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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. I hope you're getting ready to start celebrating Thanksgiving, especially if you're in the US. Maybe getting today off of work, maybe doing some traveling. I am here for you. We got you today. We've got you Friday. We've got a great show in store.

But before we dive in, I want to take a quick moment to share about one of our incredible partners. This podcast is sponsored today by [BetterHelp Online Therapy](#). It is widely known and sometimes a painful reality that we can't control what happens to us or what other people do. But what we can control is how we choose to respond to those things. It's how we turn the proverbial lemon into lemonade. And therapy can really help us learn how.

BetterHelp is customized online therapy that offers video, phone, and even live chat sessions with your therapist so you don't have to see anyone on camera if you don't want to. It's much more affordable than in person therapy and you can start communicating with your therapist in under 48 hours. So let's go make some lemonade, shall we? That'd be a good addition to Thanksgiving.

This podcast is sponsored by BetterHelp, and That Sounds Fun listeners get 10% off their first month at betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun. That's betterhelp.com/thatsoundsfun.

I know some of y'all are counting down the days till Christmas. Let's get to Thanksgiving first, everyone. But I'm counting down the days—this won't surprise you at all—till I get to hop on a bus with my friends and take this podcast back on the road. We're headed to a city near you in February and March of 2022. You do not want to miss the fun, the laughs, the comedy, and more.

These tickets also make great gifts. No supply chain issues to worry about. And we even have a little printable card that you can use to fill those stockings with fun and tell your loved one that they get to come to one of our tour stops. So if you're going to gift tickets at Christmas, we've got a card for you. So just go to Anniefdowns.com/events for all the details and go get your tickets. I cannot wait to see y'all.

Intro: Today on the show. I get to talk with my friend Hannah Brown. You know Hannah Brown. She starred on Season 15 of this little reality series you may have heard of called *The Bachelorette*. She went on to win Season 28 of *Dancing with the Stars*.

This beauty pageant titleholder and winner of Miss Alabama USA 2018, she just released her book *God Bless This Mess: Learning to Live and Love Through Life's Best (and Worst) Moments*. It just released yesterday. Y'all, she is a real gem. I genuinely like her so much. I can't wait to share this sweet conversation with y'all. So here's my chat with Hannah Brown.

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Annie: Hannah, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

Hannah: I'm so happy to be here.

Annie: Listen, you know, for starters, people have been yelling at both of us for you to be on this podcast for two years. So it is about time.

Hannah: It is about time. I was just saying our little pre-hello that this is one of my very first conversations about the books. I'm so excited that it's with you.

Annie: Oh, thank you.

Hannah: You know, in all this time, it's going to be really good conversation.

Annie: That's right. It's all built up to this.

Hannah: Yes, yes.

Annie: We've been friends for a while, but this is our first public... This is kind of us going out publicly for the first time in our friendship.

Hannah: Yes.

Annie: Let's talk about what matters the most. University of Alabama, University of Georgia. Oh boy! Did you know that's where I went?

Hannah: No.

Annie: Yes, that's where I went to school. I'm a Georgia person. Tell me how you're feeling. When y'all lost to A&M, what is that feel... I mean, I've known that feeling a lot but tell me how that felt in your body.

Hannah: Well, I think I have a little bit more separation from it now. I would not have wanted to be in my hometown around my family when we lost. I'm here in LA now. But my theory is when we lose we lose gracefully because it doesn't happen much. When people beat us they storm a field.

Annie: Right.

Hannah: When we lose, it's like okay, "We're just going on to the next game. Let's do this." We came back.

Annie: Do you think it's going to be us against each other in the national championship?

Hannah: It's highly likely.

Annie: It's highly likely. It'll for sure be the SEC championship. It'll be so fun.

Hannah: Yeah, that will be so fun. I'm a big SEC girl. That's what I try to say.

Annie: Yes, yes, yes. I feel very much that way except Florida. I mean, it's Florida. I mean, to me we can cheer each other on and I just have to work at it. I don't know, Steve Spurrier stuff. I love Tim Tebow. It's not a Tim Tebow problem.

Hannah: I love Tim Tebow but-

Annie: I told him one time, I was like, "Everybody misses hearing the Lord every now and again. So you just missed it. You just missed it." Okay, so here's my thinking. When it comes to the SEC and you living in LA, are there people out there - like do you gather to watch games with people?

Hannah: I don't. I feel like I still don't know that many people here. So that's also a struggle. But no, I just watched it at my home with my boyfriend. But-

Annie: Oh, we're for sure talking about Adam, because he's adorable.

Hannah: Yeah, he's pretty great.

Annie: Can you back up and say how y'all met? I don't think I've watched that part on the internet. I just knew he arrived. Is he the guy that you left a note on the car?

Hannah: No.

Annie: I wanted that to be the one.

Hannah: Everybody wants to know that. No, but it all kind of happened around that same time I started dating. I one day after finally getting over just other boy stuff, I booked a trip to Cabo and then signed up for a dating app. All like same night sitting at a dinner table. And I was like, "I'm just going to do it." And my mom was so mad at me. She was like, "Why are you getting on a dating app?" And through the dating app I've met Adam, and now she's obsessed with him.

So I'm like, "If I would have listened to you, I wouldn't have met this amazing human." But yeah, I did it for fun. And then made a YouTube video of some of my dates, which it was really fun.

I didn't put any pressure on it, and I think that's why it worked out because I just... he just came at the right time, even though I was like, "Whoa, this is not the right time." It was because I think I had been doing the work on myself and was able to slowly but surely receive the type of love and just nurturing and encouragement from a wonderful human.

Annie: I've heard a friend say over the weekend that when you... I mean, you know me, not married yet. I'm 41. So I've been a person for a long time, and want to be married. And this guy friend of mine said, "It's just like when you spend so much time getting good at being you the right person just shows up." Do you feel that? I mean, after reading your book, I can see the growth in you to being in love with the journey of who you are. Do you feel like that played into Adam?

Hannah: Well, I mean, we had this conversation a lot. I'm like, "Oh, he's seven years older than me. I still have a lot of work that I'm doing on myself. I'm in the thick of it." And that's kind of what my book's about too. Like, I'm in the thick of all this. I'm not on the other side yet.

But I hope that for the people who read this book it's like the big sister who's only like two steps, three steps ahead. That's what I wanted. But even on this journey of just accepting love from a man, it's hard when you've had these like patterns of what you think love is with types of relationships that you've had.

And sometimes I'm like, "I'm really sorry." I'm still trying to process this. But he's kind of been on his own journey and he's in a place in his life where he can be there for me and show up when I need somebody to show up for me and be patient. So I think having someone who's done that process themselves, like being in a relationship with somebody that's done that, he has so much grace for me and is

there as I continue to navigate everything. But yeah, we wouldn't have met each other if I hadn't gone on this journey. So really it all works out.

Annie: He seems so lovely and so funny. I very much enjoy seeing y'all together.

Hannah: Yeah, he's the best. And he's the best encourager. He wrote a note for me. He always writes notes. And he wrote one that says, "You have a special story, share it with 100% confidence. Getting ready for today."

Annie: Oh my gosh, you have a special story, share it with 100% confidence. That's really sweet.

Hannah: Yeah,

Annie: Let's dive into some of your story because when I was reading your book called *God Bless This Mess*, which is a hilarious title. Hannah, well done. I'll tell you a couple of things stood out to me that I would love for you to talk about. One of them is your internship in LA. I know this is a weird train, but I wonder if you'll follow with me on it.

When I was reading that part about your internship in LA, I thought she had no idea that a decade later she'd be living there. Not even a decade. So many of us are trying to figure out what God's doing in our lives and the path He has us on. Will you talk a little bit about how it feels to live there now when you had that experience from small town Alabama to an internship.

Hannah: It's so weird now because I don't live where I interned. When I'm trying to go in town, I live on West - what's it called? Westwood. I'm in Santa Monica. I'll like drive by and I'm like, "Wow, I had no idea where I was." Truly I couldn't have told you where I lived during my internship because I was all alone and had never been there. So it is surreal.

But yeah, I had an internship I think - what was it? Going into my senior year of college. And it was for John Paul Mitchell Systems. And it was right in Century City. When I talked about this office that I worked in, it made The Devil Wears Prada office... like it put it to shame. It was like this amazing, beautiful office. And I'm like, "I work here. It's so cool."

Well, did I do much of anything? No. But that experience for me, just seeing this whole other side of what a life can be was really profound. I mean, I went from one really serious relationship to the next serious relationship. Well, it's kind of like in

the beginning stages of it and came out here. And I always thought what my life was going to be was living in some smaller town, getting married. I thought I was going to get married pretty soon right out of college. Like all my friends had. Not saying there's anything wrong with that, by the way.

Annie: Girl, southern stuff. Us too.

Hannah: But I always had this gut feeling that that wasn't the life that I was supposed to live but it's what I so desperately wanted.

Annie: Wow.

Hannah: Because that's all I really knew, and there was a comfort to it. But there's always this spark of like, "Maybe there's something else." And that internship to LA, the first time in my life really being independent, my dad went out there with me. He signed my name to rental car because I couldn't. I wasn't 25 yet. So he got me a rental car, got me groceries, and dropped me off in this studio apartment.

I truly had no idea where I was living. I couldn't tell you on a map anything. I was just there. And I didn't know a single person. But there was so much adventure and just experimenting with... if I could step into this person, I mean, I would go... Like, I have so many pictures of me going to all these places, like now where I live, by myself and just asking a person to take a picture of me. And just going on these really cool adventures around the city. Still not knowing exactly where I was.

I lived close to a street called Abbot Kinney and Venice. And I couldn't even have told you at that time. I was taking pictures. But when I moved here, I'm like, "Oh, that's where I lived."

Annie: Yeah, totally.

Hannah: But yeah, it was crazy. I remember coming back from that internship and being like, "Man, that was like..." I felt really free. Coming back and kind of having this, like, "Oh, now we're back here."

Annie: Wow.

Hannah: But I didn't know anything. That was the first time to know anything different, but still didn't know how I could really get there. Because I had this relationship that I felt I was supposed to be in. It was really hard. So it all came back around and now I'm living in a view shot of the ocean. I know this exact place. I took a picture, I'm

like, "I literally walked by it every single day - the place that I was taking a picture to show my friends like this is where I live." It's really cool. Now it's hard for sure, but it's really cool.

Annie: I mean, I've heard it is hard to live out there unless you like know it's the place that you're meant to be.

Hannah: I know I'm supposed to be here right now. I think sometimes I question, like, "God, why?" But I know I'm supposed to be here right now. I don't know if it's forever. But I keep hoping-

Annie: And then you'll end up here in Nashville.

Hannah: I feel like that-

Annie: I just want it to be in the cards.

Hannah: It's definitely in the cards. I think about it a lot. But right now on this season... I mean, I'm talking to you, but I'm also staring at the ocean.

Annie: Which we don't get to do. Sorry to tell you.

Hannah: That's really special. I always, when I was younger, thought I was going to... my dream was to spend one summer at the beach like beach bumming it. And I am getting to live that dream now but not having to beach bum it.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Hannah: So I'm just trying to enjoy this moment right now and be here. And whatever happens later will happen. But I do kind of miss being in the South for sure.

Annie: Yeah, yeah. I mean, when you think about writing, when you wrote *God Bless This Mess*, can you see some of the places that there are these strings of God leading you? Did it help to write the book to be like, "Oh, my gosh, I would have never thought about that until I had to go back and write about it connecting with this"?

Hannah: Yeah. You've read the book. I'm very honest with my struggle.

Annie: Oh my gosh, you are so honest. You're honest. I was like, "Hannah, are you sure Okay. Okay, girl. Tell that story. Let's go." I love it. I think it matters.

Hannah: I'm scared but I also believe that the superpower that God gave me was my vulnerability. And I have to continue to step into that and know that I'm going to be persecuted, that people are going to misunderstand me, that there are people that don't want to hear from me, and that's okay. But there are a lot of people that I know that I'm reaching. And because of some of the experiences that have looked and felt like... and where my biggest mistake is how God's making my story so much bigger than if I would have lived the straight, narrow path that I thought I was going to live. But that's really hard.

To be honest, I was worried about doing this podcast... not your podcast because I'll say like you're one in... Well, I'll get into that later. But there was a lot of my time on the show where I felt very almost persecuted in a way for making some maybe not the best decisions. But God has used all that in such a bigger way. And I had to go through all that.

But getting back to that, there's so many threads in my story. And that's why at the very end of the book, it all kind of comes together where it's like I had these big wow moments. God's story in my life is not over yet but it's so big. That is my something big. I have a chapter in there like something big. He is using my life in a way that I could have never planned and I am still like, "Oh." I just fell and I had to get back up. And He uses all those moments where I fall to make the story even bigger and grander. That was really cool writing the book. It was really hard writing the book.

Annie: Oh my gosh, I can imagine.

Hannah: There was a lot of things that were hard to just be honest with myself about and then knowing not only am I being honest with myself about, but I'm being honest with everybody who reads this book too. So there's a lot of fear there. But there's no fear where God is going to use this story. And I'm just trying to remember that every day and every time I do a podcast, like, He's got me. This story is going to be used and the people who are going to get it and receive it are going to, and the people who don't, they don't.

Annie: Here's what I hope you remember. And I'll tell you this again the day the book comes out if you want me to. There are so many of us who experience parts of your story or all of your story who you connect with certain pieces of it. And when you say, "I was there, I did this, I experienced this," we get to say, "Oh my gosh, I'm not the only one. I'm not the only one. I thought I was the only one. I thought I was the only one who made that decision. I always thought I was the only one who asked that question."

And what you did over and over to me and my reading of *God Bless This Mess*, what you did over and over as you said, "I'll tell you my part and maybe you'll say me too."

Hannah: Yeah.

Annie: That's a real gift, Hannah. That's actually a real gift you've given. And it is going to cost you something. I mean, gifts cost the giver. That's just how it works.

Hannah: Yeah. It is getting so close, I'm like, "Oh, are you kidding me?" It's been such a long process of the book. And there's been so many bumps and halts and stops along the way. But in all that, there's been, I think so many more moments to thread and time to continue to use that thread that God's been weaving into my life from that. And the book would have been something completely different if there wasn't all those. But I think this is a much more impactful story. I am really proud of it.

Annie: You should be. You really should be. Will you talk about how much journaling matters to you. How much did journaling shape the book? And how much does it shape your life?

Hannah: I was actually trying to find before you got on here... So how I came to even follow you is I read your book *Looking for Lovely*.

Annie: That's right. Oh my gosh. That's right.

Hannah: I loved it. I've kind of gone through depression or realizing that I had been struggling with that. And after getting some help, my fire for the Lord and just like consuming anything and everything was just so fierce. And your book came up and I loved it. So I was trying to find through my journals where I probably wrote some notes from your book to show you.

Annie: That's so sweet.

Hannah: If I ever find it, I'll send it to you.

Annie: Yeah, send it to me.

Hannah: But journaling is such a big part of this book. It is where many of the pages in the book were just taken from my journal and placed in there.

Annie: I love that. I love the places where you quote your journal.

Hannah: And then some of them we make it sound a little bit nicer than how I wrote it. I mean, I'm like, "We got to figure how to put this." But it was such a wonderful thing to have because I could really go back to like, "What it actually feel in that moment?" Because there's been a lot of processing that's happened in the past two years. So to be able to really go into that moment so that I can really understand.

If somebody is reading that book and they're like reading the book in that moment, like, what did it actually feel like to have the words to explain my emotions was I think really special to have in this book. It's where I do my best processing in this whole book is about taking those really terrible, no good situations, admitting that that's how I feel and this is what's happening, but then figuring out how to process and heal from that. That's all that my journal has been. And it's really cool to like now that I have all these journals to see something that I was writing down like prayers and then to see how over weeks, months, years God has been able to heal me or give me some peace about things is really cool.

Annie: Yeah.

[00:23:28] <music>

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Annie: This may be a terrible question. So fix me if I'm asking this stupidly. I saw over and over in the book from *Dancing with the Stars* to *Bachelor* or *Bachelorette*, but even in your teen years, you talk about telling yourself the truth and not believing... you know, it's easy to lie to ourselves like, "Oh, this is going to be fine," or "Oh, this isn't good" when it is good for you. How important have you continued to see telling yourself the truth or paying attention when you really see the truth in a story? How has that served you?

Hannah: I think I have always been... I don't want to say very aware of my emotions. I sometimes feel like I wasn't. But that truth always bubbles up. It's always kind of there. Now, I've had moments where I've been like, "Mmm, I'm just going to pretend like it's not."

Annie: Yeah, that's what you write about. It's like, "I'm sure he really liked me." And then y'all would break up and he would hook up with other people. You'd be like, "I always knew in my gut."

Hannah: I always knew.

Annie: You seem to have a really good inner knower.

Hannah: I do, but I don't always... There's truth in trusting. I have been on this journey of learning how to trust myself.

Annie: Wow.

Hannah: Which means that inner knowing is God. Because I have struggled with not feeling good enough. I think we all struggle with that. If you don't really know who you are and you don't feel good enough to, you know, serve that part of you when you're in the stillness, then, of course, you're going to make mistakes, of course, you're going to do the thing that you weren't supposed to do. And like, oh, it hurts really bad and

you're like, "Dang it. I knew it." But it's really learning to trust that voice. And how you do that is to be still.

But for so long I was going, going, going, going, going. It gets really hard to decipher that. But if you take the time to look back, sometimes those messes, those mistakes, when you had the time to process them, that's where you really see where God did show up and was there.

But I think what's important is to take that time to see those threads so that as you go forward you're a little bit better. It's not about being perfect. Just being a little bit better. And the way that I feel like I've been able to do that is to see where I was right, which God was right and I think through the past few years, like slowly but surely more leaning into that and trusting that truth that's inside me.

But like I said, you're going to hear me say process, process, but it just has been. It's been tough but I know that God is transforming me in such a big way. And already has but is so not done yet. And that's really exciting to know that growth is continual and His truth will always come through.

Annie: Tell me what your prayer life is like. When do you pray? And how is that affecting the decisions you're making and knowing the truth that is in you?

Hannah: I've always had this really... Maybe that's what that truth is. My relationship with the Lord has always been very intimate I feel like. I heard that, you know, maybe in Sunday school, like, "God's like your Father," and I took it very seriously. Like He's a dad. Like He's somebody I can just talk to.

And so I've always just been able to have those whispering pure prayers with God of like "I don't even know what I need right now. I just need you." In certain moments of my life, I haven't been as much for prayer warriors. Sometimes I'm praying all day long in everything. But when I'm the closest to God is when there's the biggest transformation.

Now I do quiet times in the morning. And that's when I pray. I've gone into meditation, which has been cool—another form of prayer. Just because for me I feel like I'm always like, over here, over there. And just having like five minutes of just sitting in the stillness is super important for me. I also journal out my prayers.

Annie: Me too, dude. I write all of them.

Hannah: It helps. That's probably the most I feel like honest and I am with the Lord. Because it's not just trying to come up with some fancy words. It's just like this journal of mine is the most honest, pure parts of me and that's what I want to bring to the table every time. So I think there's all different types of ways to pray but that's how I do it more in the mornings.

Annie: And to me when I write my prayers, it slows me down so much-

Hannah: So much.

Annie: ...in a good way of like "Oh, I have to write the name and write the thing." And my brain can't go as fast as I can talk.

Hannah: And it sticks with you. Adam writes on his computer out his prayers and things.

Annie: Oh, my gosh.

Hannah: And I get it. That's cool. But for me I have to be like pen and paper. I just have to do it.

Annie: When I pay attention to how you love your friends and how we communicate and how I see you communicate with people, I've just wondered... Take this or leave it. When I was hearing you talk about prayer, I just thought, "I bet God likes her so much." I'm just sure He likes you so much because everything you love you love all the way. Right?

And so I would imagine that that's what He is experiencing on that side of this relationship... I'm just going to tell you that is what he thinks. I think that's what the Holy Spirit is saying to me, is how much He like likes you.

Hannah: I really need to hear that because sometimes I'm so hard on myself. I think we all kind of go through those struggles. But I know that the intimacy that I have with God, I think it sometimes takes people a long time to figure that out. But I'm just like, "God, you got me you. What the heck are we doing? Help me." But I think He has never turned his back on me even when I turned my back on Him and been upset and mad.

But I will say, I will go to the Lord in prayer even when I'm mad of like, "I don't understand why You did this. I don't feel You." But I think that internal dialogue and even open dialogue with the Lord has really just helped me even when I've just fallen down so hard, really know that His presence is there and that He's got me. I

think just always having that really intimate relationship has helped me so much. But I don't always feel that way. So I'm glad that-

Annie: Oh my gosh, all this beating in my chest is how much He likes you. So take it because that is what I know. That's what I know.

Hannah: Oh, thank you.

Annie: Another interesting thing about your book is you kept connecting different songs to different stories.

Hannah: Mostly Taylor Swift.

Annie: And some Garth. There are some Garth in there too?

Hannah: Yeah.

Annie: I mean does music matter that much to you? Is it just like part of your... what is Hannah? Is there always music playing?

Hannah: I remember certain songs with different experiences in my life. I am so mad at my mom that she never put me in some type of like... I mean, I was in dance. I dance. But I wish I would have done some type of musical instrument. I wish I could sing so bad. I can't at all. But I've always loved music. Because if I did sing, I mean, I'm coming for you, Carrie Underwood.

Annie: Listen, if the Lord would have made me able to sing, nobody could tell me nothing, Hannah.

Hannah: I like to tell everybody, I'm like, "Oh, I would crush it on stage. I know I would." We would be a great duo.

Annie: Listen, the Lord for protecting us from our own pride that we are unable to sing the way we know because we can perform. The voice just doesn't note up to it.

Hannah: It doesn't.

Annie: Oh, next time you're here, we're going to Sam's karaoke. Have you already been at Sam's?

Hannah: No.

Annie: Oh, sorry, not Sam's. Santas. Santas.

Hannah: No, but let's do it.

Annie: Dude, it is a double-wide and all he sells is beer and chips. That's it. And it's a carrier. It's the best. It's the best. So next time you're here we're going to go make fools of ourselves until no one except us and it'll be the best. It'll be the best.

Hannah: Okay.

Annie: But music you just loved it for forever. I thought that was amazing there were so many songs that directly connected with stories.

Hannah: Yeah, yeah. It's so weird all those different moments it's when I was sitting down trying to go back to these stories. It's like I had to add them in because that's what it was like going through my mind is like those different experiences were either like... it was something happened songs on the radio or when I was sitting down to write. I'm like, "This is just like that song." So yeah, I've always loved music. That's probably why should be... I love country music. Probably why Nashville calls my name all the time.

Annie: Keep it on the cards, girl. Come on. You and Adam just come on down and move down here. Well, build you an ocean. We'll figure it out.

Hannah: Yeah, yeah. I just recently went to the Dan + Shay concert, and I was talking to Shay, and he was like, "Look, you can just go down to Thirty-Eight when you need to. It's like five hours away. Just come on." And I'm like, "I know, I know."

Annie: And we drive straight through Tuscaloosa so you could see your people and then head down to the beach.

Hannah: I mean, everybody would be happy with that.

Annie: Hannah Thirty-Eight is literally just another version of Nashville. It's everyone is there.

Hannah: Everybody is there.

Annie: Everyone. Yes, yes.

Hannah: We'll see.

Annie: I was just down there at a wedding and I avoided someone at the grocery store. And I was like, "Well, now you really know? Now you really know." That's how many neighbors enough down there because I was like, "I don't have the energy. I can't do it at the grocery store at 38."

Okay, some of our friends from the AFD Weekend Review email sent in some questions for you. And I love them all. But they're multiple people saying, "Finally, yes. Love you both. Been waiting," all those things. You're welcome, everyone. We're here. I love this one from Jenn. Why do you think the bachelor franchise is attracting so many believers right now?

Hannah: I think it is such a worldly experience that is in the desperate need for the Holy Spirit to intervene. And I feel like some of us get the calling... I mean, I know for me I never watched the show and I somehow found myself through the weirdest way on the show. I think the Lord just really was present in that for me in so many different ways.

I think there's just a need for more Christians to be on that show and have different experiences and be able to unify in a way. Because people either love you, hate you, but it is such a huge show with such a huge following that you have such a big impact that can be made. And so I think that's why. Because the Lord uses us in so many different ways. And even if it's not in a way that you would expect, yeah, but that's when He does biggest work, I think.

Annie: I think you're right. It's been interesting. We've had a couple of bachelor people on and everyone says, "Yeah, God told me to do that," or "God opened up all the right doors." And almost every time we'll get messages back from people going like, "God told them to do that?" And I'm like, "Yeah, yeah." Because that's your story is that it really just almost was like handed to you by friends.

Hannah: Well, I didn't even know. I never really watched the show other than I was in a sorority at the University of Alabama. So everybody was watching the show.

Annie: Every Monday night it was on. Yeah.

Hannah: So I knew about it, but really didn't have that much interest. It was like all one day I just broken up with my second long-term relationship. All my friends, truly like all my friends were getting married and they were like... I was like, "Heck, at this point. I'm going to have to do something crazy." I don't even know how you do that.

I wasn't in the space. I haven't really watched this show. So it was this thing I threw out.

I'm telling you, hours later I'm home because I was in Birmingham having lunch with my girlfriends. Came back hours later, I get a phone call from a producer on the show saying that somebody anonymously put my name in. And I was like, "This is so weird. I had no idea for like a month who sent my name in." And I asked all my friends like, "How did y'all do that?" They're like, "First of all, no. You've only been home for like an hour. No, we didn't..."

Annie: Right. We don't have time.

Hannah: It was so crazy. And then all these doors kept opening and I'm like, "I'm supposed to do this." I mean if people have gotten my story, I have gone everywhere after that. And *The Bachelorette* was definitely a lot harder than being a bachelor contestant. But as a *Bachelorette* contestant, that was one of the best experiences of my life, truly of my life, of even my spiritual journey.

Yes, you don't have that much time with the lead but because that you have actually so much time to have quiet times, I read *Mingling of Souls*, *Wild at Heart* while I was there. And I was just in it. I'm like, "If I'm going to get engaged..."

Annie: I also love both those books. I love *Mingling of Souls* by Matt Chandler. I thought that was incredible.

Hannah: That is one of my favorite books. But I was really in it and was able to see God work in me so much during that time, and like me flourish as a person of like, "Hmm, asking those big questions. I remember coming back home and my parents being, everybody be like, "You've changed so much." Like my confidence, just knowing who I am, knowing how God used that experience. Now, after that, we had some stumbles.

Annie: Sure.

Hannah: But because it's a lot different being a lead than a-

Annie: Than one of 30.

Hannah: Yes, yes. But that was different. But even all the stuff that happened afterwards. Like I have now this really big platform and I'm able to point to God through it all

and also be able to show all my... I will say one thing. Especially after this book, I have nothing to hide. I have really nothing to hide. No deep dark secret or anything.

I've been able to use this huge platform to be like, "This is what I've been through. This is what I'm going through. Here's how I know I'm going to be okay." And that the Lord is just using this for like... I'm going to look back and like... even every year I'm like, "Oh, wow. Okay, that's making sense now." And to live for something so much bigger than myself, I get to share that message to a lot of people who think that... you know, being on social media you realize that people sometimes forget that there's something so much bigger than yourself and the number of likes and the number of comments and the this and that. And being able to share that is really special.

So it was all what I was supposed to be able to do. I still sometimes I'm like, "What? This? Really? Okay." But yeah, I think I've been able to use that franchise and the Christians on that show in a really awesome way.

Annie: What do you know about God that you didn't know before you went on The Bachelor?

Hannah: I think what I thought before I went on that show was that for God to use me I had to be good Christian girl, make all the right decisions.

Annie: He can only use you if you're perfect, if you don't make a mistake.

Hannah: Even when I was struggling with anxiety and depression, that was something that I was ashamed of, that I was upset with myself that like, "Oh, I must have not prayed hard enough. I must have not done this enough. Oh, I just got to work on myself more." And it's been hard. But God used in the Bible all the people that He used to bring His name glory were the most like... you're kind of like, "You used..."

Annie: "That's who you used?"

Hannah: "That's who you used?"

Annie: Right.

Hannah: And I feel like that sometimes. After everything that I've been through, I'm like, "You're going to use me?" And I always hear, it's like, "Yes, you. It's you." And all those mistakes and all those stumbles and all those times where I've questioned and been humiliated or been ostracized or hurt, I've been through all that because He's

chosen me and He's using that. Not the good girl who tried to pretend like she had everything together. It's the girl who has been through it, who is still in it but is working every day to stop trying so hard and just let Him lead me. And hopefully be able to really speak to those who felt like they were too far gone or in the thick of it like me to know that God's got them too and that we're going to make it through the mess together. So really knowing that God uses all those messes for His bigger message.

Annie: Oh, uses messes for His message. Okay, Hannah Brown.

Hannah: I like to do a little preaching!

Annie: You better. You better preach. You better get some of those catchphrases together, girl. Let's go!

[00:46:11] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just taking a quick break to tell you about one of our amazing shows on the That Sounds Fun Network. You know how much we love the network. It is our amusement park of podcasts that we are a part of. And in a time when people are consistently desperate to find hope, my buddy Carlos Whittaker leads us in conversations that bring us just that. From fun discussions about everyday joy to polarizing and challenging topics, Carlos shows even the most callous towards that there is still hope in humanity.

You may remember Carlos for being on That Sounds Fun Episode 55 and Episode 230, sharing about his awesome books, *Kill the Spider* and *Enter Wild*. But some other things to know about him, he's a People's Choice Award winner, a former recording artist signed to a major label, a social media maven, and he currently spends the majority of his time writing books and speaking on stages around the world and recording his podcast.

I love Carlos. He and his family and I are real life friends. I'm so proud to be on the network with him and his podcast Human Hope. If you're not already listening, do it. You won't regret it. Episodes released every Thursday. For more information on Carlos, just follow him on Instagram, it's @Lowswit and visit Carloswhittaker.com.

If you're looking for a little hope, listening to Human Hope with Carlos Whittaker is a great way to find some. This is a great way to try some shows while you're cooking for Thanksgiving, while you're traveling back and forth. And I think you will love checking out some episodes of Human Hope.

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just taking a quick break to tell you about one of our amazing partners, [EverlyWell](#). Take a sec and think about what your answer would be if I asked you the question, "How are you feeling today? Like how does your body feel?" If the answer is anything less than "great," it may just be time to learn more and find out what could be better for your body.

You can take control of your health and wellbeing with an at-home lab test from EverlyWell. EverlyWell offers affordable at-home lab tests that give you trusted physician-reviewed results. You can choose from tests, including food sensitivity, metabolism, sleep and stress, thyroid and so many more.

Here's how it works. EverlyWell ships you your test straight to your door with everything needed for a simple sample collection. And then you return the test to a CLIA certified lab with a prepaid shipping label. And voila, your physician-reviewed results and insights are sent to your device in just days.

Over a million people have trusted EverlyWell with their at-home lab testing. I found EverlyWell to be super simple to use, with easy-to-follow instructions included. And I love the peace of mind that comes with knowing that my results were reviewed by a physician and could be trusted.

And for my friends, EverlyWell is offering a special discount of 20% off on at-home lab test at everlywell.com/thatsoundsfun. That's everlywell.com/thatsoundsfun for 20% off your at-home lab test. [Everlywell.com/thatsoundsfun](https://everlywell.com/thatsoundsfun).

And now back to our conversation with Hannah.

[00:49:03] <music>

Annie: I think that's beautiful. The other thing I want you to hear me say is you said that God still chooses you and that's why He's using you. I also think He uses you because you're still choosing Him.

Hannah: Yeah.

Annie: Right?

Hannah: Yeah

Annie: Because even there are parts of your story that I read in the book, and then I lived real-time watching the television, there are parts of your story that you could say, "Because of that, and because of how it was treated by Christians, I'm walking away from this whole thing."

Hannah: Mm-hmm.

Annie: But you didn't.

Hannah: That was something I wanted to kind of come back to with you is like why I was excited to do this podcast is you made me still feel... I'm going to get emotional about it. But just to have your encouragement through that was really important to me because I remember I didn't know... I felt really lost, but really like searching and just needed... I needed my people.

Being told I'm not a good example of Christians, that was hard. That's probably one of the hardest things out of everything because that's when I needed a community the most. I mean, I was out here by myself, knowing I made mistakes, not knowing the whole world was going to see it. And it was so hard. I remember I... I'm not going to say the podcast, but I was listening to this podcast and it was from a well-known church and they actually did a podcast about me. And I'm listening and it was like, "Does Hannah Brown really love Jesus with all her heart?" and inviting me to church.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Hannah: That was really hard. I was like, "Wow." And in that whole thing, I was around people who had never believed in anything. I was around not one single Christian. And I had been making these... I would try to do my quiet times, I had nothing, especially as Bachelor you have no time. And had started planning these scenes. And we were so excited because they're going to go to church with me for the first time, and then all this happened at one time. And it was like, "Dang it."

I remember one of the people that was with me the whole time was like, "Well, if that's Christianity. I don't want any part of that." And that killed me. But I would have never known what that felt like, because I was always in the inside. That's how I grew up. And I would never have known what that felt like if I hadn't gone through that.

And so now, I had this connection because... connection with other people is what we're made for. It's to find those relatable moments that we can connect to the heart

and really be able to be like, "I see you. I feel you." I now am able to connect with so many different people and bring them in to knowing God and knowing that some people don't have the experiences that I did growing up of going to church since I was little and being in a church group and youth group.

Unfortunately, people had those experiences that I had on the show far too often. And it helps me know how to show up for the big church, to show how we're called to show up. And it's to love on people and to pray for redemption, not to scold, or to reject, ostracize. We can't do that. And I don't think I would have really known what that was like if I hadn't gone through that experience.

But when you messaged me, like you don't understand how—and how you've always just checked on me—much that meant to me, especially during that time when I felt like everybody was disappointed in me. It was really powerful. But God used even that really hurtful moment to give me another way that I can be used in His bigger story for me.

Annie: You've done a beautiful job with it. And I am so sorry. I mean this sentence "I was always on the inside, I didn't know how this feels" could make me cry because that is so heartbreaking. That's so heartbreaking that there are so many people who grew up like us and have left because they knew what it was like on the inside. They made some choices that people put them on the outside and they don't want to come back.

Hannah: Yeah. I mean, God's just got such a hold on my heart that I can never turn away from Him. And I have also felt like the love of so many people who have loved me through some of those hard times and always pointed me back to God even when... There was thousands of other people making me want to go the other way, but God is just so much bigger than that.

And you know, sometimes we have to always develop in our faith. I think that was just another just learning lesson for me too of like I think in the past I was so judgmental of people who made different lifestyle decisions than what I thought was the capital T Truth of how we're supposed to live as Christians. And probably did snuff some people instead of showing love.

I, unfortunately, then experienced that on the other side. And I will tell you, I will never count anybody out because we're all welcome. And God uses so many different types of experiences to be able to speak to another person who is longing and questioning and wondering if they are enough and worthy of God's love. It's been really cool to see other people message me of like, "I love how you've been

through so much and all this stuff has been said about you but still your faith is so important to you, and you don't turn your back on that."

So, yeah, man, it's been hard. And that was one of the toughest things that I went through. But having just little voices of encouragement, and God using other people in my life really helped me continue on this path and also make me really dive deeper into why I believe what I believe. And I think also trying to do that. When you live in this... where everybody says they're Christian even if they're not, you just go by... it feels like it's easy. And it is-

Annie: Because everybody believes the same thing. Everybody believes the same things that's sitting around you.

Hannah: And to just be in this thing, this bubble where everybody says they believe this and that but then being put in a bubble where everybody around me doesn't believe anything that I believe. And really being able to dig into the Bible be like, "Do I believe this?" or "Is this just something I've told." I think if I wouldn't have gone through those experiences, and had those questioning moments of like, "whoa, do I want to be a part of this? I wouldn't have grown as much as I had. And I'm really thankful for that, too.

If I could have kept living that life of just being the quintessential, good girl, I would have probably not have had this intimate relationship with the Lord that I do now in such, you know, all-encompassing way of like, knowing that I'm never going to be left, I'm never going to not be loved, that I am worthy even when it feels like I'm not.

Annie: If God would have given us everything we wanted when we wanted it and if we're to live perfectly, we would not have the relationship with Him that we get to have. I know more because of my mistakes than I know because of what I've done right.

Hannah: Right? Yeah.

Annie: For starters, this whole conversation, start to finish, is exactly why I can't wait for people to give *God Bless This Mess* to the people in their lives. What a book for Christmas! What a book that we can put in people's hands who just love Hannah Brown and don't realize the depth of the spiritual side of this, but want to hear the hot goss about the bachelor!

Hannah: I remember when I was trying to figure out like, "Is this just a Christian book? What is this?" and I think I'm so excited and honored that I have the ability to reach

people who are going to grab the book and think it's one thing. And then really be able to maybe for the first time in their life see how God can work in somebody's life and who and what God really is. And that's just overwhelming love. That's really cool.

I think it's a book obviously for Christians, but it's also going to maybe plant some seeds, and people who aren't and have felt like that is not something I want to be a part of. Well, maybe if it's like that-

Annie: Yeah. We call it sneaky Jesus around here. Your book is a little sneaky Jesus. They think they're getting one thing and they're going to meet Him in the process.

Hannah: So I'm super excited about that. I just hope and pray that those moments of honesty and really showing the mess as it is is going to show people that I don't have it all figured out and I'm still in the thick of it, but I'm not fully broken either. And there's a reason why I'm not fully broken and I'm going to get a little bit better every day because of that. I'm so nervous but also excited for it to be here because then it's not my problem anymore.

Annie: That's right. The night it releases, it goes from being yours to ours. Another guest said, "It's like you build a house and you invite everybody to the party, and then you sneak out the party."

Hannah: I love that.

Annie: So you're like, "Yeah, come on over everybody. The house is yours. Open every room, eat what you want, drink what you want." And then you move out and you go somewhere else. "What happens in the house doesn't have anything to do with me." Okay, Hannah, is there anything we didn't say about the book that you want to make sure we say?

Hannah: Hmm. I mean, I don't know. Do you feel like we covered it pretty well?

Annie: Yes. I love how the book goes through pageant life, bachelor life, college life up till *Dancing with the Stars* until now. I mean, it covers so much of your life. That makes it really fun. So I think people will love that too.

Hannah: I feel like when we were talking about like, "Where did you start the book in like... there's a reason why I did this thing that everybody saw me do publicly but oh, it makes so much more sense.

Annie: Backup, backup, back up.

Hannah: Yeah, backup, backup, back up, and see where that's coming from. The threads that all kind of come together and make this really beautiful story at the end. I'm really proud of it. It took some time to kind of process and figure out: how does this all go together? And then it's like, "Wow, God has made this really cool story." So yeah, it's going to be good.

Annie: That's very good. Well, I have one more question for you. But I do want to say to you, you know this privately and I'm glad you do it privately, but I do want to say it publicly. I am so on your team. And I am so for you, and I am anything you need. I am proud to be your friend. I don't feel anything but proud to be your friend. Mostly because you won the Mirror Ball. No, I'm proud of how-

Hannah: It's pretty cool.

Annie: Oh, yeah, it is very cool. Only what? 22 people in the world have ever done it?

Hannah: I know. It's so weird. I watched the show and then I'm like, "I did..." It's almost like I feel like I might... How did I do that? If you know, when you read, I was not...

Annie: You were hurting. You're hurting so much.

Hannah: I was hurting so bad. But now I can be like, "Wow." I think this year I'm really like, "Wow, I'm really proud of that. That's awesome."

Annie: And I am proud to be your friend for that, but for all the other reasons about who you are as a woman and who you are as a friend, and how you represent what it looks like to be in relationship with God. I'm proud to be a friend for all those reasons. Okay, the last question I always ask, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you?

Hannah: You know, I thought about this and the first thing that popped in my head was a girls' trip.

Annie: Where do you want to go?

Hannah: I want to go somewhere where I'm sitting in the sun but not out here. I want to go somewhere tropical with some friends. And now I'm like, "I've got to make this happen."

Annie: It sounds like you do need to make it happen. Like very warm days when your regular life is getting fall wintery, great!

Hannah: It's the best.

Annie: Are you like a South Beach kind of person? Or are you a Costa Rica kind of person?

Hannah: Well, I want to be a Costa Rica person because it's on my bucket list.

Annie: Okay, good, good. I want to be a Costa Rica person.

Hannah: But more like a south beach. That's what I know. I mean, like I said, get to look at the beach but the water is too cold.

Annie: Yeah, it's cold over there.

Hannah: So I'm thinking we got to do the Costa Rica.

Annie: I went to Costa Rica after college my first spring break. And there was a swim-up bar at the pool and I was like, "What is this life? I could swim to a bar. Okay!" I was like, "Is this all of Costa Rica because I live here now. You can swim to this?" I mean, I remember feeling like we are in the lap of luxury. So get ready. Get ready.

Hannah: So now girls' trip to Costa Rica. We have to settle.

Annie: Well, Hannah, thank you for being on the show today. It means a ton to me. I'm so glad we got to do this. I'm just so glad. I can't wait for people to hear and read the book. I think they're going to love it.

Hannah: Thank you so much. I'm so excited to be on this show. And hopefully when I get to Nashville we're going to hang out in karaoke.

Annie: 100%. 100% You will not get away. Will not at this point. You will not get away with it.

[01:05:10] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, don't you love her? She's just so honest and so genuine and knows who she is. And, man, I respect her for that. I do. So be sure to grab a copy of her

new book, *God Bless This Mess*, and go follow her so 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, 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. Today what sounds fun to me is driving to see my family. I love this drive I get to do today. I'm very much looking forward to it.

Have a great Thanksgiving, friends. And we'll see you back here on Friday when Charles Robinson is back with his wife Siouxsan, and they're answering your follow-up questions about indigenous culture. Oh, I cannot wait for you guys to hear this one. We'll see you on Friday. Happy Thanksgiving, friends. I'm grateful for you.

[01:06:09] <music>