

[00:00:00] <Music>

**Annie:** 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, one y'all have been requesting for always. So I'm thrilled about today's show.

And before we get started, I want to tell you about one of our incredible partners, CRU. It probably goes without saying, but here I am saying it anyways, reading the Bible is so important to me. If you've been following me through 2021, you know, I've been doing the Bible in a Year, and I'm always blown away by the new things I learn, even in passages I feel like I've read 100 times.

But imagine for a second that you couldn't get a Bible, like you couldn't afford one or couldn't just hop on Amazon and have one sent to your house. Take it one step further, and imagine that you aren't even allowed to have one. Honestly, sometimes we forget that there are so many 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 in the world, with over 25,000 missionaries in almost every country. Cru has given Bibles to people in their own heart language, and sharing the hope of Jesus all around the globe.

But here's where they need our help, for only \$21 a month, you can provide three people with Bibles each and every month. And when you sign up to provide three Bibles with a monthly gift of \$21, as a thank you, Cru will provide meals to five hungry families through their humanitarian aid ministry, and you'll get a free copy of my book That Sounds Fun.

Simply text FUN to 71326, to help today. Imagine just how much this gift could change someone's life. So text FUN, F-U-N to 71326, to help now or visit [give.cru.org/fun](https://give.cru.org/fun).

Today on the show, you guys, okay listen, here's what, there are some people y'all ask me to have on the show all the time. And Abner and Amanda, from JOHNNYSWIM are the top of that list, and I adore them. They actually met right here in Nashville in 2005, started writing songs together. And they just released their first book called *Home Sweet Road: Finding Love, Making Music & Building a Life One City at a Time Finding Love*, earlier this summer.

It's a gorgeous book, y'all are absolutely going to love it. The words are amazing. The pictures are beautiful. There's recipes and poetry anyway, I loved it. I read it

front to back and I absolutely loved it. And remember they have TV series now as part of the Magnolia Network launched on Discovery Plus and they're awesome. Y'all, I could not love these people more. I'm so happy that they're on the show today. So here's my conversation with my favorite and your favorite JOHNNYSWIM.

[00:02:41] <Music>

Here's the thing I need to tell y'all, Abner and Amanda, there isn't anyone people stalk me about having on the podcast like JOHNNYSWIM.

**Amanda:** Yay.

**Abner:** Yay, stalkers, we love stalkers.

**Amanda:** Yay stalkers, love you stalkers out there thank you.

**Annie:** Your people are relentless, and I'm tired of it. So this is-

**Amanda:** [Crosstalk 00:03:05] you know what I mean?

**Abner:** Oh, Lord yes.

**Annie:** Well, I'll tell you the real, reel, is we wanted y'all to do, and this is some making-of-the-sausage story. But we originally-

**Abner:** I don't understand that kind of story.

**Annie:** ...sorry about that. In 2020, we had a live show, in 2020 before COVID, we had a live show in L.A., and I wanted y'all to be live with us.

**Abner:** I wanted to be there.

**Amanda:** We were on tour, weren't we?

**Annie:** There was nothing, we were nothing. Everybody was at home, because it was 2020.

**Amanda:** Okay got you.

**Annie:** COVID cancelled everything. And so what your stalker fans don't know, is that we've tried 54 times, to get you on the show, and our schedules don't work. And then we tried to have you live, and then COVID cancelled.

**Amanda:** Well, here we are, we made it.

**Annie:** Here we are.

**Abner:** For such a time as this young ladies, for such a time as this.

**Annie:** Listen, won't He do it? Won't He do it? Listen, I need us to talk about how much you left Nashville, you left Nashville. And you talk about it so much in your book, how much you love leaving Nashville?

**Abner:** Nashville is like the nephew that you said goodbye to, you leave for college, and you come back, and he's like the cool kid. You left him, and he was like the  
[Inaudible 00:04:14]

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Abner:** And now everyone's like, "We're here, we are in L.A." I'm learning to fly airplanes right now, and so I'm in with my flight instructors for sure, and I talk about this-

**Annie:** Are you really?

**Abner:** ...the whole time, so-

**Amanda:** That's why he was late.

**Abner:** No, don't say that, that's not why

**Annie:** We rescheduled so you can fly a plane? I respect that so hard, Abner, I'm all the way here for it. I'm all the way here for it.

**Abner:** Yeah, I'm obsessed. Amanda where [Inaudible 00:04:39]

**Amanda:** Nashville.

**Abner:** Nashville, so I'm fine.

**Annie:** Nashville.

**Abner:** And I'm like so excited, this is a dream come true. I'm flying an airplane, I'm with my instructor. And so sometimes you plan, you coast, and you're heading to a place to practice a thing, and in that way, there's small talk. And so my instructor,

this particular instructor is from London, lives in Los Angeles, and he's like, "Man you know..." and he just says to me, "Man, my wife and I really tried to move to Nashville, I visited once and it's just like the best city I've ever been to."

**Abner:** And I was like, "Can I just stop you real quick, before I need you to fly this plane, because I'm going to I'm going to pass up. You are from London, live in Los Angeles, and Nashville is the coolest place you've ever been to?" So it's definitely like the nerdy nephew that outgrew you.

**Amanda:** But even for me, I mean, I went to high school and college in Nashville, I moved away. And then around the time I met him, I moved back to Nashville, and I remember living in New York and being like, "Yes, I'm going to Nashville this weekend." Like even back then before, that was before it got cool, you know what I mean? When there-

**Annie:** Yeah, y'all were way O.G., yeah.

**Amanda:** Yeah, like when Green Hills Grille, shout out to Green Hills Grille, O.G. Green Hills Grille.

**Abner:** Green Hills Grille

**Annie:** Back open.

**Amanda:** It's back.

**Annie:** It's back.

**Amanda:** I went [Crosstalk 00:05:48]

**Annie:** When y'all come to town we're going, it is-

**Amanda:** Yeah. It's not quite the same as it used to be when-

**Abner:** In Green Hills.

**Annie:** No, ma'am.

**Abner:** It used be-

**Amanda:** But...

**Abner:** No, the one in Cool Springs, there's one in Cool Springs.

**Amanda:** No, there was... oh, no, that that was no, no.

**Abner:** Okay, I'm wrong.

**Amanda:** You're misinformed.

**Abner:** I'm sorry.

**Amanda:** Anyway, y'all know what I'm talking about. There was like two restaurants, you went to Macaroni Grill, you went to Alexander's, you went to Green Hills Grille. Back in those days-

**Abner:** For sure.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** ...I would feel like I want to be in Nashville. But then there came a time also where it was like, "We're not supposed to be here."

**Abner:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** And it was just a very obvious like, "We got to go somewhere."

**Abner:** We try not to be like weirdo mystical folks, but there's, I mean, we're on a spinning rock. That somehow the spinning of this rock as it travels through the universe, keeps at our feet on the ground, and things grow, and there's life, and there's love.

So things are maybe more mystical than we, in our daily life give them the credit for. I'll never forget, we were in Nashville, and we both hated L.A., both of us. I'd only been a couple times.

**Annie:** Mh-hmm.

**Abner:** She was born here, and lived here for a while, and I visited a bunch. And we were both kind of, we're really into journaling at the time. Which we haven't done, I think having three kids keeps you from journaling, maybe I don't know.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Abner:** It has me. And I remember we both within like a few days of each other, I think she was at a town as well. We were kind of like having our quiet times and just

write our thoughts down, and I remember seeing your journal and I had written something similar to mine. But she showed me in the corner of her journal, she wrote, "What's this about L.A.?" Question mark.

And we had both decided we were never going to move to L.A. But we both got this sense that we had grown as much as we're going to grow where we were, and that we needed to plant in a new ground, if you will. So to get that next season to grow, and so we moved to L.A., with I think we had like \$25 to our name, we lived with family. And really Nashville claimed us more after we left than when we were there.

**Amanda:** It's true, yeah.

**Annie:** Really?

**Abner:** But we love it, we love it, [**Inaudible 00:07:44**] Nashville, please.

**Annie:** Hey, listen, I'm all here for this mystic talk. Because I think the Lord is always trying to show us more Easter eggs than we are paying attention to.

**Amanda:** I love a good Easter egg. I love a good Easter egg.

**Annie:** Okay, so let's chat, and one of the things you'll say in your book, which if our friends haven't gotten the book, Home Sweet Road, I mean, I read the whole thing. And I-

**Abner:** I can't believe you read it sorry.

**Annie:** ...and I loved it. I need y'all to know that I did, and I loved it. I mean, the way y'all go back and forth, yeah, I'm not going to do that, it's amazing, it's very good. But the part where you say, "We are rivers and not lakes." Were you taught, both of you kind of talk about that, because that's mystical to me.

Like I had this moment where I stopped on that page. Where you're telling the story that I went like, "Oh, that explains nine things is going on in my life right now."

**Abner:** I think there's always this fear that I think with money, with creativity, you see it all the time, especially with kind of art come-ups was in Nashville. And the difference in the creative communities in Nashville, L.A., in New York, at that time, and I can't really speak to it now as much. All these kids grind and write, in L.A. everybody wants to be famous, in New York everybody wants to be

successful, in Nashville everybody wants to be great, they just want to be great.  
That was-

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

**Abner:** ...[Inaudible 00:08:53] the strong songwriter community is still, we always go over the Nashville thing.

**Annie:** Interesting.

**Abner:** And I think there's always, there was this talk, especially when you're young, of like, "Are you nervous?" And I think it happens when you're young, and then when you've had a little bit of success. Are you nervous that you've written your best song? Are you nervous that your best moment of creativity is behind you? And that's a real genuine fear, and there was this realization.

The whole rivers and lakes thing came up because of money, really. There was this super rich guy, whatever, and I always hate listening to rich people talking about money, because they make it sound easy, but they never give me any. So like-

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Abner:** ...don't tell me how easy that was to give me the money you gave me.

**Annie:** Yeah, let me let me prove it, let me prove it.

**Abner:** But he was talking about people, this one particular guy, I cannot remember who he is, he's like, "I remember I was just hoarding my dollars, all my dollhairs were just being hoarded. I want to have more of it, I want to grow, I want to grow." And it was the least amount of financial growth I've ever had in my life, is when I hoarded my finances.

When I found things to give to whether philanthropically or people to invest into or whatever. When I realized that I was a river, that my finances were like a river, not a lake, and just like a lake or a pond that has kind of grosser stuff in it, it gets a film on it. I don't know if you've ever been to some of these lakes in like Central and South America, where the sewage just dumps into it. And I've swam it as a kid.

**Amanda:** That explains a lot.

**Abner:** And you'd like just go, you go hit deep into the nasty soil, and then river, there's new life, there's refreshing, the water is cooler, there's so much more growth of like healthy things, whatever. He said that it really flipped the switch in me for creativity and for life, and for finances, and all that stuff.

That we haven't just been given one talent to bury into the ground. And then whenever we have to show a report and be like, "See, it's right there, we did the right thing, we did the safe thing."

I love that we're constantly, as humans being, called into adventure. And the adventure isn't just to go see something new even though it is sometimes or go do something new, which it is sometimes. The adventure is also to trust that what you have, is it going to fail you. What you have is enough for what's ahead of you.

And that's really what we talked about, when we think about being rivers not lakes. Don't just store up so you have enough to do the thing you thought of doing, you got enough right now to make that first step forward.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** And it frees you up to be generous, you know?

**Annie:** Yeah

**Amanda:** Generous with your creativity, generous, obviously, with your money, generous with your time. It frees you to be generous and not feel like you have to hoard things when you go, "I'm a river now, like there's more coming in where that came from." There's not like, God doesn't have a cup where He's like **[Inaudible 00:11:18]**, that's it, used up. Like we are rivers not lakes, there's more coming to us, so that means we can give more.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** So it's definitely like a life motto. But he said it all better, so I'm going to shut up now.

**Abner:** No, I didn't, I just said it louder.

**Annie:** No.

**Amanda:** You definitely said it louder, I can-



**Annie:** I was very... We're going to really dive into friendship, because I'm going to tell y'all stuff like we're not recording. I mean, last week when I was on vacation, one of the things that the Lord said to me the clearest is, "You know enough, you know, enough to make the next step." Because I was wanting-

**Amanda:** Everything.

**Annie:** ...I was wanting all the way down the river. And the Lord was like, "You know enough." And so literally, I'm going to show y'all on the background of my phone, "You know enough."

**Abner:** Wow.

**Amanda:** Oh my gosh, yeah.

**Abner:** I mean, I'm just like living by, right? Like, I've got an I see enough of a river, I know enough. And so talk to our friends, who are listening who are thinking, "But we hear you Amanda and Abner, but our money is running out." Or "That relationship just ended that I thought wasn't going to end." Or "We just lost another pregnancy." Or "I'm a pastor to church, and it's not going right." Like, what do we say that people who aren't loving the river?

**Abner:** Mh-hmm, that's so good.

**Amanda:** Well, specifically with the money thing, the first thing I thought of, when we were first married, and we were so, so, broke.

**Abner:** I had \$14 on our wedding day.

**Amanda:** Like so broke.

**Abner:** My total values.

**Amanda:** So I feel that one specifically. I feel that one specifically. And I remember we moved to L.A., and we were like, "All right, this is it, we're going to move to L.A., things are going to click. We're finally going to get somewhere with our career, we're probably going to like get somewhere."

**Abner:** Those are good words.

**Amanda:** And we got here, and like, literally, nothing happened.

**Abner:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** And we didn't have furniture, and we didn't have money, and we had to ask our friends to help us with like bills quite often.

**Abner:** Literally, no literally, we had friends over when the power got cut off, that would pay our power bills for us.

**Amanda:** Yeah, and we talk about it in the book. But one of the things that I remember in that season, A, we learned contentment in all things. It was like, okay, all of this stuff is going wrong, but look at the things we can be grateful for right underneath your nose, and there were so many things. And it allowed us to like train ourselves, I feel like you do have to train yourself.

Actually, I think it's scientific. I'm going to say it's scientific, because I think I saw it on a TikTok, which means it's scientific. But you know, you train yourself to see-

**Annie:** That's right.

**Amanda:** ...whatever. Whatever you focus on your brain sees more of. If you're focusing on the color red, you see more red. If you're focusing on things that are good, you're going to see more good. If you're focusing on things that are bad or that are depressing, you're going to seeing more bad things that are depressing.

And for us in that season of contentment, one of the things that we felt like the Lord spoke to us was, "Money is easy for me. The thing that you want, the thing that you feel like you're fighting for that is easy for me." The things that are more valuable than that thing you want is the patience, is the contentment, is the ability to have gratitude and all things.

Those are the things that are hard, that money cannot buy, that nobody can actually force you to learn unless you sit here and learn it yourself. So I'm going to give you the stuff that's important in this season, you get the honor of getting the valuable thing. Even though the thing that you think is valuable or something to buy.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** So I would say-

**Abner:** That's good.

**Amanda:** ...focus, and this comes from a children's book that we love, specifically, and it's called, *The Boy, The Mole, The Fox, And The Horse*.

**Annie:** And The Horse, three different people gave it to me for my birthday.

**Abner:** It is so good. Listen to the audiobook.

**Amanda:** Listen to the audio book, sit with a cup of tea, and some tissue.

**Abner:** The audio book-

**Amanda:** Have you listened to it?

**Abner:** ...is to me even better.

**Annie:** No.

**Amanda:** It's a beautiful. Like we bought it for our kids, we were driving up to Lake Arrowhead, like in the middle of pandemic we rented a house up in the mountains. Because we were just trying to get out and we're like, "Let's put this audio book on." And Abner and I were crying, and our son, like our son Joaquin, who is six, was like, "This is beautiful." I was like, "Gosh no."

**Abner:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** And one of the things he says when the world seems crazy, when things feel out of control, when they seem too big, the little boy asked, I think, the horse, "What do you do?" Or the mole.

And the answer was, "You look at the little things that you're grateful for right under your nose, and you focus on those things." And that for us was like, especially the pandemic world, tours got shut down, everything's a mess, it was like, "Ah! That is the thing to focus on the little things right under your nose."

**Abner:** To echo, the echo of Amanda's echo-

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** I thank you, I did a kind of double-edged sword-

**Abner:** When we first moved here, again, we were super poor-

**Annie:** That was beautiful.

**Abner:** ...we were super broke, we had no trajectory in career, nothing was happening, we moved here completely as an act of faith. And there was a pastor that was really close to us, that is still really close to us, kind of a prophetic voice into our life. Somebody prayed for us, prayed over us-

**Amanda:** Like from the time we first met, like, actually, before I met him.

**Abner:** Yeah, I've actually known known him, his name is Pastor Dan Fessler, I've known him since I was a little girl. He was like a very close friend of my parents, and so he's been with us kind of like our whole journey.

**Abner:** Pastor Dan was in town, we were kind of at the bottom of the barrel. We were like, completely not enjoying our ride down the river. And he said, "I got something for you, the Lord spoke to me about you specifically. I'm so excited, let's meet up, I'm going to take you to lunch, and I'm going to tell you about it. I'm going to tell you this word of the Lord for you, whatever."

And we get in the car, and I'm actually taking him to the airport, by the time he tells us. He was like, "All right, so God told me that in this season," and I was ready for him to say, "In this season, success is coming, you're going to make money, you're going to have a song that sends you into the stratosphere. Careers will really blast off all the stuff." He said, "In this season, you are going to learn contentment."

And I remember sitting there and being like, "That's not what I want to hear." And I said that, "That's not I want to hear." And he said, "Man, I'm telling you, it's better news than you think."

**Annie:** Right.

**Abner:** And in that season we made no more money. In that season we had no launch in our career. In that season we were the happiest we've been in our entire lives. We pulled, in this season, where we've got two TV shows, a book out, we're about to tour, a new album, we feel like we're on the path that we've wanted. We have the belt, and you can't ask for homeruns, but you can ask to step up to the plate. We're at the plate, and we get a chance to do something with the talents, and the opportunities, and the energy that we have.

In this season, we're still drawing from that broke, sightless, perspective-less season, because in that season, there was a well dug in us of contentment, of true joy of happiness. That so often we find ourselves in the middle of the mess, in the middle of the beautiful busyness. Centering ourselves back in something that we

discovered in the saddest, because we lost both our parents in that season. We lost her mom and my dad in that season.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Abner:** In the least career fulfilling, the most broke we've been, we are drawing today from that season, because it was that good. And it didn't feel great at the time.

**Amanda:** No, no, no, it did not.

**Annie:** That is such a word. That is such a word. I mean, that is like reminding us that what we are gaining in the hard days, in the dark nights of the soul, we will still care about when we have the-

**Abner:** That's it.

**Annie:** ...thing we think we want.

**Amanda:** Right, and it will probably be the thing that still is more valuable to you, you know?

**Abner:** This is going to get a little dark-

**Annie:** More valuable.

**Amanda:** Fantastic.

**Abner:** ...but whatever, here we go.

**Amanda:** I'm going to need some coffee.

**Abner:** It's empty.

**Annie:** Here we go. I mean, I told you what the Lord said to me last week at the beach, so we're good, we're all the way in. We are 10 minutes in and we're going deep.

**Abner:** My dad was sick, he had a stroke, and he was in the hospital. And he ended up passing from, but I remember he was in the hospital for about a week, maybe 10 days, and we were praying. We were praying, believing, and listening to worship music, we were singing. I remember looking out of the window and seeing Amanda down in the little garden at the hospital, walking and praying, hands up singing, believing, contending for his healing, contending for his life.

Praying, like I've never prayed before, not even just out of desperation, but out of a true faith, there was something beautiful, that was unlocked in that time. In that really dark, beautiful time, and we lost him, he died. And I remember, I don't remember, I think was you that said this, there was this weird-

**Amanda:** If it was awesome then yes it was me.

**Abner:** It was awesome, and I'm going to give you credit for it.

**Amanda:** Thank you.

**Abner:** What happened to all those prayers, like what happened? We really believed it was an exercise of faith, it was an exercise of belief. And Amanda said this really beautiful thing, and you can, once she said it, once you put words to the sentiment, I could feel the reality the truth in it.

She said, "I just can't shake the feeling that every moment of prayer, every time contending, and all the time contending in worship for healing, dug a well for us that the Lord is filled up with joy, that He's filled up with energy." I don't just mean like excitement and energy, I mean, like the capacity to continue, that kind of energy.

**Annie:** Yeah. Actually like kinetic energy, actually something, yeah.

**Abner:** And it made all the sense in the world. I could feel that, I could feel that not one prayer, returned void, not one request, not one moment. Even in that sad dark time where we did not know what we asked for, none of that went in vain.

**Amanda:** And I don't think it's just for us, I don't think it's just for Abner and Amanda. I think those prayers dug a well for generations after us, and that's what I believe and I'm continuing to believe. Is that those moments of really being on our knees, weren't just for us, and, yeah.

**Abner:** Not even just for my dad, not even for that moment. I feel like that time is present when we write songs, it's present when we're with books. There's something, it's not, I always, by being from Nashville, there's always these bands that are kind of similar that pop up. So when we were on the come-up there was a bunch of duos, in the early years, and now there's kind of duos everywhere.

But I remember there was this one duo, that really was cashing in on how sweet and like lovely their romance was. And how kind of beautiful and perfect, and I think you see a lot of that now. And we've always been anti-that. Typically, when

you see JOHNNYSWIM merchandise, this is one of the rare times I'm not wearing some, it's got skulls on it, it's kind of dark in coloring-

**Annie:** Aha.

**Abner:** Because we don't, the thought of not leaning into this picture-perfect, because that just seems so fake, like when we talk about whatever kind of love. When we talk to people about finding the person, their spouse, the person they're meant to walk this life with. And the generations after them are going to be dependent on that one relationship. We don't just talk from this time of, "Oh, everything's been cool, everything's been great. It worked for us, here's our 10-step process to being like JOHNNYSWIM."

It's like, "No, man, we've been in the mud. We've dug the well in prayer and requests that weren't answered the way we thought. We've heard the "Nos" we've seen the tragedy. We've had to wait when we wanted access, we had to wait when we wanted action."

And I think even like the skull and bone stuff that we use in a lot of our merches, even the romantic side, like I would never encourage someone to just find a love that was similar to a blossoming flower, and how beautiful it is, that's not even what you want. That's not even what you're looking for, even if you think it is, it's not what you're looking for.

What you're looking for is kind of ugly, and it's kind of painful. What you're looking for is someone that, success in your relationship, success in me and Amanda's relationship, is this ring being on my finger and a toe-tag being on my toe the day I die. That we made it, that we pushed through.

**Annie:** Mh-hmm.

**Abner:** Not just the time, but that we saw the highs, the lows, and the tragedies, the successes, I'm talking too much, Amanda I'm sorry. You understand me?

**Amanda:** 100%.

**Annie:** No, I'm all the way here for this.

**Abner:** But there's so much I remember, God, we keep it dark. When Amanda's mom passed, we were all there, and I remember, and I won't you know overshare. But there's this beautiful moment, near the end, where her husband is holding her, and she's in pain. And he's looking her in the eyes, and saying, "Look at me, look at me Adrian, look me in the eye, I love you, I love you, I'm with you, I love you."

It was simultaneously the most painful thing I've ever witnessed in my life, and equally the most beautiful thing I've ever seen in my entire life, they existed at the exact same time. And that's what we signed up for with each other. That's why I believe like the moments in prayer, the times when those wells that are dug, those unfulfilled requests, that's where you see the value in them, not just in, "I feel better," here's some encouragement. But there's something that people need around you to do. I'll stop talking.

**Amanda:** And this you're going to find on christianmingle.com. One day soon.

**Annie:** Man I'll tell you there something really profound that we talk about prayer a lot around here, because we enjoy the conversation. But there is something about how much better you know the Lord, when you don't get what you want when you want it.

**[00:23:31]** <Music>

Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation real quick, to share about another one of our incredible partners, Rothy's. I know that in a lot of places kids are prepping to head back to school, but summer is still in full swing and none of us need to be caught without comfortable footwear to finish out the season.

Rothy's has got us covered y'all, Rothy's surveyed thousands of customers, and the number one word used to describe their shoes is, comfy. I would love to know the number one word you would describe me, we'll figure it out someday.

What is it that makes Rothy's so good? It's their unique seamless design it's insanely comfortable, as soon as you put them on, and the styles are sustainably made with materials like plastic water bottles, y'all know I love that. You can toss them in the washing machine whenever they need a little refresh, and they're available and tons of shapes, styles, and colors, so you can always find the one that's right for you.

With bestsellers like flats, loafers, and sneakers, along with sandals, and an array of colors, their newest styles have something for every outing you've planned. Plus, they're spacious, washable bags are perfect for summer getaways.

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So step up that summer wardrobe you guys with washable, sustainable, stylish shoes, and bags from Rothys's. Just head to [rothys.com/soundsfun](http://rothys.com/soundsfun) to find your new warm, weather favorites today. That's R-O-T-H-Y-S.com/soundsfun. And now back to my conversation with JOHNNYSWIM.

[00:25:16] <Music>

Okay, so tell me, those wells, when you're thinking about that, how does that play out? When you're parenting? How does that play out when you're writing songs? The fact that those wells exist in you, does that affect everything?

**Abner:** Absolutely. I'm going to leave Amanda to it.

**Amanda:** I don't think that there's any way that they could not affect. Because it really does change your makeup, it changes how you see everything, parenting can be very, very hard. Sometimes, because your kids are being weird, and sometimes because your kids are being kids, and you'd have a billion things to do, and you're like ready to jump off a cliff.

**Abner:** Don't do it.

**Amanda:** Don't do it. No, but there's a-

**Annie:** Don't do it.

**Amanda:** ...there is a, you know that you have the capacity for. You know you have the capacity to withstand whatever the pressure is. And you also have the capacity to know to surrender when you need surrender.

**Annie:** Mh-hmm.

**Amanda:** It's kind of, I talk about birth a lot, I had for all three of my kids at home. And one thing that before we had our first was when you get to transition.

**Abner:** What's transition?

**Amanda:** Yeah, what's transition? So transition is like the last phase of birth, before you start pushing the baby out. Like, you go through all of labor, and then-

**Annie:** Okay, so you've already had contractions?

**Amanda:** You've already had contractions for a bunch of time. Now, the baby's like, basically where it needs to be, and you're about to start pushing. But there's a few a really short amount of time called transition, where you go from just regular labor to like pushing the baby out.

So transition is the hardest by far, it is also the shortest part of labor. But every time of all three kids, I would look at Abner and go, "I can't do this, I'm done, I can't do it." And he's like, and every time either him or my midwife, would look me right in the eye and say, "You've got it, you're doing great. The baby is almost here, just keep breathing. Just relax, keep breathing."

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** And then one of my midwives will just touch me on my forehead right there, just to make sure everything's relaxed, like whatever.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** And all this is the shortest part, and then after the baby is born, literally, the babies are born like minutes later. But in that moment, you're like, "This is horrible." Like, "I cannot do this anymore, I'm done." And that's right when the baby's about to be born. So for us in that season, that it was like that for us in that season, with our parents dying and everything else.

Like it was such like a amount of pressure that felt like we couldn't withstand it. And then obviously, we did and it made us better, and there was so much beauty that came out of it. The same thing now with parenting, with writing music, with media, with all that we kind of can tap into that a lot of times, when we're in the middle of something. Like we're making this record, we're almost done, we're almost done with it. We've made it during quarantine at home in this very room, you can see the little keyboard back there and all the gear, and whatever.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** Everything has been done here. It's the first time we've really done it all our ourselves. Abner is fully producing, with two other friends remotely, that sort of thing, but it's basically been us. And like, last week, we were like, "We are done."

**Abner:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** And our manager was like, "We're almost ready, a couple of more songs." And we're like "We can't do it anymore."

**Abner:** And I was like, "I think I've given all I can give. I don't know that I could do one more song, literally one more song."

**Amanda:** And then we looked at each other, and we were like, "Transition."

**Abner:** Transition

**Amanda:** This is the part before the new birth comes, and all we have to do is relax, let ourselves feel what we're feeling, but relax. And it's going to come out, and it's almost over, this means we're almost done.

**Abner:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** I feel like that's the case-

**Abner:** That's good.

**Amanda:** ...with so many things, and I honestly, the lessons that I learned in that season where we were digging those wells were the ones that got me. Because honestly, in that season, I can do hard things, that was the big thing. Our parents both died the same year, there was so much hardship in that year. Also so much joy and beauty, but so much hardship.

But it instilled in us this idea of like we can do it, and not only we don't have to do it by ourselves, we know where we can go for what we need. And we can get through it, and it can still be beautiful, and you can look at hard things and choose them. And that's part of why I even chose to have babies at home, because it instilled in me this thing of going I can choose hard things that I believe have value, even though I know it's going to be horrible.

**Annie:** Yeah

**Amanda:** And kind of [**Inaudible 00:29:15**]. But I also believe in what we are doing, and that all came from that season of our life.

**Annie:** I mean, that transition thing will carry, so many of us are going to carry that in our lives, and go like "Oh!" So I guess the question is, you need community I guess, to help you know when it's transition versus when it's labor, and when it's birth?

**Abner:** That's great.

**Amanda:** That's absolutely right.

**Abner:** That's exactly right.

**Amanda:** That's absolutely right.

**Annie:** Because by myself, I'm going to quit. Yeah, if it's just me, I think, transition means eject.

**Abner:** Right.

**Amanda:** Exactly. Like transition means do whatever you need to do, I'm tapping out, and you do need the people next to you going, "You got this. You can do this." We were at the gym yesterday and there was a girl next to us, that was like "I can't do it." And I was like, "You can do it." And then she looked at me and I was dying on the floor, and she was like, **[Inaudible 00:30:01]** Okay, we got this.

**Abner:** And I was laying on the floor skipping that workout.

**Amanda:** We had the community, we had strong women community here in-

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

**Amanda:** Because you can't see it, so it's kind of outside of you. At some point, you get into that primal, like fight or flight mode when you're going through the hard times. And you just think "I got to escape." And to have somebody with you, that sits with you in the moments that are painful. In the moment you want to escape and go, "We're going to keep sitting here, we're going to do it together. It's going to be okay, we're going to take deep breaths."

**Annie:** Yeah. And there's something new about to be born. Like, that's the reason not to give up, is because if you give up the new thing doesn't get born.

**Amanda:** Right.

**Annie:** Okay.

**Abner:** God, that's good.

**Annie:** Well, if everybody would just-

**Abner:** Now I'm going to be **[Crosstalk 00:30:45]**

**Annie:** ...bow their heads, we're just going to pray out, and I will just-

**Abner:** If everybody at least give 15%.

**Annie:** Okay, so then let's fast forward to like 2020, two TV shows on Magnolia, the new book. I mean, are y'all, are these shows fun to do, I imagine it's fun, but it's like real in your grill, I mean, they like know your life?

**Amanda:** Yeah. Well, the fun thing was, the first season of Home on the Road with JOHNNYSWIM, that was the first season where we were actually on the road. And there was a camera crew following us up, but it was pretty produced, because they had never done a TV show with touring musicians. So we were like-

**Abner:** And it's funny, not many people have.

**Amanda:** Right.

**Abner:** It's hard to find a production company that's producing anything like it.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Abner:** And still be like, "Well, hey, when you go to Dallas, when you're on tour in Dallas, why don't we take the day before. We'll go to a restaurant the day after, do some **[Inaudible 00:31:34]** stuff in another day. And I was like, "I don't think you understand, we're on tour."

**Amanda:** We'll be there for a day, yeah.

**Abner:** Like we were in Austin the day before, we're like in Oklahoma City the day after, you got us for... and we've got interviews, we've got radio, and you've got like three hours of us.

**Annie:** Yeah. As I was saying, you could have lunch until I started getting dressed, You can have lunch to three.

**Amanda:** get ready then go and change again, and plus we have kids, it was also like, there's a lot. So we kind of had like build a tour, like specifically in a way that we could shoot it the way that they needed to shoot. This because of the pandemic-

**Abner:** We're really proud of it, we think it's beautiful.

**Amanda:** Oh it's beautiful.

**Abner:** Home on the Road with JOHNNYSWIM, awesome. Show number two-

**Amanda:** But [Crosstalk 00:32:08] that was harder for me.

**Abner:** You know, what's funny is it seems like it wouldn't be that hard because there was so many more, there's so much more control in it, like from production, they handled everything, told us where to go,

**Amanda:** But because there was so much more control, it was harder.

**Abner:** It was harder for us.

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Abner:** So then we are, our second TV, the first two episodes are out now on Discovery Plus, and the Magnolia app is the JOHNNYSWIM Show. And the JOHNNYSWIM Show and happened because of COVID, because of the pandemic.

We were all over sudden, Amanda and I since, when in those days before we were married, when I had \$14, we would say, "Yes" to absolutely everything. There was a vineyard in East Hampton, that wanted us to come in and do two, two-hour sets for \$250. So we spent \$300-

**Annie:** Oh my gosh!

**Abner:** ...on flights from Nashville, another \$50 on train. We lost money doing this thing to go sing for four hours, and that's just what we would do. So that kind of lifestyle, we are dating in our early marriage, and time with our first baby, Joaquin, 300-days a year, we were gone. We were on airplanes, buses, cars, anything, wherever we could go, we're going to say yes to whatever.

And so the pandemic was the first time in our actual relationship, where we were home for an extended amount of time. The pandemic was the longest I've been at, I mean, it's easy to say now it's for everybody, but it's the longest I've been in one city since I was like 17-years old, which was only you know, 21 years ago. But...

**Annie:** Right.

**Abner:** And so the JOHNNYSWIM Show captures us here at home, when we couldn't go get adventure, and we had to bring some adventure to us.

**Annie:** Right.

**Abner:** The show doesn't cover this part, but it was also the first time we were in therapy together. All over sudden we're in marriage counseling-

**Amanda:** It was right after.

**Abner:** Yeah, it was right after all that stuff oh for sure. It was a I know the pandemic tough for all of us. And I think there's a unique neurosis when you need thousands of people to tell you, that you did a good job in order for you to sleep well. And that's absolutely me, that's this guy.

**Amanda:** He thrives off of tour life.

**Abner:** Tour life, let me get a couple of thousands people to tell me how great I am, and then I'll take a shower, and I will go to bed, and it's going to be amazing. And I didn't have that-

**Annie:** And then I'll do it again tomorrow because I can.

**Abner:** Absolutely, there was literally one night, I wear this big hat on stage I have, and it's right by my bed on the stand. And there was one night, where I was really feeling a little extra blue. Just feeling pretty down in the middle of the pandemic. And I'm standing in my boxers about to get in bed, and I'm like, "Babe this is going to sound weird, but can you clap for me real quick before I get in bed?"

**Amanda:** Why not?

**Abner:** And so I put my show hat on-

**Amanda:** Yeah, why not.

**Abner:** She applauded, and I took a bow, a little boxer bow.

**Annie:** Yes, yeah.

**Abner:** I put my hat back on and I slept like a baby, slept like the best sleeping months that night. But the JOHNNYSWIM Show covers us being absolute neurotic at home.

**Amanda:** But that was it. We had cameras around our house, that they positioned cameras in the house. They were never in our house other than if there was like something wrong with some of the gear,

**Abner:** They're called RoboCams. So somebody would be in a trailer in the backyard moving the cameras along.

**Amanda:** So there was a trailer in our back driveway, so we didn't really see anybody. And then we just had us in our little pod filming everything, for better or worse. But for us, it was so much fun, because instead of it being like, "You're going to go here today, and then you're going to do this, you're going to talk to this person, we've set everything up for you." It was like, "So what are you guys doing?" And we're like, "I don't know, man, we kind of, I kind of want to buy chickens, I just want to buy chickens." "All right, cool, have a good day."

And they would like leave and we would figure it out ourselves, and go buy chickens and do whatever we were kind of already planning on doing, and then we got to watch after the fact. And for us, it's super entertaining, because there's so much going on that we didn't know about.

Like he's building a chicken coop and his mom is sitting there like, "It looks horrible. He is great with a guitar, but horrible with tools." And we had no clue that she was saying all this. And so we were watching the show after, and we're like, "Oh savage, Marisol is getting savage on him." So for us, it was a lot more fun even though it was more invasive because in our home, it was actually less invasive because there wasn't strangers in our house, you know what I mean? It was just kind of us.

**Annie:** Right.

**Amanda:** Us just making sure we don't fart on camera or like cuss too much.

**Abner:** Well, I did, they'd edited it out.

**Annie:** Right, right, right, they just make sure it gets edited out.

**Amanda:** Yeah, exactly.

**Abner:** We'd always wanted to have a TV show, to say the only way I know how. I remember we were first married, we lived near Nippers Corner, what was the name of that neighborhood we lived in a little-

**Amanda:** Lenox Village.

**Abner:** In Lenox Village.

**Annie:** Yeah, Lenox Village.



**Abner:** ...one-bedroom apartment. And I remember we watched a lot of Anthony Bourdain, we watched a lot of travel shows.

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Abner:** And we dreamt of having a TV show one day, and whatever the show was, our goal was always that it would be honest. There's something when you watch recipes as they were named, when you watch some of these old shows, when you watch some of these other folks. Andrew Zimmern I think is similar, he had that crazy show and everything.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Abner:** There's this honesty, where you just know these are good people. And even if you don't know they're good people, you know they're being honest, you know that they're themselves, you feel that with Chip and Joanna.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Abner:** And we can attest to that, that they Chip is that psycho dude all the time.

**Amanda:** He will eat a snakeskin for no reason.

**Annie:** Yeah, yeah, I believe that.

**Abner:** Absolutely, Joanna is that sweet, and that put together at all times. Like she is awesome.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Abner:** Like they really are. And so even years ago, before there was even talks or hopes of a TV show, we knew we wanted one, and we knew we wanted to present ourselves honestly. And it's hopefully what we do with the book. Hopefully what we do with our albums, and our music, and our performance, in anything, for better or worse.

That'd be honest, because in honesty, with folks like yourself, folks like us that have some sort of platform, and some folks that maybe care what we say, that honesty, that if you lead with honesty, somebody is going to feel known. Somebody is going to feel a little bit less alone. Somebody is going to feel a little bit more hopeful. Because I'm not the only one in this I'm not the only one that feels this way, I'm not the only one, and to us, that's always been the goal.

And I really think especially with the JOHNNYSWIM Show, it's heart forward, heart on our sleeves for better or worse, and it's honest. And hopefully people that watch it feel known, hopefully they feel a little bit more hopeful, they feel a little bit better about their day.

**Amanda:** Yeah, like we had a meeting yesterday for the next season. And instead of it just being like, "So what are we going to do?" It was, "How are you guys feeling?" It was like a therapy session, like a nice feeling to begin to this next part. Let's start with how you're feeling, what you're going through, and then we can figure out what the show. What we'll actually need you to film, and when we need to be there to film after that, which is kind of our way to go.

[00:38:27] <Music>

Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation one more time, to tell you about another amazing partner, Nutrafol. 30 million women are impacted by weakened or thinning hair. And if you're among them, I want you to know that you are not alone, and there is a solution you can trust to deliver results.

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Plus, you get free shipping on every order, y'all. So get \$15 off at [nutrafol.com](https://nutrafol.com), that's n-u-t-r-f-o-l.com, and the promo code is TSF. And now back to finish our conversation.

[00:40:06] <Music>

I want to read you a quote from your own book, are you ready?

**Abner:** Yes.

**Annie:** From page 191. Because this is what you're talking about, but I also want you to talk about counseling in this a little bit if you're willing.

**Abner:** Absolutely.

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Because, Abner, you write on this page, "I think what happened with us," you're talking about y'all and your manager, Jay, but I think this is really interesting. "I think what happened with us from the very beginning was there was an alignment of our assignments." And I have been like rolling that phrase around, an alignment of assignments. A, that's what I'm looking for, with who I'm looking to partner with, with my life, right?

**Abner:** Yes.

**Annie:** And it's what I'm looking for with the people that work with me.

**Amanda:** Right.

**Abner:** Yes.

**Annie:** So talk to me about how that works for y'all, and yet you still get to go to counseling? Like it's still doesn't mean everything's perfect, and you're still two humans in this.

**Abner:** I grew up Southern Baptist, so therapy was always like last-ditch resort, like you never confessed.

**Annie:** Right.

**Abner:** You better come out-

**Annie:** Emergency

**Abner:** [Inaudible 00:41:05] going to therapy in Southern Baptist Church, both equally bad, in a Southern Baptist environment that I grew up in.

**Annie:** Right.

**Abner:** And therapy has been like taking vitamins. And it's been like working out for the first time in three months. Sometimes you want to puke but you're proud of yourself.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** That's therapy for us, you want to puke but you're proud of yourself.

**Abner:** Yeah, but then also like-

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

**Abner:** ...instantly more connected, instantly just, even if, I remember the first call we had therapy, by the end of it we were like cuddling. We were like trying to hook up a little bit, like it instantly, like not just solves problems-

**Amanda:** Shut that Zoom call up real fast,

**Abner:** It's like, "Yeah, we're good, we're good, thank you." [Inaudible 00:41:43] next day. We're going to be busy, time to get busy. That was amazing. The alignment of assignment, what I love is this, I remember as a young artist in Nashville waiting for the right manager, lawyer, somebody, somebody is going to discover me.

Because you always hear those stories, "Elton John was discovered in the Troubadour in West Hollywood. So and so was discovered here and there. Donna was doing a show in Germany, and was discovered by this producer." And so everybody has like their love story. But what people don't realize, especially people on the grind, is that that's always in hindsight. That is so, it's not even something you want, but it's all I wanted as a young artist.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Abner:** You're looking for that right person, that eagle that's going to swoop you up, that's going to snatch you, swoop you up, and carry you to the mountain top.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Abner:** You're good enough just as you are. You're good enough just like you are. Let me put you in front of more people, let me put you, let's just make you successful. And that's what I wanted, I realized I've seen people with that same desire, have

the answer, "Yes" to their prayer, "Send me somebody that's going to take me to that next level."

And in my experience, we've been doing this for quite a while now between Nashville and here. And having a lot, the environment change around is quite a bit, the cast of characters some stay the same, some are here now gone right away. Some stick around like you see, we've done it for long enough to see the faces come and go, and see the few who stay. As far as like other artists, pursuing like, on the same kind of trajectory.

And I would say every artist that's ever found someone they could depend on to take them to the next level, that they can just count on, and you watch them, like, you could almost see in their countenance. See the look on their face., "I've got this guy, and he's willing going to do it for me." They last zero, like zero mornings, that's the beginning of the end.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Abner:** The moment they find somebody they can put all their baggage on, that they can say, "All right, carry this for me, take me to the top." That's the beginning of the end. And I think relationally, I think workwise, what you want isn't somebody that's going to take you. You don't want a Sherpa that's going to just give you a piggyback ride to the top. You want somebody that can face this mountain for what it is not, in flying, they say it's just as unhealthy for a pilot to feel like nothing's ever going to go wrong, as it is for him to think that everything's going to go wrong in every second. Both of those are incredibly dangerous.

And I feel it's the ability to look the danger, and the potential consequences in the face, and have somebody that's going to line right next to you, stare at that mountain, know the journey ahead, know that it's hard, know that it's uncomfortable, know that sometimes when you're looking for success, what you're actually going to find is joy, you're going to find contentment in the middle of sorrow. That there's so many Frodo Baggins moments up ahead of you, but I'm not just going to carry you, and you're not going to carry me. We're going to face this thing together, and that's marriage, that's career.

**Annie:** Mh-hmm.

**Abner:** And as I'm learning now in COVID, because things get weird in all relationships, that's friendship. That's not just finding people to make high-five-

**Annie:** That's good.

**Abner:** ...and as a Seven I just want to high-five and keep everything happy all the time. But the most value-

**Annie:** Your girls are Seven too you know?

**Abner:** My girls? You, me, and Ellie? We would just have a blast at all times.

**Amanda:** Exactly.

**Annie:** And we forget everything we're supposed to bring with us and all the things-

**Abner:** And it's like, "Nobody has it, don't you have it?" But finding somebody to lie next to you, whether it's in career or in relationship, in life, like find people that have an alignment of assignment. Like we're going to hit up that mountain together, because that's what we're called to, that's what we're going to do.

For Amanda and I, and for Jay our manager, we know we are called to help people. And I know we're in entertainment, we're making TV shows, writing books, and we're making albums. And that often is synonymous with selfishness, and it can be very selfish environment. But we have to constantly remind ourselves that this isn't for us. That we literally, we actually see what we do as an act of service. Not just like, "Look at how us serving you, aren't we serving you well? Now, but somebody needs this. Like these songs, they help me they're going to help somebody.

**Annie:** Yeah. Yeah, you say in the book, "We don't sing in cities, we sing for cities."

**Abner:** That's it.

**Annie:** And I was like, "Let's go."

**Amanda:** Let's go.

**Abner:** Look at you reading the book, you really read it.

**Annie:** I told you, I wasn't lying. But I mean, that is an assignment. And if you say, "I sing for cities."

**Abner:** Yes.

**Annie:** And that means y'all understand you have an assignment that is bigger than the ticket sale.

**Abner:** That's it.

**Amanda:** Absolutely. And I think a part of aligning your assignment, alignment in the assignment as well, is understanding each other's strengths and weaknesses. And knowing I'm not just going to flood him, like, I'm not going to be like, "You carry the whole thing." And he's not going to be like, "You carry the whole thing." It's a lot of looking at each other, we all have something, we all have something that we're carrying, that we're going to get them out and together.

I've got something to give, you got something to give, maybe what I'm giving is encouraging. Like a lot of times, our manager, I mean, he does so much, but a lot of his work sometimes is just being like, "You guys got it. Just keeping honest, keeping yourself." Like it's that, and that helps us get up the mountain, you know what I mean? And then we do what we do in here. And so part of aligning in assignment is understanding each other's gifts. Their giftings and weaknesses, and getting each other up together.

**Annie:** Did y'all think about aligning your assignment in that language or that idea when you were dating, or did that like once you got married and got things rolling, it came along?

**Abner:** We, as far as terminology, all I had in my mind was, "Yes, ma'am. Whatever you want I'm here to provide."

**Amanda:** I'm still trying to use that with like laundry.

**Annie:** Yeah, yeah. I mean the story you tell Abner, where you are sitting with the girl you're dating, and Amanda stands up and you said, "That's the girl I'm going to marry." And your girlfriend said, "Well, then you better go talk to her." That is no joke, man.

**Abner:** That was for real, that was at Bethel World Outreach Center, in Nashville, Tennessee. That's where it happened, that really happened, and I will never forget. She was wearing a white sweater, she had her hair all curly, she stood up near the front, I mean, it was perfect.

Amanda, before we were dating, we were kind of, we were a little more than friends, we weren't quite dating yet. She had just gotten out of serious relationship, so I was trying to be patient, she asked me, I think I just told her, I think I offered it. I was like, "Just so you know, like, I'm here. Like, whatever you need, if you need somebody to support you, as you figure out your romantic life, in like what you're getting through, I'll be that dude. I'll be your friend, I'm happy to be your friend. If you want to get married tomorrow, I'll be that guy as well."

So early on, there was a lot of a, I'll call it addiction, I was freaking and still am quite addicted to my wife. But I think we learned early on especially both of us being broke, both of us, she had left a really moderately successful modeling career in New York City. To have a moderately successful barista career-

**Amanda:** At Neighbor's Corner and Starbucks.

**Abner:** ...at Starbucks and Neighbor's Corner.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Abner:** And I was a P.F. Chang's food runner, because I wasn't disciplined enough to be waiter, because I didn't want to have-

**Annie:** The one at Vanderbilt?

**Abner:** No the one at, P.F. Chang's in Cool Springs.

**Annie:** Oh got it, got it.

**Abner:** Right next to discipleship Starbucks is what we always called it. Because if you worked there-

**Annie:** Yeah, for sure. For sure.

**Abner:** **[Inaudible 00:48:21]** mentor at 555 Cool Springs Boulevard.

**Annie:** That's right.

**Abner:** I think early on when we did realize, and I don't know if we use this term either, but we realized that life's a lot like cooking Italian food or like making gumbo sometimes. We're like, when I'm making baguettes or making croissants, it's very specific, the temperature-

**Amanda:** Humblebrag.

**Abner:** Humblebrag. When, I'm making some-

**Annie:** I mean, like, "Right, listen to me make baguettes and croissants." Okay, Abner, we see you, okay.



**Abner:** When you're making French food or when you're baking like everything's really meticulous. You know ahead of time this is the exact amount of yeast that's going on this thing, the exact amount of butter. This is the exact temperature I wanted up, for exactly how long they're up.

When you're making Italian food, or Amanda is cooking here at home. We got a garden in the back, she knows where those tomatoes came from, she knows how the basil tastes like, let's figure it out. We trust the ingredients to make everything work well and you taste it as you go. Or you know, this needs a little more salt, maybe needs a little more basil, maybe it's whatever. But you trust the ingredients.

And one thing we learned early on, was to trust the ingredients, more like cooking Italian food and French food in our life. We're going to taste as we go. We're going to work on these ingredients. We're going to make sure that soil is good, that this thing's growing in, and we'll know if something is growing in bad soil or something that really shouldn't be ate in the first place. We're going to add the right ingredients, and it's going to look different day-to-day. We're going to trust ourselves, we're going to be flexible. We'll going to bend before we break. Day-to-day we're just going to make some good food, and have a good time.

**Annie:** It's a river.

**Abner:** Yes. So many analogies hope everybody is tracking.

**Annie:** Oh, people are taking notes. People are crying. People are telling people to listen. I can tell you what everyone's doing at the grocery store, on the treadmill, they're like, "They were just my favorite band, and now they're my favorite preachers." Y'all that's so good. Okay, so then when's the album come out?

**Abner:** Uh, we don't know?

**Amanda:** The album comes out October-ish.

**Annie:** Okay.

**Abner:** October-ish. We know we're going to put out a first song, middle of August. I'm going to tell you what song it is, it's a song called, "Slow."

**Annie:** Okay.

**Abner:** So we didn't write with a lot of people for this album. And we didn't work with any other producers really, there's one song with a dear friend of ours Malay. And there is this guy named Harold Brown, that we worked with on three songs right

now in the album. And Harold, we wrote this first song, it's called, "Slow." It'll be the first to be released, we just shot a music video for it, very excited. I've been, I think, during this, not to get political here, we'll see where this goes, hey, it's not live right? we can edit wherever we want, you can edit whatever you want.

**Annie:** Be you. You're allowed to be you here. Every time you come here, you're allowed to be you.

**Abner:** Oh, I like that, I like that. So it's not like home. Worship music has been a little triggering for me in this season, like politically. Because it feels like so many evangelical Christians have like really let me down, in how we handled social justice, COVID, all the stuff. I just, I feel weird about a lot of stuff. I heard this worship song about halfway through the COVID experience in 2020.

It's a really well-known worship leader named Pat Barrett and this other guy Harold Brown, and "Lightning" rocked my world. We were sitting in this room, the first time I heard it, I screamed for Amanda, "Amanda, you got to come hear this song. Come hear this song." And we sat, we played it on repeat like seven or eight times.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Abner:** We wept. It talked about social justice, talked about the presence of God. It was like what I wanted out of a worship song. And so, I knew I had acquaintances with Pat Barrett, and somebody had to know Harold, somebody had to know this guy. And so I went way out of my way to go hunt this dude Harold down, and we became fast friends. We wrote a few songs for the album, and all that to say this first song, "Slow" is our music baby with Harold. The guy that wrote "Lightning" and produced all that stuff, made a lot of music over the pandemic that's rocked my world. So I'm really, really excited for people to hear "Slow". the first single of our self-titled fourth album, JOHNNYSWIM.

**Annie:** Okay, yes. And I mean, Pat Barrett can bring some words. I mean, that guy he's good. Okay, that reminds me one of the things that was I was like, bossed around to ask y'all about, the song "Marietta". I'm from Marietta, Georgia, is that what it's about? Is it about Marietta, Georgia?

**Abner:** It's about Marietta, Florida. It's the west side of Jacksonville, has a little suburb, I hate it's even called suburb, a little place called Marietta. Duval County was a bunch where Jacksonville is, Duvall, was a bunch of cities until like the '70s. And in the '70s they consolidated all the cities within Duval County and one city became Jacksonville, Florida. And at the time, it was the largest city literally, in

the world, land wise, because it was all these towns, Marietta was one of them that became Jacksonville. All of the Duval Counties is Jacksonville, Florida.

So Marietta is where I grew up on the west side of Jacksonville. I grew up five blocks from the rodeo. I grew up in a town of seven when we moved there, six, when we moved there. When I was 24, we were dating, or we were married? Dating. Right, run it.

I remember we were visiting my mom and dad at the time in Jacksonville in Marietta. I was going for a jog, and I had a girl or a boy with a rebel flag in the back of his truck, chasing me around the neighborhood I grew up in. Asking me what business I had doing there? We had a burning cross in our front yard in the first few weeks living in that neighborhood.

**Annie:** Oh gosh!

**Abner:** Marietta, is still where my mom lives, so God bless her velour Marietta if you're hearing this, she loves you, we love you, and we want to keep everybody safe. That song Marietta is about where I grew up, and really my loving relationship with it, how there's been a lot of unfairness, I think towards my family. But there's also been a lot of kindness, and a lot of grace, and things way past kind, like whatever the opposite of unkind is. Like being so, not just kind, but really giving. And some of the best people in the world are there too. And so I've always loved, I've always been interested in how where I grew up makes me feel. So I'm not the guy that's rapping it all the time.

**Annie:** Yeah, yeah.

**Abner:** Yeah Malay, what's up? **[Inaudible 00:53:58]** I love it.

**Amanda:** The Easter egg in it-

**Abner:** Yeah go ahead, no I keep talking on that.

**Amanda:** About the Easter egg of that song too is that his dad was a poet, and his parents came from Cuba in 1981, the Mariel boatlift, like they-

**Abner:** 1980-

**Amanda:** 1980, sorry, they escaped Cuba, but he absolutely loves, like Cuba he would talk about like a woman that he like, couldn't be with, and he was taken away from. This beautiful woman that he could never have again, and he would write poetry about Cuba as if it was a woman. And so we're working on the last album, and we

were kind of talking about his hometown, and all these feelings that he feels. I was like, "I feel like we need to take a dad moment and honor your dad, by you writing a song about your hometown, even though it's not the love of your life. But the way that she still draws you in, the way that she can still get a rise out of you. I feel like we need to have a song about." And so that's the Easter egg there, and it was kind of like an homage to-

**Abner:** In the style of my dad's poetry-

**Amanda:** In the style of his dad's poetry-

**Abner:** ...looks on.

**Annie:** Man, those Easter eggs, I'm always here for those, so, y'all can always share those with me. Okay, y'all, we're out of time, is there anything we didn't talk about, that you want to make sure we talked... I mean I have 100 more things I want to talk to you about.

**Abner:** All right ask me two more questions, can you ask me **[Inaudible 00:55:05]** I want to hear two more things, two more questions.

**Annie:** Okay. Two more questions. Okay, how does music affect the place where you are in? Because in Christianity, we talk a lot about the atmosphere, right?

**Abner:** Yeah.

**Annie:** We talk about how atmosphere changes. I've been at y'all shows, I've seen the hat, I am there, I know. But so what is it? What is it that happens in a room when everybody's singing the same thing?

**Abner:** It's something we learned growing up in church man. That you activate the supernatural by the physical act of opening your mouth, and letting the sound out,

**Annie:** Uh, you better.

**Abner:** That's not just singing, you're activating the supernatural. When you open your mouth to sing a worship song with a roomful of people you're activating your faith, you're activating, it's literally a spiritual activation in that room. And that rule doesn't just apply to songs that, "God how great thou art." They just don't just apply to corporate worship settings.

**Annie:** Say it.

**Abner:** One thing we've seen, in this case, we are scientists that have tested and seeing this is true. No matter where you are, you can tap into the supernatural by the physical act of opening your mouth and singing. We believe that when we get folks to sing along with us, when people walk into a JOHNNYSWIM Show, maybe hurt physically, maybe hurt relationally, maybe feeling like they want to give up in life, give up the pursuit they have, whether it's relational or dream or whatever. We believe that as they walk in, and we together activate the supernatural, they will walk out different. That there is the potential of your limp going away.

You can walk in about the breakup with your spouse, and walk out more in love than you've ever been. Not because of us, but because we believe that it's a universal law. That music itself taps into the supernatural. That you can do with your attitude in the environment, you can change everything around you. So we expect, truly expect, miraculous outcomes, every room we're in whether it's a bar, whether it's Lakewood Church in Houston, whether folks are drunk and doing cocaine in the balcony, which happens.

**Annie:** Mh-hmm.

**Abner:** And we sing, and we're praying, and be like "Please stop doing cocaine at the JOHNNYSWIM Show. Our children are backstage, please stop." That's what we believe singing for cities is about.

**Amanda:** I think one thing that we talk about a lot is that we don't see shows as us communicating with people. We don't even see it as just community of people getting together, we see each show as communion, that it's time that we get to party, do something bigger than all of us. And so we go into every show, in every city, seeing it as a time of communion together. And so that's-

**Annie:** Yes.

**Amanda:** For me that moment-

**Abner:** It's holy.

**Amanda:** It's a holy moment where we get to be together, where we're asking God to meet us. I know that's not our stage, whatever the authority that's given to us as we stand on that stage. We ask for an open heaven as we sing, as we sing together, as we're in that place partaking, because we're partaking as well. Like, there's plenty of times where we're like, we're singing something and we're like, "Oh, I needed that."

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Abner:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** We're, I get to listen to him sing every night, I'm just like, "Mh-hmm, yeah, got that, I made good choices somehow, I don't know." But yeah, we see it as communion. And I feel like for going in and saying, "What does it mean to sink for a city?" To me, it's communion with that city as we play shows.

**Abner:** Yes. I know how that sounds that felt good.

**Annie:** No, listen, I got one more, now I've got two more, that's a prompt manner, you opened it up, you opened it up. Okay, so when our friends are seeing you on TV, or when they pick up your book, *Home Sweet Road*, when they listen to your music, when they're sitting in the audience. If they think, "I would love to pray for Abner and Amanda." What do you want people praying for? What do you want?

**Abner:** More money, I'm just kidding.

**Annie:** Say it.

**Amanda:** I mean, I think the easiest question, and the like, the easiest answer, in every season is just going to be, for me, it's always going to be more of God. More of the truth of who God is, more the truth of who I am with Him, just more of Him always. Because that covers a lot of bases, you know what I mean? So there's one thing, it covers a lot of bases.

**Abner:** Wow, that's good. What's one thing you could pray for us? First of all, I think yeah, more, man...

**Annie:** Because they're going to do it. So-

**Abner:** Yeah, I like that.

**Amanda:** I think going through, I was raised in a Christian home, going to Christian schools my whole life. And you know, you get to your 30s, and well, for me it was my 30s, and around the time or the season where we're losing parents, whatever. And you're struggling with so many things that you've learned and like, "Wait, do I really believe in that?" And like, "This is the theology I was taught." And I actually think my theology aligned more here when you're doing a lot of shuffling.

And I feel like in the shuffle, the one thing for me, is always been like, what do I know for sure is true, and so and I want more of that. And so that's always like, if ever I feel like my what is this, my meter is like going crazy, or my what is it, the weather vane is twisting around-

**Annie:** Yeah

**Amanda:** ... towards the true north, I just kind of go, "Okay, what are the few things that I absolutely know are true." And the truest thing that I know is how near God is to us, and obviously, how real He is, which sounds so kind of trite. But the great cloud of witnesses speaks to me often about that. And so all my TikTok journeys of understanding, I'm on a lot of TikTok journey, so I should probably digress from that. But I think, just more of the truth of who He is, is always, I think, whatever. And just let me dive right in, dive right in.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** If we are a lake, that's the lake I want to be in.

**Annie:** That's right.

**Amanda:** If I'm going to swim in a lake, it's going to be that one.

**Abner:** Yeah, I mean, I pray for us at every show. And if anyone were to join with us in this prayer for us, on our behalf, that truly wherever the soles of our feet shall tread will be holy ground.

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Abner:** That wherever whether that's on TV, whether that's on this podcast, whether it's at the House of Blues, Boston, physically wherever it is. That the Holy Spirit would show up however, and however it pleases Him to do so.

**Annie:** Mh-hmm.

**Abner:** Yeah. That we would never be just JOHNNYSWIM the band, the act, the artist, the influencers. That we would always be in pursuit of being growing, being JOHNNYSWIM, the presence of God bringers.

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Yes. Ah, JOHNNYSWIM, the presence of God bringers, Lord have mercy. That was beautiful. That makes me feel terrible about our last question, because it's

very light and breezy. Here's what we always ask at the very end, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what y'all do for fun?

**Abner:** I'm sorry, I fly airplanes for fun.

**Amanda:** He flies airplanes for fun.

**Abner:** Oh, it makes me so happy. Have you seen "Luca" yet? The Disney movie?

**Annie:** Yes.

**Abner:** So there's that scene they build the Vespa and they filled **[Inaudible 01:01:37]** and they finally get the ramp on the turtle and they launch, and everything slows down-

**Annie:** "Silencio Bruno."

**Abner:** "Silencio Bruno." I am terrified of heights, I am scared of heights. Flying isn't just like the natural next step for me, flying especially for the first several months, has been waking up knowing I'm going to fly that day, and knowing I'm terrified. Like literally I felt my legs shake, but there's this moment, and it happens every single time I'm in the air, it happened today several times. Where you take off, and you feel, you do all the test to make sure the plane is right, to make sure you can trust it to do what it's meant to do.

Then you go, they say, "Niner Niner Zero Bravo, you're clear for takeoff." And I say, "Clear for takeoff." And every time I say, "Let's go to the sky, let's go to the sky." Feels just like Luca, feels like that moment also you get in the sky, and like everything slows down. It's like stress is so far below it only, I feel like I haven't screamed because it does come a little bit from facing a fear.

**Amanda:** Well, Amanda, for starters, tell us what sounds fun to you.

**Amanda:** Honestly, I was really trying to soul search there, but honestly eating food, and being on TikTok are my... My For You Page right now is crushing, and that sounds like fun to me. Oh, usually because it's also just like silence, and there's like nobody asking me for a snack or anything. So I can kind of just like-

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

**Abner:** Eating and being on TikTok. TikTok, I like that.

**Amanda:** I just want to eat and be on TikTok.



**Annie:** Those are good answers, my friend. Hey, listen, y'all, thank you for making time for this. This has been such a gift-

**Abner:** Thank you.

**Annie:** To my heart, I'm so thankful.

**Amanda:** Thank you for having us.

**Abner:** Can we do this once a week? [**Crosstalk 01:03:09**]

**Annie:** Listen, you better believe. Now, I don't know about them, but I'll be your friend, I promise you that we're on the same team.

**Amanda:** Well, I love that.

**Abner:** I love that, I love it.

[**01:03:15**] <**Music**>

**Annie:** You guys, how much do you love Amanda and Abner? I know, me too, me too, I like smiled that whole episode. What a gift it was, I'm so thankful for them. If you haven't already, make sure you grab a copy of JOHNNYSWIM new book, [Home Sweet Road](#), and check out the next season of their show Home on the Road with JOHNNYSWIM. Make sure you're following them on all the social media places, so you can tell them 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](#), [Facebook](#), all the places you may need me, that is how you can find me. I think that's it from me today, friends, go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you, I'll do the same. Have a great couple of days. We are back here with you on Wednesday, y'all, with one of my heroes, no kidding, podcaster, author, co-host of the Men in Blazers. We're going to talk some soccer, y'all are going to love it, Roger Bennett is with us on Wednesday, we'll see you guys then.

[**01:04:15**] <**Music**>

#### Podcast Recommendations

1. Shows;

- o [JOHNNYSWIM Show](#)

2. Book;

- o [\*Home Sweet Road\*](#)