

## **TSF Tour LIVE: Aarti Sequeira**

**Intro:** Hi, friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm really happy to be here with you. Today we've got a great show in store for you.

**Sponsor:** But before we begin with the Live podcast recording with Aarti, I want to talk to you about one of our partners Cru. It goes without saying that reading the Bible is so important to me. If you've been following me lately, you know I've been reading through the Bible in a year. But imagine for a second that you couldn't get a Bible, that you couldn't hop on Amazon and get one sent to your house or even afford one. Take it one step further and imagine that you aren't even allowed to have one. Honestly, sometimes we forget that there are lots of people all around the world who simply can't get a Bible. And that's why we're thrilled to partner with Cru.

Cru is one of the largest evangelical organizations with over 25,000 missionaries in almost every country. Cru is giving Bibles around the world to people in their own heart language and sharing the hope of Jesus. But here's where they need your help.

For only \$21 a month that you can provide three people with Bibles each and every month. When you sign up to provide three Bibles with the monthly gift of \$21, as a thank you, Cru will provide meals to five hungry families through their humanitarian aid ministry and you'll receive a promo code for 10% off of That Sounds Fun store. Simply text "fun" to 71326 to help today. Imagine just how much this gift could change someone's life. So text "fun" to 71326. That's "fun" to 71326 to help now. Or visit [give.cru.org/fun](http://give.cru.org/fun).

**Annie:** Today on the show is my friend Aarti Sequeira. Throughout this month, you're getting to hear all of our That Sounds Fun tour live conversations if you weren't able to make it in person. We did save some of each interview just for the live audience, but most of it is here and you're gonna get to hear some live feedback from the audience, which is so fun.

Aarti is a cooking show host, a cookbook author, a journalist, a television producer, and a food personality. She won Season 6 of Food Network Star. In addition to hosting her own shows, Aarti's Party and the travel show, Hidden Eats, she also serves as a judge on his shows like Guy's Grocery Games Judge, Cooks vs. Cons, and the Christmas Cookie Challenge.

Aarti was also on our show for the 2019 Christmas Party if you want to go back and listen to that. I was so excited to have Aarti with us at our stop in Charlotte, North Carolina and so was the audience. So here's my conversation with my friend Aarti Sequeira.

It is such an honor, I mean, such an honor to welcome our guest. I feel like we are undeserving. She's incredibly generous to be here. Will you please join me in welcoming Aarti Sequeira. They love you! You're so lovely.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Oh, my gosh!

**Annie:** This is a mess, right?

**Aarti Sequeira:** I'm gonna cry.

**Annie:** I know. I was like, you're waving. They're taking pictures. Look, you get the pretty-

**Aarti Sequeira:** Look at these people.

**Annie:** I know. You get the pretty gray.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Oh.

**Annie:** I know.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Hi.

**Annie:** I told you this song is gonna live in you. What if you did this thing like on Ellen? That'd be hard. It's not possible. It's just not possible. Look at this, Aarti. You're in the studio.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Oh, my gosh.

**Annie:** Ain't that cool?

**Aarti Sequeira:** I love that you have the soundproofing.

**Annie:** Yeah, we soundproofed this picture.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I love it. I love it. Hi.

**Annie:** Aarti, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Oh my gosh, you guys. There's people here!

**Annie:** It's different than the other times we recorded.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Oh my gosh, it's so nice. It's it? It's just so lovely. I'm just like, look at me. I'm like a cat.

**Annie:** Yeah, you're doing great. You're doing great. Just make yourself at home. That whole thing is yours. Originally, they said, "Make sure you tell Aarti where to sit," and I was like, "She'll get it." No, she didn't. No, she did... Okay, fine. Fine. For the audio, she's reclined.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yes, that's right.

**Annie:** Well done.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Thank you. You know, it's funny, I was gonna wear comfy shoes. And then I decided no, I'm gonna pull out these shoes that I haven't worn in like two years.

**Annie:** Literally?

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yeah. And so back there, for a second. I was like, "This is a bad idea."

**Annie:** Take them off.

**Aarti Sequeira:** No, no, because I didn't-

**Annie:** Can we take our shoes off?

**Aarti Sequeira:** Did someone say, "Take it off?"

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Don't yell. All right.

**Annie:** Please don't yell "take it off" on a live podcast unless you mean it.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Oh, this feels so much better.

**Annie:** Oh, yeah, that's better. That's for sure better. I'm gonna get fired from my job for this. And then we just curl up.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Curl right up.

**Annie:** Why do we do that?

**Aarti Sequeira:** I don't know.

**Annie:** What is that?

**Aarti Sequeira:** I don't know. It's not curling up out of fear.

**Annie:** No.

**Aarti Sequeira:** It's out of total comfort. It's like... you know, we moved. I don't know if any of you've been following my life. But- I know, Annie, you have.

**Annie:** Yeah, I watch every story. I'm in.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Well, we moved. So my husband and I, Brendan... we're not called Brendan. His name is Brendan. It's not like Bennifer. How excited are you about Bennifer?

**Annie:** I hope that's real. I hope that's real.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Please, Lord.

**Annie:** Oh, please let it be real. I mean, that and high waisted jeans, I am here for it.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yes, I know. 100% on both of those.

**Annie:** All those things.

**Aarti Sequeira:** So we moved from LA where we had lived for two decades. Which, by the way, I grew up in the Middle East and I was there from the age of three months until I was 18 years old. So that's 18 years. So to them-

**Annie:** We call that fast math.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Where's the math teacher? I can do it too.

**Annie:** Wasn't that right? She was right.

**Aarti Sequeira:** And so then being in LA for 20 years and go, "Oh, I've been here longer than I've been there," that whole sense of home really shifted for me. And then to leave that. And

guess when we left, guys? We drove away from Los Angeles on the 27th of January 2020 and then my husband got a mysterious flu on day two of the drive.

**Annie:** Spoiler! Weren't the flu.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yeah.

**Annie:** That was not the flu in February of 2020.

**Aarti Sequeira:** No, it was not the flu. I'm sure it wasn't. And we were supposed to drive through Nashville and see you. And it was so bad that he was in the car with a mask on. He was like a prophet wearing a mask.

**Annie:** I reject his prophecies moving forward.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I know. What else you got? Because we were in a freaking Prius. It's not like we're in an Escalade.

**Annie:** Wait, wait, wait, wait. Before you go any further, you moved, you, your husband, and your two daughters, in a Prius. How did you stop and plug up in Oklahoma?

**Aarti Sequeira:** We care about the earth, Annie.

**Annie:** I believe you. That is a long way to go on a battery.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I know. It's a hybrid. So we have gas possibilities.

**Annie:** Okay.

**Aarti Sequeira:** But anyway, he got sick, I got sick, we canceled Nashville. We head to - what's it? Raleigh, which is where we live now. What up? Are you my Raleigh people?

**Annie:** So, today none of the people in counseling live in Raleigh, girl.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Come on.

**Annie:** So y'all need to start a group?

**Aarti Sequeira:** That's okay. We're gonna go. Yeah, we'll work it out.

**Annie:** Forgive me, we are outside of Charlotte. How far are you from Raleigh?

**Audience:** Two and a half hours.

**Annie:** Two and a half hours. Thank you, everyone. Some man said it over here. Thank you, sir.

**Aarti Sequeira:** All I will say is when I found out that there was no IKEA in Raleigh, I kind of lost my mind. I was like, "What do you mean? What?"

**Annie:** There ain't one in Nashville either. I know. I know it's hard for all of you to believe but true, we do not have one.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yeah, that's crazy.

**Annie:** We suffer for the gospel.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I'm telling you. It's a lot.

**Annie:** I get it. I get it.

**Aarti Sequeira:** It's a lot. I don't even know why I was telling you all of this.

**Annie:** That y'all moved across the country.

**Aarti Sequeira:** We moved across the country. We got there on February 7, we got to my in-laws house, and then the world exploded and we lived there for six months. One of the big dreams for us was to be able to buy a house because we'd spent 20 years paying somebody else's mortgage in LA. Hope you're happy, Tony!

**Annie:** He's a listener.

**Aarti Sequeira:** He was great.

**Annie:** He's a listener. Be kind. He hears this.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I'm sure he hears.

**Annie:** That was overly sarcastic. Went too far.

**Aarti Sequeira:** He was a listener. But anyway, we bought this house but trying to get furniture is so hard because COVID but also because I'm like... a huge part from both my husband and I, it's we want people to come over. And we want people... I'm showing you my side. Okay.

**Annie:** No, no, it's fine. They have TV screens. They can watch you.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Okay. I was like, "This is not nice."

**Annie:** Yes, it is. Yes, it is.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yes, it is. It's great. You're lucky. I just want you to side coach me at all times.

**Annie:** Got you.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yes, it is! Yes!

**Annie:** There it is. Side coach! I like that.

**Aarti Sequeira:** You know, okay, so funny story. We're just going to go with it.

**Annie:** Yeah, I'm here.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I was so worried because I was watching you... first of all, Annie, I could cry. Because I've only known you for a few years and by "know you" it's like... you know those people you meet and you're like, "We're good."

**Annie:** We met on the set of Hallmark Home & Family.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I know.

**Annie:** We were guests on the same day. It's also how I know Ben Higgins. Two of my favorite friends in the last couple of years-

**Aarti Sequeira:** Really? Oh, my gosh!

**Annie:** ...were just randomly booked on the same day for that show.

**Aarti Sequeira:** And it was probably one of a few of you because this is where the Venn diagram comes together, the circle of me and the circle of you. I had gotten this pair of Keds for my husband, designed by Anna Rifle who does Rifle Paper Company. She's awesome.

**Annie:** There she is.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yeah, there she is. They're black with gold flowers on it, and people had said to me, "That looks like the cover of Annie's Book, Remember God."

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Aarti Sequeira:** That was my opening line to you.

**Annie:** Yes.

**Aarti Sequeira:** And finally, I was like, "Hey, your book looks like my shoes."

**Annie:** And you know what I said? "Interested." Interested in this kind of friendship. That's right. And then we immediately went and ate Mexican food.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yes, we did.

**Annie:** And that seals every friendship.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yes, it does. Yeah. So all of that to say that this makes me cry for you. It makes me cry for you because I can tell what a big deal it is for you. And I've watched you. My husband's acting teacher would say, "Just bake the cookies, put them on the window. Bake the cookies, put them on the window. Look at your cookies." Like this is amazing because you've just continued to bake the cookies.

**Annie:** That's very kind of you.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I'm so proud and so happy for you because I know that it is fulfilling to you. But then it's also, look, I know, at all these people here and how happy they are and the smile on their faces and how happy I am too to be here. It's just dang, girl.

**Annie:** Be careful with those lashes.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Watcha say?

**Annie:** Don't cry. Be careful with those lashes.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I know. I've been doing the lash serum.



**Annie:** Oh, listen, we believe in some lash serum.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I'm telling you. That stuff works

**Annie:** Homegrown.

**Aarti Sequeira:** It works. It works.

**Annie:** Thank you for your very kind words. That is really sweet. Did I lose you?

**Aarti Sequeira:** I'm just such a mess right now.

**Annie:** No. No one thinks that.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Okay, good.

**Annie:** We're having a great time.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Okay, good.

**Annie:** I mean, you left LA... the timing is a big deal. But you work in TV, your husband works in TV and you moved, actually across the country having no idea how you would get to keep doing TV.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Well, you kind of talk about it. I mean, I'm going to call out some of the things you did in a second, but during COVID, I mean, you did a lot of the cooking with Guy Fieri on his shows. Tell me about what it felt like when that stuff started showing up, when you saw you've driven away from all of it.

**Aarti Sequeira:** We knew that it was going to be kind of a faith exercise, but also it felt like we were running to something that felt like a haven. Because I love LA. I miss it every day, you guys. I miss it. I miss the people. I miss the food. I miss the energy of that place.

And it's funny because that very energy was also one of the things that made me want to leave because there's just this constant striving there, which is awesome. But after a certain point, you're like, "Can we just take a break? Can we just rest for a minute." And I never felt like we got to rest.

So really, I think the bigger faith exercise was Brendan, my husband, because you know Brend wanted to act since he was... he has acted since he was four. So for him to leave LA was him saying, "Here's my dream, Lord Jesus, I'm gonna put it right here. I'm gonna go over there because I want a better life for my daughters." We have a seven-year-old and a five-year-old, Eliyah and Moses. We wanted more family. We had some family in LA, but more like cousins and aunts and uncles that's available to them. We wanted their toes to get dirty in the mud.

You know, they do pick up snakes now. They know a non-venomous and stuff. Those are the things that we wanted. I remember when everything was starting to collapse, I was at the airport because I would do these things at the Delta lounge. And it was the last. It was the last one.

**Annie:** She mean like she would cook food for people in the Delta. You could go taste her food. So you walk into the sky club and Aarti, this famous chef from Food Network is like, "Would you like to try this canapé?" And you're like, "Is that Aarti?"

**Aarti Sequeira:** I know. So many people were like, "What are you doing here?"

**Annie:** Right, right.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Or they do the thing would they'd look at the picture, look at me; look at the picture, look at me. "Oh my gosh." I'm like, "Yeah, here I am." And I remember that all those got canceled, a bunch of shoots got canceled, and I lost like... I saw half a year's income just evaporate. And I was like, "Okay, but..." Excuse me. I'm pointing at the ceiling podcasters because I'm talking to God. I'm like, "Excuse me, Lord. I'm sure you have a plan. But just so you know, we eat. We need to eat. And when you take away the money, the eating doesn't happen so much." So I was definitely nervous. But I give Guy a lot of credit. That man is always thinking of ways to keep people working.

**Annie:** It was really impressive.

**Aarti Sequeira:** It was really miraculous that he came up with this idea that we would do Guy's Grocery Games, essentially over Zoom. It was so weird, and so hard, and so ridiculous, and so much fun. The messages that I got from people were "Thank you. Because I keep it on all day and it keeps me up." You know what I mean? I'm never gonna say it makes me happy or makes me joyful, but it just helps so much to have something.

I mean, I watched so much comedy last year. I thank God for every comedian. I thank God for Mike Goodwin. You know what I mean?

**Annie:** Right. Me too. Me too.

**Aarti Sequeira:** We needed to laugh so much. And that hasn't stopped. I mean, I still watch so much comedy, because I was like, "Otherwise I can get really serious."

**Annie:** I think one of the things that y'all did for me when I was watching... I wonder if y'all feel this way too. When I was watching shows like that, I thought they aren't pretending like this isn't real. I'm not watching this show that is an experience that I'm experiencing. It was like bizarrely when I turn on Food Network, they are going through exactly what I'm going through.

And it was just amazing how Guy and the producers, whoever, how all y'all made us feel like, "Look, we've sorted out one way to survive in this emotionally." Did it feel that way on the cooking side of it, too? Did it feel like, "Here's a little piece of normalcy?" Or were you just giving?

**Aarti Sequeira:** No, no, it did. I mean, I remember the first episode that they did and I was judging. I wasn't cooking. And I remember we had like a few minutes before everything was about to go and it was so bizarre because I was sitting on a bed with my computer and a phone that they had given me to shoot through.

**Annie:** They just mailed you a new phone?

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yeah. They send like a big Pelican case with a-

**Annie:** I'll be friends with Guy Fieri. Open the mail, there's a phone.

**Aarti Sequeira:** It gets sent back.

**Annie:** Oh, okay.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yeah.

**Annie:** It's fine.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Before you get too excited. But that was the camera. That was the camera was the phone. In those few minutes before we started rolling, it was like me and... I don't know how many of you watch Grocery Games. It was me... Yay. My Raleigh people.

**Annie:** A lot of us do. Yeah, a lot of us do.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Me, Troy, and one other person. I can't remember who it was. And we just started talking. And then I made fun of Troy because that's what Troy's for.

**Annie:** That's what all the Troys are for.

**Aarti Sequeira:** And we laughed, and I was like, "Oh my gosh, you guys, didn't that just feel like it always did." And they were like, "Yeah." And I was like, "I'm just so happy to be with you." And it was. It was like for us too it was that taste of being together again. And even though we're watching each other cook and people are sweating because it's hard, the fact that we could still laugh and make fun of each other, which is what we do and also lift each other up. Like, "How in the world did you make those Cheetos taste good?" Or whatever it was. It was a lifeline for us too.

**Annie:** Did Candyland come next? Was that the next big opportunity for you?

**Aarti Sequeira:** That was huge. I mean, this is the thing. There have been lots of moments over the past year. Whenever you do a huge thing and you change, there are things that are hard. The one revelation I had early on was, "Okay, Aarti, just because this is hard it doesn't mean it's wrong."

**Annie:** Wow.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Just because this is hard doesn't-

**Annie:** No taking up episodes. Sorry, I didn't warn you.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Just because this is hard it doesn't mean it's wrong.

**Annie:** Just because this is hard it doesn't mean it's wrong. Wow.

**Aarti Sequeira:** This is a hard thing to do, that doesn't mean that you made the wrong decision. So just look around and look for things to see if maybe this is okay. And I saw my girls kind of flourish. It has been hard for them but I've just seen them grow in lots of beautiful ways. Like they really like the outdoors. They were scared of bugs and stuff. Now they're like, "There's a grasshopper in the window. Let's go!" So I've seen that in them.

And then one of the things was that God, Jehovah Jireh just kept providing, kept providing. I was like, "There is no reason whatsoever that I should be working as much as I am."

**Annie:** Like insane. If y'all know, she's a judge on Candyland with Kristin Chenoweth. And then Selena Gomez calls you to be on her show. Yes. Let me tell you who Selena hasn't called this year. Your girl. And then Ludacris wanted you on his show, too.

**Aarti Sequeira:** What?

**Annie:** Luda. Mmm.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I mean-

**Annie:** Those three things to me are like, only the Lord has Selena Gomez and Ludacris call you-

**Aarti Sequeira:** It was amazing.

**Annie:** ...to teach them how to cook. Like God was in on your 2021 bingo card.

**Aarti Sequeira:** No. I know, we had this conversation the last time I was on your podcast about having dreams. And I said to you, "I don't a) because I had a dream to be a journalist and then it got smashed to pieces. And a little part of me was like, 'I'm not doing that again. I'm not gonna dream again.'" But the other part of me is that after that career died, and that was a dream I've had since I was 11, after that evaporated, then I started cooking. And then that led to making my own cooking show for YouTube, which you can still find, and then going on Food Network Star.

**Annie:** And then winning Food Network Star.

**Aarti Sequeira:** And then winning.

**Annie:** And then having your own TV show on Food Network.

**Aarti Sequeira:** And then teaching Selena Gomez how to cook.

**Annie:** Listen, I'm impressed with Selena Gomez, I am here for Ludacris.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Oh, I know.

**Annie:** Atlanta stuff. I love that guy.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I know. He was great. We'll talk about him in a minute.

**Annie:** Okay.

**Aarti Sequeira:** It's just that my dreams are never anywhere near God's. Nowhere near. And the thing that I am sort of trying to wrap my head around this year is that God has dreams for me. I have dreams for my kids. I just gave myself goosebumps.

**Annie:** You're about to make me puddle on my face.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I'm sorry.

**Annie:** I'm gonna just cry if you don't settle.

**Aarti Sequeira:** What you're not gonna do.

**Annie:** What you're not gonna do. What you're not gonna do is make me cry in front of all my friends.

**Aarti Sequeira:** So good. It's so good.

**Annie:** You're right Aarti. Your dreams for your kids. Keep going.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Well, I have my dreams for my kids. My parents had dreams for me. But holy cow has my life unfolded in a much deeper and richer way. Even if I wasn't teaching Selena Gomez and Ludacris to cook, even if that's not what it is, you know, I have this incredible husband who loves the Lord and led me to the Lord. He is such a man of God. And then I have these two miracles. Because I was told you having kids is not likely. I got not one but two. I mean, even that is like this huge rich blessing that I was like, "I don't know about any of this." So I was watching Nate Bargatze who lives in Nashville. It's like one of my favorite comedians. He's so good.

**Annie:** I love him.

**Aarti Sequeira:** He's so good.

**Annie:** Yeah, he's great.

**Aarti Sequeira:** And he was talking about how he has dreams, but he keeps them within reach. Like his goals, he keeps them within reach. Because to have this huge dream is too overwhelming to him. I don't know Enneagram stuff, but whatever he is, I think I am. Because I was like, "Yes, I see you. I see you."

I don't know why I'm talking about that but that has been the lesson of this year is just like, okay, just... and my manager, Jeffrey-

**Annie:** He's wonderful.

**Aarti Sequeira:** ...who is one of my dearest friends in addition to being my manager, is like, "I want to hear what you want to do." And every time he does, I go, "Ugghh!" And he goes, "I know, but go take some time and sit by yourself." I'm like, "I don't..." It's just so hard for me. I know he's calling me to do that, but I also am comforted that if I can't figure it out, there's our first. He who started a good work within you will see it to completion or perfection. Perfection! Not even completion. Perfection. And I'm a perfectionist, so for him to sort of say that, it gives me peace that I don't have to figure it out.

**Annie:** Okay. But Aarti, what happens... So you have a dream, God has a dream. "God's dreams are better" is the t-shirt and the sentence in all the things. How do you mourn not getting the things you wanted?

**Aarti Sequeira:** Oh, man.

**Annie:** This is water by the way. Before you guys get excited. We're not like, "Be back in a minute."

**Aarti Sequeira:** I wish.

**Annie:** I mean, I think yours is water. Mine is. If yours isn't, I'm mad.

**Aarti Sequeira:** It was water.

**Annie:** They only gave me water.

**Aarti Sequeira:** And then I prayed over it.

**Annie:** Ladies and gentlemen, she just said she's Jesus. So we are done here. We are done over here.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I don't know. I'm still in the process of that because a lot of the dreams that I still hold on to, honestly are for my husband. I want him to be able to live his acting dream out. He got ulcerative colitis again like a few years ago. I'm just aching and aching for God to heal him. But the thing that I came to in 2020 was that God... why do I do it? I'm sure none of you do

this. Like when you want something. When I want something, I will go and figure out every way to do it. I will make all the lists. I will figure out all the people. I will read all the articles.

**Annie:** Control.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yeah. But will I just get on my knees and be like, "Hey, this is the thing that I really want? Would you mind taking care of it for me?" That is not the first thing I do.

**Annie:** Me neither.

**Aarti Sequeira:** For some reason, I feel like I need to be responsible and do it myself first. And then if it doesn't work, I need to go to Him. So I just pray. I'm like, "Lord, these are dreams that have not been answered yet..." I remember listening to Beth Moore once when I was super pregnant walking up the hill-

**Annie:** Sounds like a lot going on with that sentence!

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yes, going on. Perfectionist.

**Annie:** Walking up the hill both ways it was hard. It was winter but I was listening to Jesus stuff, so we're good.

**Aarti Sequeira:** But she said, "God doesn't say no unless He's got a bigger yes in store." So I'm just holding on to that, that if He has said no thus far, there's a bigger yes. And there's things happening even right now that are good.

**Sponsor:** Hey, friends, just taking a short break from this conversation to give a shout-out to our amazing partner Grove Collaborative. We've seen how healthy plant-based, non-toxic cleaning products do work and the good ones are actually more enjoyable to use. But where do you start and who do you trust? That's where Grove Collaborative comes in.

Grove is the online marketplace that delivers healthy home, beauty, and personal care products directly to you. Grove Collaborative Grove takes the guesswork out of going green. Browse the site for thousands of home, beauty, and personal care products, all guaranteed to be good for you, your family, your home, and the planet.

I use Grove products from work to home. Y'all know about my newly renovated laundry, well, the Grove laundry detergent is seriously the best. And we use the grove products at the office too. I love the natural fragrances that don't give me a headache, and I especially enjoy using the



concentrates and reusable glass dispensers. That means we're putting significantly less single-use plastic waste out into the world.

With Grove, you don't have to shop multiple stores or search endlessly online to get all the natural goods you need for you and your family. Join over 2 million households who have trusted Grove Collaborative to make their homes happier and healthier. Plus shipping is fast and free on your first order. Making the switch to natural products has never been easier.

So for a limited time when my friends go to [grove.co/soundsfun](https://grove.co/soundsfun), you'll get to choose a free gift with your first order of \$30 or more. But you have to use our special code. So go to [grove.co/soundsfun](https://grove.co/soundsfun) to get your exclusive offer. That's [grove.co/soundsfun](https://grove.co/soundsfun). And now back to my conversation with Aarti.

**Annie:** I've really been wrestling... Let's just really go there. I mean, I've really been wrestling with "not my will but yours be done." Just going like, "Oh, Jesus really had a way that He hoped the story was gonna go." He had a will. And I feel that in me of going like, "Oh, I think I'm seeing some real profound places where what I want and what God wants are not matching." And so for you to just say to me, "Have you gotten on your knees and just said it?" is pretty helpful for me-

**Aarti Sequeira:** All right. Well, good.

**Annie:** ...to hear that. It's like I'm helpful. Where didn't I be?

**Aarti Sequeira:** I like being helpful. I write these Monday motivations and they've been really helpful to me because it forces me to sit down with the Word. I mean, I know you're reading the Gospels like 70 times backwards and forwards in all the languages. I'm going to start a campaign to not quote the Old Testament anymore. Because-

**Annie:** Okay, sounds interesting.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I just think it makes it sound old. And there's nothing wrong with old things or people. Hear me out. But I think people when you say, "Oh, it's in the Old Testament," they're like, "Oh, not that God." Right?

**Annie:** Right.

**Aarti Sequeira:** "That's the old God." And I'm like, "Mm-mm, it's the same one." So I'm going to call it the First Testament. That's what I call it.

**Annie:** Can we keep clapping for you? You are not allowed to start a new religion here. Pump the brakes. I like that. The First Testament. And will you keep the New Testament new or will you turn that to Second?

**Aarti Sequeira:** I hadn't thought that through.

**Annie:** You gotta work this all the way out, my girl.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I think I'll keep it new because I think "second" implies that there's a third and a fourth. It's like Star Wars. It's not Star Wars.

**Annie:** It is just like Star Wars.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Luke Skywalker, Jesus.

**Annie:** What is your experience with the First Testament, what someone called the Old Testament? What's your experience with the God of the Old Testament that makes you want to talk so fondly about Him today?

**Aarti Sequeira:** That He is so patient. That over and over, the story of the First Testament is if we are Israel, as a whole or individually, is the... I'm gonna go serious now. My big revelation, we were studying Hosea with my women's Bible study, what's up Fellowship Raleigh? That's my church.

**Annie:** I didn't know what you're gonna what's up to. I needed to figure out "what's up to redeeming love or something else that's gonna be it." But I'm fine with "Fellowship Raleigh" too.

**Aarti Sequeira:** What's up Hosea!

**Annie:** Francine Rivers.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Oh, my God.

**Annie:** So you're reading Hosea.

**Aarti Sequeira:** No, this is good because it's gonna get serious. Is that the people of Israel had gone into the land of milk and honey and then they got swayed. Here were people that were walking around in the wilderness and they were people that raised animals. And then they come to this land of milk and honey and they're meeting agrarians, farmers, my people. My dad's a farmer. My people.

And so they had a god... How do you pronounce it, B-A-A-L? Bail? Ball? One of those. And they got seduced by what was happening there. But if you go back, which is where I always am, because I can't seem to read fast enough, God had told them even in the wilderness, "You're gonna go here. Listen, you're gonna go here and this is what's going to happen. You're going to get tempted to leave me and leave my ways and not be my bride anymore." All of Hosea is in that bride and bridegroom imagery, which of course is Jesus and the church too.

I don't know, this light bulb went off in my head, which was like, we're not meant to be like everybody else. You know what I mean? We're not meant to be like the world because it's not safe for us. If you look at what people did in Hosea, oh, my gosh, it makes me want to cry the things that they did.

And it was not just that it was horrific, it was defiling. It's like watching a beautiful thing not take itself seriously, a beautiful woman not take herself seriously and not see her worth and not see the beautiful dreams that God had for her, and to be seduced by something that was gonna just defile her and degrade her and take away all her worth and make her feel gross about herself.

And so that was just this huge lesson for me this year was "stand firm, cling hard, and don't..." When you feel like—and I feel this constantly—"I wish I was like everybody else. I wish I could do what everybody else does... There's so many times that I want to do that and I can't. Not in good conscience. You know what I mean? I know I'm being vague, but I think all of us can relate to it. Right?

**Annie:** Yes.

**Aarti Sequeira:** But where you feel like, "But I just want to-

**Annie:** It feels easier over there.

**Aarti Sequeira:** So you have less responsibilities over there. I wish I could be over there. But I can't. I've said this to people when we've talked about difficult subjects where I'm on the other side of it from them. And I was like, "I know. I know you think that I'm all the things." I'm like, "It would be so much easier for me... just hear me. It would be so much easier for me to be where you are. It would be easier on my life, it would be easier between you and me. I would feel easier like calmer and at more... Not at more peace but accepted."

**Annie:** Accepted. Wow.

**Aarti Sequeira:** As a child, I had a lot of issues with always being on the outs with friends. Until sort of recently, I've always scrambled to be accepted. "Oh, look at me, look at what I can do, look at my shoes."

**Annie:** You took them off. That was not in the plans. But I'm so happy.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yeah, I feel so good. So I don't know. That's just been something that's been playing in my mind is like, "Just stand firm. Just stand firm. Just stay here. Don't go running over there. Just stay over here. Even if it feels boring sometimes, just stay here."

**Annie:** And the patience of God in the Old Testament, I mean, I agree with you, it's one of my very favorite things about reading before Jesus, is how God was like, "Just come back. Just come back. Just come back." And I can feel myself having days where I'm like, "I am too tired."

**Aarti Sequeira:** I know.

**Annie:** Y'all know my personality well enough. I can't feel this anymore. I just need a break. I can't. And Jesus is just so kind of say, "Just come back. You want to come back home, come back home and let's talk about it." Right?

**Aarti Sequeira:** Well, it's refreshing to hear that you get tired. Anybody else? I mean, my dad used to work for Energizer. There's a certain Bunny that reminds me of you. Like you just have so much and you have so much to give. I mean, the thing in Hosea that really struck me was that God was so angry because He was so betrayed. He was a cuckolded man. And He was just so heartbroken. And then it was like a roller coaster in a bad way. Well, roller coasters are just bad. For me, they're just like it's just hell on earth.

But He would be raging and then He'd be like, "I saw you as fresh fruit in the desert. Don't you remember me? I held you as a father held a child when they start to walk." It was so tender and it was so pained. And it just gave me the sense of like, "Wow, Lord, like you're so invested in me. You're all in. Even though I'm a fair-weather friend, He's all in."

Even today, I was like, Lord, I haven't prayed today, I haven't read the Bible today. Also, didn't do it yesterday, also didn't do it the day before, and then here I am speaking to your children." And I'm like, "Could you just fill in the gap for me because I don't feel equipped?" And I don't think it's fair. You know, it's not fair. I don't deserve to be here. But for some reason, He just keeps giving me these sweet, amazing things to do even though I haven't done the work, so to speak. In today's parlance, I haven't done the work.

**Annie:** I think that feels very profound to me because it's just a reminder that First Testament or second testament, old or new, whether during the Q&A with the VIPs earlier, we had some questions about like, what if I'm new in my faith? And then some other questions about, like, what if I have friends that are really toxic? It's just this path we are all on of needing God to remind us that He is concerned about our story. And that we cannot earn that concern or that care or that love.

So you even being willing to be that vulnerable with us and say, "I didn't read my Bible today. I didn't check off the things that people are supposed to check-off is just such a good reminder to me that God is the one who is compassionate and slow to anger and abounding in love, not me.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yeah, 100%. 100%.

**Annie:** Selena Gomez.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Oh, yeah, let's pick it back up. Selena Gomez is a dear darling sweet lady.

**Annie:** She just wanted to learn how to cook?

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yeah. My friend Antonia, that's one of my other blessings for 2020 was that I got a really great friend out of it. Even though she lives in LA and I live here, we have a shared love of ice baths. That is my fun.

**Annie:** Oh, my gosh. Don't answer that yet. You love getting in pools of ice water?

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yeah.

**Annie:** That's so dumb. Save it because you said that's what sounds fun and you know that's how we ended. But you and Antonia... So she helped you get connected?

**Aarti Sequeira:** So Antonia had done it the first season. And I was so happy for her but also so jealous. You know that feeling? You know that feeling?

**Annie:** Yeah. Sorry, we do. We do. Don't we?

**Aarti Sequeira:** God, don't leave me hanging.

**Annie:** We know how people are jealous. We know how people are jealous.

**Aarti Sequeira:** She was so kind and she gave my name to the team and they were going into the second season. And so I was so excited to get the phone call. Again, God. "So we'd like you to be in the first episode." "Great. Okay." "So the first episode of the second season is going to be a standalone episode." "Awesome. Okay. And it's going to be a Thanksgiving one. You're going to make an entire Thanksgiving dinner with Selena. You're going to make her make it."

And I was like, "Wow." It's simultaneously like, "I don't think I can do that, but okay." Yeah. Also, it's one of my favorite holidays. And what a great way to connect with this person through Thanksgiving. And it ended up being a Friendsgiving. So I got to have my two best friends with me. And she had her two best friends with her.

**Annie:** Now you're like a girl gang with Taylor Swift.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yes. My squad.

**Annie:** Yeah, it's a squad. I get it. Selena is in your squad. That's why we brought you here so you can tell everyone the news.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I don't know how many of you got to watch it but at the end, we did the "What are you grateful for?" And she said her faith. And I was like, "Oh, my gosh. She just busted the door open." And I was like, "Oh, really? Tell me more. And she was talking and then her granddad was there." And he was like, "Yeah, yeah." She was saying, "I think if it wasn't for my faith, I wouldn't have gone through all of this." I think she has lupus and she has some other things going on.

And then her granddad was there and then he started quoting scripture from the Second Testament, New Testament. He starts quoting scripture, and I was like, "Oh, yeah." He couldn't finish it and I finished it. I was like, "Oh, Romans 8:28." And both of them just kind of looked at me and I was like, "Mm-hmm"

**Annie:** As Mike Goodwin would say, we're on the same team.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Yeah, we're on the same team. I hear you. I know you. And that was my hope was to connect with her. And this is my whole point with food is that it breaks down all the walls. You know what I mean?

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Aarti Sequeira:** It breaks down all the walls. You're sitting at the table, and you're breaking bread together, and food is going into your body and food is going into my body. That's very

intimate. And especially if you're the person that's made the food, something that I made with my hands, and my heart, and my mind, I'm now giving to you, you're going to put it in your body, and it's going to nourish you, and it's going to communicate something to you that I care about you even if we don't agree about stuff.

So I felt that happen where we were like, you know, even though she was in a whole different neighborhood and I was in a different neighborhood and there was just a screen connecting us, we made the same food and we were taking bites of it, and then we started talking about Jesus. That is not a coincidence. That's food. So that was so magical. And I love that.

**Annie:** I think in those moments she also will never forget that when something goes sideways, you know, someone who might be able to talk to you is Aarti.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Oh, I hope so, Selena, if you're listening.

**Annie:** She is.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I'm in your corner.

**Annie:** She and Troy both are big fans. Tony. It was Tony, sorry.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Oh, Tony!

**Annie:** Yeah, Tony, you old landlord. Before we finish, I do need to hear more Ludacris.

**Aarti Sequeira:** No, let's just keep going.

**Annie:** We can, but we can't is the science of it. Was Ludacris great?

**Aarti Sequeira:** Ludacris was awesome.

**Annie:** What did you cook with him?

**Aarti Sequeira:** The focus of that show is called Luda Can't Cook. Because he can't. So he is doing the thing that I would love to do, which is go to chefs that you admire and go, "Teach me."

**Annie:** These are things Ludacris can do that you and I can't do. Like, "Oh, let me just call Aarti."

**Aarti Sequeira:** You can try.

**Annie:** So just his people call and say, "Help him learn." Did he tell you what he wanted to learn to cook or did you pick for him?

**Aarti Sequeira:** I didn't teach him, I judged him.

**Annie:** A lot of us have done that. Am I wrong? I'm not.

**Aarti Sequeira:** My friend has a bunch of restaurants in Atlanta and in North Carolina. Meherwan taught him how to make a bunch of dishes and then he kind of put his own spin on them. So we got to eat them. And he did tremendously well. I was a little irritated because I was like, "This is my pool. This is your pool. Now you're splashing in my pool." But he was very humble. He has such magnetism. Like he walks in the room and everyone's like, "Pruuu, who is that guy?" Also, he has—this is so shallow-

**Annie:** Oh, great.

**Aarti Sequeira:** ...such beautiful skin. Annie, oh, my gosh.

**Annie:** What is his regimen? Did you ask?

**Aarti Sequeira:** I said, "I know that you've done a lot of amazing things in your life-

**Annie:** "But that facewash is the peak. The way you showed up glowy and dewy today!"

**Aarti Sequeira:** I said, "Your skin is impeccable. He's like, "Yeah." And I was like, "Okay."

**Annie:** Did you ask him for products?

**Aarti Sequeira:** I said, "What's your secret?" And he pointed across the room and he goes, "My mama." And if you look at his mom's skin, same.

**Annie:** Genetics. You can't bottle that.

**Aarti Sequeira:** No, you can't. I guarantee you he scrubs his face with dirt and that's why... you know what I mean?

**Annie:** Right, right, right. It's grocery store soap, which is fine.

**Aarti Sequeira:** It's fine.



**Annie:** I respect your budgets.

**Aarti Sequeira:** We are open to all sponsorships.

**Annie:** I will reverse sponsor grocery store soap. We are going to keep talking in just a second for our friends just in the room. But for the podcast, is there anything we didn't talk about that you want to make sure we say?

**Aarti Sequeira:** Let's see. One thing is after your first podcast... our first podcast, which may as well be your first in my mind-

**Annie:** I'm sure you didn't have shows before I showed up. You're right...

**Aarti Sequeira:** I'm trying to be like Luda. So many of you reached out to me, and was so kind and so sweet and so reassuring, and were like, "Come to my church in Raleigh," or "I'll be your friend." You guys, it was so sweet. I tried to respond to every one of you because it was so thoughtful and so kind. So I wanted to say thank you to all of you, first of all, for that. That was really, really cool.

**Annie:** We truly do have a very unique group of friends.

**Aarti Sequeira:** It's really great.

**Annie:** People say to me all the time, "I've never experienced anything like your audience." I mean, people say it to me all the time that they don't know anybody like y'all. It's one of my favorite parts of this is that when you say on a show that you're lonely, our friends say you don't have to be alone.

**Aarti Sequeira:** It's extraordinary.

**Annie:** It is.

**Aarti Sequeira:** It's unique. It is unique.

**Annie:** Yes, y'all all very generous to people. Aarti, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Ice baths.

**Annie:** No. I'm gonna let you say it but I don't like it.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Listen-

**Annie:** I mean, that is obvious thing is like so cold. That is so cold. Why do you love it? Why does that sound fun to you?

**Aarti Sequeira:** The concept of an ice bath is that you sit in icy water... listen to you.

**Annie:** 90% of us are out like a trout.

**Aarti Sequeira:** It's only 40 degrees, okay?

**Annie:** Fahrenheit?! That's so dumb. That's so dumb, dude. I love you so much. That's stupid.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I know. I know. I thought the same thing though.

**Annie:** But it makes you feel great on the inside?

**Aarti Sequeira:** First of all, you have to breathe and breathe and breathe and breathe... beforehand.

**Annie:** We've been doing that all night long without being in ice.

**Aarti Sequeira:** You're already a step ahead.

**Annie:** Yeah. We do without getting in ice, though. It's one of our skills.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I'm telling you. Just imagine how you'd breathe in ice.

**Annie:** Nope.

**Aarti Sequeira:** But no, for me, what's helpful about it is a) it makes me feel strong and b) it shuts my brain off.

**Annie:** Everybody's like, "Yeah, huh?"

**Aarti Sequeira:** Why are you laughing?

**Annie:** They were with you and then they turned.

**Aarti Sequeira:** No. But you know how for me my brain is constantly spinning and I'm trying to be very mindful about not being on my phone constantly or listening to something constantly. I mean, unless it's this podcast.

**Annie:** Certainly.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Because it's just too much. I'm reading Jennifer Dukes Lee's book "Growing Slow" and so that's really in my mind that I need to slow it down. Because my creativity is spent, my patience for all things is spent. So I'm just trying to slow it down.

So before you get in the ice, you have to [breaths in and out]. Like you almost hyperventilate yourself a little bit because it warms your body up. Stay with me. And then you get in the ice and everything slows down. And you breathe and you feel... I mean, it doesn't feel great.

People are like, "Oh, there's something wrong with you. It feels awesome." No, it doesn't. It doesn't feel great. But afterwards when I get out, there's a high, there's clarity, there is such clarity in my brain. Also, your skin firms up and you get a glow. I'm trying to sell it. I'm trying to sell it.

**Annie:** You're trying to sell. Yeah. You look like Luda.

**Aarti Sequeira:** I just love it. I just love it. It feels like one of those things that I don't get to do it nearly as much as I want to. So now I just do cold showers. Just a cold rinse at the end. Stay with me, don't leave. It starts with 30 seconds at the end of your shower and you feel so energized and so refreshed, and your eyes are wide open and your brain is firing.

**Annie:** Sure.

**Aarti Sequeira:** Also, I have struggled and still do struggle with depression and anxiety. It's really great for that. And then if you have any muscle soreness from working out, that's where it kind of started, it helps to dissipate some of that soreness. So for me, you know, standing and cooking all day...

**Annie:** Will you please give a round of applause to our guest Aarti Sequeira.

**Outro:** Oh, you guys, isn't she just the best? I love Aarti so much. What you couldn't see but you probably heard was she just kicked our shoes off and crossed our legs and had the very best time. Hey, go give her a follow. She's @aartipaartipics on Instagram if you're not following her. You can tell her thanks for being on the show.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook. All the places you may need me, that's how you can find me. I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that Sounds Fun to you. I will do the same. Have a great weekend. We'll see you back here on Monday as we continue with our That Sounds Fun live shows with my friend, Jamie Kern Lima.