyed this episode, or if you've been a Girls Night fan for a while now, would you take just two quick seconds to leave us a rating and a review on iTunes. Those reviews help out our podcasts so much and it really would mean the world to me. So if you take two quick seconds to do that, I'd be so grateful.

All right friends, thank you so much for joining me for Girls Night. I'll see you next week.