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[00:01:01] <Music>

Annie: Hi friends, Happy Saturday. Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs, I'm so happy to be with you today. We have got a great show. It is day 10 of the 2021 Christmas Party. So we've just got a couple more episodes in our 12 days in a row of Christmas episodes.

Imagine that we're all just still like mingling around this lovely party. Nobody wants to leave because we're having such a good time chatting with our friends, eating some great stuff, talking to dear friends. Don't miss the earlier episodes of our 12 days they are so good, and definitely doing the trick to get me and that Christmas spirit.

The soundtrack of our party is Little Drummer Boy from for King and Country. It's from their album A Drummer Boy Christmas, it's so good, be sure to check it out. Today on the show I get to talk with some dear friends Jeff and Alyssa Bethke. They've been on the pod before but they've been busy since then, both releasing books this year and you know doing the rest of their life too. Alyssa released *Satisfied: Finding Hope, Joy, and Contentment Right Where You Are*. And Jeff's new one is called, *Take Back Your Family*.

They're parents, bloggers, YouTubers, and hosts of the Real Life podcast. They're the friends of the party, that are going to pull everyone into a conversation and ask all the good questions. So here's my conversation with Jeff and Alyssa Bethke.

[00:02:23] <Music>

Annie: When guys grow out their facial hair, how old are you and you figure out what your face does and doesn't do?

Jeff: You know I'm a bad person to ask because I think I was 30, or one, or 29, when I was like, "Oh, I have a little bit more than fuzz now." I was a late bloomer. But I think that's probably like an early college thing when you start seeing that awkward like "Oh yeah, they can really grow it." Or it starts looking very inappropriate.

Annie: But even in your own face or you like, "Huh, there's no hair on that part." Are you like, "Oh, wow, I have a beard."

Jeff: I've literally sat and stared at the mirror and I'm like, "Why does a gap exist there?" Like, "Why is there some physiological response where this has hair and then I have a weird gap?" So if anyone is listening and you're like a beardologists I would love to hear from you.

Annie: Yeah, well, lucky for you we have a lot of beardologists in the audience.

Jeff: What did you say?

Alyssa: I said you gain status as a man if you can grow like a full beard. Is that a thing?

Jeff: Yeah, that's definitely street cred. If you can actually show that "Like Johnny over there. Like Johnny over there." That's like street cred beard.

Annie: So, but when does street cred start mattering? Like fifth grade or like college?

Jeff: That would be a fascinating question to survey men. I would say College, that's what I would say.

Annie: Your brain is so Barna-shaped. You're like, "Let's survey everybody. Let's ask about the gospel in beards."

Jeff: I would like to see the poll, and the data, and the sample size.

Annie: Yeah, we'll just get Barna right on that; A, they've got tons of time, they're not working on anything more important than what age men start feeling insecure about their facial hair.

Jeff: They have a beardologist on staff.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. You guys, welcome back to That Sound Fun. I'm so glad you're here for the Christmas party, thank you for joining us.

Alyssa: Thanks for having us, this is so fun.

Jeff: We are so stoked. I feel like we've done a Christmas one before with you? Was it actual Christmas a couple years ago?

Annie: We talked about Christmas, but it was not technically on that. Now we've done couples, let's just run through how many times you've been on the show y'all are VIPs. Episode 56, which is long time ago back in 2017.

Jeff: I was 17-years old.

Annie: And then both of you were on in 2019 and then Jeff you were back at the end of 2019. So that is how-

Jeff: Man, you're the best and we love what you're doing out in the space, so thank you.

Annie: You're kind. Okay, Maui and Vermont, you have two homes, go. This is the update you now own a place in Vermont.

Jeff: That sounded way busier than it is. We live in Maui, which also sounds, it's still a real life, by the way, I do want to say that. There's a disclaimer that when you say that's like there is sin here, Genesis three made it here just to let people know that. And then yes, we have some mentors and partners of ours that we really care about hospitality, so, we have leaned in pretty heavily that last couple years and so yeah, we are part-owners of a 500-acre farm in Vermont called OQ Farm and it's massive. Eight buildings; we do weddings there, retreats there, families can stay there in just one of the homes. It's super fun and we love it. So yes, we live in Maui and we go to Vermont a lot for that.

Annie: Talk to me about getting on a plane in Maui and getting off in Vermont, 19 layovers?

Jeff: Yeah.

Alyssa: Let's just say those people that have private jets, I get it.

Annie: You are finally like, "I understand."

Jeff: No, we can't say that publicly, private jets are sinful never do that-

Alyssa: If you could do it, it's the way to go.

Jeff: But we definitely can't do it.

Alyssa: We can't but that would be fun.

Jeff: So we are going, yes, we go to Vermont in Delta 37A

Annie: Yes.

Jeff: That's how we go to Vermont.

Alyssa: And it takes two days.

Jeff: Yeah, so this is actually fascinating like to be in the same country, it's a random thing but like you can go from Vermont to London and back, before it takes us to get from Maui to Vermont. It's like a six to seven-hour flight depending on the wind to like the West coast. Then you get on another flight on the West coast, Seattle or L.A. that's usually a five or six-hour flight, then to Boston, and then the farm is so rural it's two-and-a-half-hour drive from Boston.

Annie: Okay, so you just go to Logan, you fly to Logan and then you drive from there. Because I was picturing like, East coast to tiny airport, to tiny airport to-

Jeff: Yeah, like the little prop plane that, what's that movie of Ryan Reynolds and Sandra Bullock? It's not on the East coast but it's in Alaska, The Proposal?

Alyssa: The Proposal.

Jeff: Yeah, like their little prop plane they take out to Alaska, and they kind of just like zip out in this little two-seater, yeah-

Annie: So that's what y'all are doing I thought your private planning at this point?

Jeff: Never.

Annie: But I mean, wisdom would say keep a car at the airport or something. Like there's got your-

Jeff: Yeah, wisdom would say that. We're not wise, but wisdom would say that.

Annie: Yeah, I would imagine, y'all, in the future there will be a time where there will be a Bethke vehicle or a farm vehicle at the airport.

Jeff: We're trying.

Annie: To get y'all back in.

Jeff: We are trying. Exactly, you have to visit. It's actually a really fun special place.

Annie: I have never been to Vermont and I am dying.

Annie: I mean, Lisa, tell me about the fall in Vermont? Did you get to see it?

Alyssa: Oh, I yes-

Jeff: Ask the right girl about the fall vibes in Vermont.

Alyssa: Okay, are you a Gilmore Girl fan?

Annie: To the death, yes.

Jeff: Yeah, we are.

Alyssa: It is like literally, there's a town outside of it where we go, that is where they probably did the overhead shot of Gilmore Girls.

Annie: At the start with the little church?

Alyssa: Yes.

Jeff: Yes.

Alyssa: It is the quaintest cutest town I've ever been in and it's just beautiful. So when I went, though, the leaves weren't fully, it's like you only get like what a week?

Jeff: You have like seven or eight days to time it in it's max, like what they call leaf season or whatever. But it's like you have seven or eight days.

Annie: Is it peak leaf?

Jeff: Yeah, peak leaf season and it's like eight, nine days. So you got-

Alyssa: So I went time right before it which was still beautiful. But were you there during peak?

Jeff: Me and me and Jon Tyson, we actually went there for a retreat during that time for our Art of Teaching stuff and it's actually, Maui is epic, but I will say the Upper Northeast when the leaves are changing colors can compete for the Mount Rushmore of prettiest places in the U.S.

Annie: Yeah. I have a funny question about Vermont, are you experiencing any of the like spiritual life, that part of the country just has such a different spiritual life than the South or even than the West Coast. Are y'all experiencing any of that?

Jeff: Yeah, well, I think what it reminds us a lot of where we were born and raised was like Seattle area. So the more you go up, there's the west coast in general, but I definitely in California has its own culture. Once you get up, I would consider the Upper Northeast, Upper Northwest, Upper Northeast, actually very similar spiritual climates. With the Upper Northeast, statistically, so I'm jumping in my Barna side again-

Annie: Come on!

Jeff: ...being the least church. So even if they go like one step farther than Portland and Seattle-

Annie: The Northeast is one step farther post Christian, from the Northwest.

Jeff: Yeah, the actual amount of church attendance-

Annie: Wow.

Alyssa: I was actually really surprised because I grew up in Seattle, and I feel like I didn't know anything was more than Seattle.

Jeff: So, anyone listening who's doing work out there you are amazing-

Annie: We see you.

Jeff: And you're trenching it out.

Annie: I did a speaking event in Maine a couple of years ago. And I remember after I got off the stage, I thought, I've gone to a lot of cities, and seen a lot of people who get to go to a lot of conferences. And then you come up here and they are they're starving, they're starving.

Jeff: Yes, it's a totally different culture doing stuff in the south where they're like, "Oh, do I want to go see Taylor Swift on Sunday or do I want to see Sean Mendez on Tuesday?" And it's the same thing with religious stuff. It's like, yeah, "Do you want to go see? [Crosstalk 00:09:30] on Monday or do you want to go to this church on Tuesday?"

Annie: Yes.

Jeff: And it's like, but the Upper Northeast is like they get one thing a year and, so, that's a fascinating dynamic.

Annie: How do y'all end up with the farm in Vermont? Did your partners already own it? Was it like already in their lives?

Jeff: Yeah.

Annie: Okay.

Jeff: They owned it for like 20 years and I had gone there just for a long time, as a friend and, she actually didn't even come until just recently this last year. And I was just like, "Babe, this place is amazing, we love it." And, so, long story short we had some conversations with them and they wanted to take it to a level of hospitality that they fully couldn't by themselves, and, so, we jumped in with them and it's been really fun. It's a special place. It's just oqfarm.co, people can go check out pictures and check out the snow, and I believe it's fun and there's horses, alpacas, sheep, all that stuff.

Annie: And y'all are doing a hospitality thing kind of a new compound in Maui as well, right? From when I was with you?

Annie: Yeah, exactly. Except out here is a little bit more sluggish, meaning we got to like still in the permit process and all that. But it's exactly the same thing out here. We have a couple acres and we took a big bet this last year. I mean, I think some people can think some of that stuff is like you're so, I don't know, well off or privileged. But it's like, man, we took some serious risk in debt, like these are business moves. These are like we're putting it all on the line, like we're putting out equity, and we're putting cashes, homes on the table and stuff like that to be taken by the bank if it doesn't go well.

So I just find that a fascinating conversation, but we love it and we want to. Which is also a side conversation on dreams in general. If you feel like the Lord's called you to it, then take a jump, jump in in faith, jump un in risk. And if it doesn't go well, that doesn't mean the Lord didn't call you to it, that just means maybe I failed.

Annie: That's right.

Jeff: Maybe He wanted to learn something, maybe whatever.

Annie: Man, I wish there was a direct line between trying and succeeding, there just isn't.

Alyssa: Yeah.

Jeff: Yeah.

Annie: Even on our best days, even if you've had the longest quiet time you've ever had, and you fasted and prayed longer, and you've been Sabbathng like a pro, you could still try and fail and that is still God.

Jeff: Yes. Well, Jesus is the perfect example. I mean, that dude, never messed up and then died a horrible, brutal, death.

Annie: Yes.

Jeff: And He was beaten by people and wanted to get killed before that, and was going to be shoved off the cliff in that one story. Like there's turmoil, sweating blood, I guess it was one to one and it never is, which is fascinating.

Annie: This is the oldest quote in the world. But I saw it like Matt Damon is on a commercial saying it or something, and he says, "Fortune favors the brave."

Jeff: Mh-hmm.

Annie: And I have really been thinking about it. Because I want y'all to respond to that quote, as well, my big response has been, "I think it depends on how you define fortune."

Jeff: Mh-hmm.

Alyssa: Yeah, totally.

Jeff: Yes, I'd love to hear what you think. I think one thing I'm going to use this as a metaphor, because I want to talk about just physical money. But I am into some of these, you know, I read a lot about with family and inheritance, and business and stuff like that. So I'm using the metaphor, but statistically, most of the wealthiest people in the world have gone like bankrupt like four times. So it's like, now normal people, when a normal person starts thinking about the possibility of them going bankrupt, they act like they are undone. They act like their life is over which is, at some level, there is a level which that's hard. I'm just saying even identity wise, like, "I can't be the person that goes back bankrupt, right?"

Annie: I will never recover.

Jeff: Yeah, I'll never come back. The rich people are like, "That's Tuesday."

Annie: Right.

Jeff: Like you, and that's a fascinating thing that no one talks about, like the wealthiest people, just because they're willing to push that line on bets, and hedge, and risk, that makes them go bankrupt or makes them a lot of money. I think it's a metaphor-

Annie: Chris Rock says, "You always lose your first money."

Jeff: Exactly, exactly. And so I think that's a good metaphor for our faith, and risk in general. That the Lord calls us to, I do think it's a little bit of like, we have so much passive faith in the American church and so we wonder why God doesn't show up. And it's like you're not putting yourself in any position where He even has to act or He even has to show up, and, so, I don't know, but how would you respond to that?

Alyssa: Yeah, well, I just it made me think, immediately, when you said that I was not thinking fortune physically. But like-

Jeff: Blessing and health.

Alyssa: The blessing and I think the Lord talks about there's so much blessing when you follow Him and I think He doesn't want us to be timid people who are scared or fearful, He wants us to be brave people. Even if you think about the people you're most like the saints or the people-

Jeff: Inspired by.

Alyssa: To the most inspired your heroes. You don't say like, "Wow, they were so cautious, I want to be just like them."

Annie: Right.

Alyssa: They were passionate people, they took risks, and they made or failed, they may have been betrayed by the world, but they knew the blessing of the Lord and that He was their everything. And, so, I think even in a like a Christian spiritual context that is so true. Like and the Lord blesses His children, our biggest blessing is that we get Him He's our inheritance and stuff.

Jeff: He's our fortune. Put that on a cup.

Annie: Put that on a cup. Where's that mug?

Jeff: Merch coming out.

Annie: Merch come, it's coming. We had Mike Todd on a couple of months ago talking about his book *Crazy Faith*. It is, have y'all read it yet?

Jeff: Parts of it. I haven't gotten through it yet, but he is real-

Annie: It is something else. Talk to me about what you've experienced in the last year with all this and other things. I mean, the art of teaching, the Legos, I mean, we're going to talk about all of it. But talk about what faith really looks like for y'all versus I think you said the Western church, the American church has a casual faith, is that what you said?

Jeff: Yeah, for some reason, the first thing I thought of when you said that is probably that our faith has been stretched in the last couple years, is we had a really horrible business partnership go pretty sour a couple years ago.

Alyssa: Talk about failure.

Jeff: Yeah, and I'm a big fan of like, there's always something to blame for both sides. But this one was definitely like, the person just like got crazy, just like literally got crazy and I think everyone would admit that.

But anyways, what was interesting about that is, that was a big thing of faith because we were very yoked to him, and a lot of our stuff was very yoked to him and that made me really nervous. It's actually a sign of where Alyssa is way more faithful than me, way more spirit-led than me.

I was like, "Man, I just can go practical pretty easily and not lean into this stuff as heavily." And Alyssa basically, like, and it was actually our move, like we saw this, and we were saying like, "Man, we

don't feel good about this anymore. We don't feel good about the decisions you're making, the trajectory you're putting your life on." And like just kind of walking away from everything that you've built for 20 years, and we're going to faith people, et cetera.

So we're like, "Well, do we just" you kind of have that classic temptation of like, "Well, can we just kind of sweep it under the rug and just still do our life." And I was kind of thinking about all that and then Alyssa just came down hard, she was like, "I prayed about it. The Lord said to divorce like, separate I had a dream and it was vivid, it was exact and so we're doing it." And then I just immediately saw the amount of dollars in our head that like we were just going to leave. And it got actually really bad, it got really traumatic financially, emotionally, spiritually.

But there was a resoluteness that she had, the faith part. There was like an anchor to the moment like that's, we made the right call and that's just what the Lord said, and that's all that matters. So I don't know if you want talk about that or a different example.

But I feel like that, to me, is the first one I thought of like when faith going from active to passive, I mean, sorry, from passive to active is usually when it's going to cost you something, anything, emotional, spiritual, whatever. Are you willing to make that call you know it's going to cost you something and we've had to make that call and probably I wouldn't have made that call single. So I'm thankful for her.

Alyssa: I feel like I'm learning so much about faith. I think, it's a really sweet thing that the Lord, you know that story in the Bible where I can't even think of it right now. But in the New Testament, where he's like, "Lord, give me the faith to believe." Because I think on our own-

Jeff: Yeah, "Help my unbelief."

Annie: "Help my unbelief."

Alyssa: ...on our own, we don't have faith or like some people I feel like their gift is faith, they have way more faith than I do. But we can ask the Lord like, "Lord, give me faith." And I'm realizing more and more that this life on this side of the Earth or this side of heaven, we like it is by faith. We walk by faith. There's so much that we don't know. There's so much we don't see. And so we have to walk by faith.

But it's not like this worldly like, with your eyes closed you just jump off blind. It's like we have the Holy Spirit, we have the Word of God, we have community, we have mentors, there are like things set in place for us to take those actions of faith. And I think, for me, when I know that I know, that I know, the Lord is telling me to do something, it's like, I know it'd be disobedient if I don't do it.

And so it's like, "Oh, I'm going to act in faith and I don't know how this is going to turn out, but I know that I'm obeying the Word and I'm staying close to Him and so it's worth it."

I think with that business transaction that happened, the thing that I learned the most was that when you obey the Lord in faith, He is so faithful to take care of you. Like to be your hiding place, to even when it feels like people are putting your name down, you're misunderstood, there's things said about you that aren't true, but it's like you can't defend yourself. It's like that's okay because the Lord fights for me. The Lord knows who I am in my own heart.

So just that like we learned a lot about the Lord like really hiding in the Lord and letting Him fight for us. Like not that you're cowardly, but that you don't have to-

Annie: You don't have to defend yourself.

Alyssa: ...defend yourself and to do the right thing because He's asking you to. And then we really realized that He like, I don't know if it happens like this all the time, but He like blessed that. In ways spiritually, in our characters and relationships, but also financially it was a huge risk and yet He provided in these crazy ways and it's not that we obeyed because of that. It was just like this added blessing where it was like, "Okay, Lord, we really see that all this is yours and you give, and you take away, and so yeah, it really built our faith.

Jeff: Yeah.

Annie: I've already purchased the Art of Teaching series but it's not available to me yet. It comes in January, you can go check the receipts, I really have paid for it.

Jeff: Two weeks away. Two weeks away.

Alyssa: I can't wait I'm dying.

Annie: I mean you in the comments of people being like, "I bought it but I don't have it yet." You're like, "I said it in the caption, in the video."

Jeff: I know, my gosh! You know like internet people don't read. Internet people don't read. I don't read so I get it I've empathy. It's actually exciting because it shows people are really excited for it, and I'm stoked because I get to work with two of my favorite mentors, and preachers, and teachers.

Annie: Yeah, I can't wait.

Jeff: The trailer was sick.

Annie: It was unreal. So I don't have the content yet, so I'm going to let y'all, I'm going to get a sneak peek of it right here. Because you talked about Alyssa, you talked about how you had a dream and y'all made some decisions based on that dream. And I'm teaching next Sunday at Cross Point about Joseph and the courage of Joseph, because twice he literally woke up from a dream and changed their course of their life.

Jeff: Yeah.

Annie: Talk about his courage, his faith. Give me give me some nuggets that I, and it's a Christmas episode. Let's talk about Jesus', what is he Jesus' his stepdad? No. I don't know Jesus's earthly father.

Jeff: Yes.

Annie: But I just think that we under discuss how Joseph just heard God and obeyed.

Jeff: Yeah. My first time, I've never heard him called the stepdad but it's kind of true.

Annie: Right. He married Jesus' his mom.

Jeff: Yes, but it makes total sense, I love that. But yeah, I mean, I think that's the hope of Advent. Is the hope of Advent is that God is ushering into darkness to bring light, and I think dreams are such a fascinating metaphor for that. Because that's literally the like, it's like dark, it's like you're sleeping. It's kind of this metaphorical darkness and God's like bursting through with light, which would be a dream, like imagination, story.

I love to by the way, the thing I love about dreams is it shows God speaks through story. God doesn't speak through facts, God speaks through stories. Facts are always in the vessel of story, like, but I find that very fascinating. And, so, I think that's exactly what it is, is God speaks and He assures, and he moves.

The thing I love about the dream thing and you even hear this now, being very prominent in like the Middle Eastern church right now, is to me I do feel like there's a level at which, now I'm talking about the macro. But like there's a level which kind of dreams are like, people that are having that kind of like experience with the Lord, it does seem to feel like a frontline of some type of battle.

Meaning like when they show up in Scripture, when they show up macroly, I mean, of course we everyone even in the U.S. hasn't. But like, where you're hearing the massive stories of like Jesus is

primarily revealing Himself through dreams. People are saying in like Iran, Saudi Arabia, stuff like that. I believe there's a frontline aspect to that. I feel like that's almost like kind of one of his primary frontline warfare weapons. And I find that a fascinating way to think about it.

[00:22:21] <Music>

Annie: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, Simplified and their Simplified Planner. Y'all remember my BFF Emily Ley, she's been a guest on the pod a couple of times. Well, she created the Simplified Planner when she was young, busy, overwhelmed, and a mom, she needed somewhere to write out her thoughts and her to-do just to help her keep it all together.

Simplified's mission is to equip and inspire women with the tools that they need to simplify their lives, and their cornerstone product is the Simplified Planner. Get everything out of your head and onto paper so that you can spend more time focusing on the things that matter.

Does my whole entire team have Simplified Planners ready-to-use for the new year? Well, technically, no, the guys don't but all the gals on the team do. But the guys could have one if you want, Johnny? Maybe okay. All the gals have them. In fact, we were just talking about how we can't wait for the new year to get started in our fresh new planners.

2022 editions are available now if you're not a paper planner person, how do you do your life? But you do you? Simplified also has tons of other beautiful products that help you simplify your life to notepads, baby books, art prints, journals, and more. Just go to emilyley.co/thatoundsfun and use the code THATSOUNDSFUN15 for 15% off your order. Again, that's emilyley.co/thatoundsfun and use the code THATSOUNDSFUN15 for 15% off your order. Get your Simplified Planner so we can be twinsies.

[00:23:58] <Music>

Bill: Hi, I'm Bill Haslam, the author of *Faithful Presence*. My favorite Christmas song is the best Christmas song "What Child is This".

Annie: And now back to our conversation with Jeff and Alyssa.

[00:24:10] <Music>

Annie: How do we know when we've had a dream if, how do you know if you move your whole family to Egypt like Joseph did? How do you know if the dream is from God in such a way that you

should shape your life around it? And how do you know when it's what that little cricket says, "A dream is a wish your heart makes?" How do you know?

Jeff: Yes. Well, Alyssa is enrolled in seminary and I'm a seminary dropout, so she's going to answer that one. You're going to-

Alyssa: That's not true, I haven't started yet.

Jeff: She is now getting a masters and I went for like five days. So, how'd you would you answer that?

Alyssa: Well, I feel like I'm starting to really step into like learning about dreams and hearing the Lord's voice. That's language that I wasn't taught growing up, even though I grew up in the church and went to Bible school. Truth be told, I have dreams but I don't feel like it's like every night. I have a friend who like, almost every night is like the Lord is speaking through her through dreams. And I've realized that the more I have less distractions like not really watching TV at night, not really on my phone before I go to bed. The more I'm like talking to the Lord throughout the day, the more I am dreaming, which is really fascinating.

Jeff: In like you are always talking about the spiritual realm, prophetically.

Alyssa: Actually, yeah, I feel like I can hear, I'm just more awake to hear the Lord like my soul is awake. But anyway, the dreams, I feel like the thing is, for me, that I'm like, "Okay, I think this is from the Lord" is one when I wake up and I remember it. Because there's a lot of times I'm like, "I know, I was just dreaming." But like, it's out I don't remember a thing. If I remember it and then if it like goes along with the Lord's heart and if I like can't forget it. Like I had a dream a couple years ago that I literally think about every day because I think it's been like, I'm still kind of living it out.

Jeff: But it's still hasn't been realized yet.

Alyssa: It's been realized but it was like a three-part dream and so it's like, I'm kind of like still living it. And there's, like, months that I was like, "Lord, what are you trying to tell me? Like, what is this mean? But it feels like this is from you." And so it's just like, the more I brought it before the Lord the more I was like curious, and asking, and had other people. I was like sharing it with them I'm like, "Does this sound toy crazy or is this like..."

Jeff: Yeah, checking it with friends, communion and the Scripture.

Alyssa: And then there would be things that would happen that I was like, and it would be I felt like the Lord was like, "This is it. This is your time for that, this is the dream. And obviously dreams,

John Mark has like a little e-book that he, I don't know, I got it in my email, he talked about dreams. I think it was dreams like that but also dreams, like the dreams that you have for your life, or the desires of your heart.

But it's always going to be different than what you think. Like you only get a little picture of it, it's always going to be a lot harder than you think. It's always going to take a lot longer than you think. And then it's always going to be a lot better than you think.

Jeff: Mh-hmm. I mean if it checks all those boxes then it was probably from the Lord.

Annie: It was from the Lord.

Alyssa: Yeah, and those are just, I'm not like, I feel like I have so much to learn in that area. But those are some nuggets that I've just been like seeking the Lord with and I feel like this is lining up to.

Jeff: I think it's just like in the Scriptures, too, it's one thing that we are so averse to doing in the West is we individualize so quickly. So it's like all of those things that show up in Scripture are for a community. Even if it's an individual who's asked to obey, it's to effect and ripple into a community.

Annie: Yeah.

Jeff: So I just feel like that's something that we like check it with communities, submit it to a community, submit it to the Scriptures kind of have these checks and balances on your own kind of wiring in the way that the Lord speaks, or else it can kind of become deformed. And so the dream-

Annie: So quick. So quick.

Jeff: ...yes, exactly. Yes, and the dream prophetic nature side of things would be, you know in the more charismatic camp, which we are. I have a friend who says, it's funny what he says and I would agree with him. "I'm charismatic by theology not by personality." And I would agree with that, meaning like I'm not charismatic by personality, I'm like, "That's weird." I'm not about that, I don't want anything to do with any of that. If I see a flag, I'm running, you know what I'm saying? If a couple comes out, I'm definitely leaving.

But I think there's a level at which those gifts are clear in Scripture. Now, how they get used is a different conversation and expression. But so I'm charismatic by theology, which makes me a little uncomfortable with it. But what it doesn't say is this, then yeah, but you see plenty of those spheres that just are ridiculous like are ridiculous. And you're like, just like every denomination

has kind of the either you're overly hardened in the reformed circle, but I know amazing reformed people. You're just an A-S-S for lack of better term, I spelled it I didn't say it over here, but I have a ton of amazing reformed friends that are not like that.

I got charismatic people that teach me a ton about God and Spirit, and talking, and communicating with Him in that way. And then I just know some crazies, where I'm like they are weird.

Annie: Yeah.

Jeff: So it's like you can find that anywhere, right?

Annie: Yeah.

Jeff: So what I'm saying with that though, is I think checking it all of that, is checking it through, outside of just individualization, just kind of outside of yourself. If it's not, then it can quickly get deformed.

Annie: Well, also in my own brain, when I've probably in my, I think history helps too, I've been a Christian, most of my life. I've probably had five dreams that I really felt like were from God. Of the thousands of I mean, I've probably slept 16,000 nights, and five of them I can say, "I think God was trying to say something to me." And I almost immediately tell someone because otherwise it even morphs in my own head of like, "Were there four people there? Were there three people there?" And, so, it's one of the blessings of Marco Polo is I almost, I real quick will pick up and go to my, and I'll send it to my mentor. I had, I mean, literally five in my life and I had two this summer.

Jeff: It's like how many-

Annie: Yes. What does this actually mean? Does it mean what it technically means or what are we waiting on? What do we pray? If this is from God what do we do? So who do you think Joseph ran stuff by then? Do you think when he dreamed about Egypt he ran it by his community?

Annie: I would think so.

Jeff: Yeah, that would-

Alyssa: Well, Joseph in the Old Testament, he like immediately told his brothers and they're like, "Dude, you're right."

Annie: Right.

Jeff: That's a valid point Old Testament Joseph, New Testament Joseph, that there is going to be times where it feels and man, that's a sticky one to pull apart. There's going to be times at which it feels disobedient to the community. There's going to be times in which it feels, man, that's a little bit of just having to have that Martin Luther spirit of like, "If you have checked it to the absolute last T, and dotted the last I, and done your due diligence, and you still feel soft in your heart. You're not hardened bla bla." Then just like here I stand, I can do no other. It's a classic Martin Luther line. So that's like, I don't know, I don't know.

Annie: I've got two people that I say to them, "I'm going to tell you the craziest stuff."

Jeff: Yeah.

Annie: And if it doesn't work out, it doesn't work out. But if I don't say it out loud then we can't go back in five years and say, "You knew God was doing that."

Jeff: Yeah.

Alyssa: Yeah.

Annie: You knew that was God. Because if I don't say it out loud, because I'm scared I sound too crazy. I'm not putting it on here, I'd tell y'all if we weren't recording, but I'm not putting it on here, right?

Alyssa: Right.

Annie: But you got to have people that you can go like, "If I'm going to actually be full of faith and believe some wild things. I have to have people that will not hold my reputation in front of me and determine my ability to hear God based on how this situation goes."

Jeff: Yes, yes. And too this kind of gets into the more mathematical side or the logical side of just statistically, it's like, that you're going to interpret it wrong sometimes.

Alyssa: Yeah, oh yeah.

Jeff: Or like, you're going to get it wrong, and then to have the expectation that that's actually going to happen relieves so many different things. Because if you have that high bar of perfection, of every time I have a dream and I know it's of the Lord, and then I do this, and I follow, and I obey, and then it goes horribly wrong. Then you're going to be massively cognitive dissonance of like what just happened? Is He real? Does He speak whatever?

But if you have the expectation of just like, "I'm a human trying to become more into the image of Jesus, until I reach there I'm not perfect." Which means I might bat 200, I might bat 300, I might bat 400. But that clearly is going to mean I'm going to miss a certain amount that's just part of the process, and I'll count the chips at the end of time. That actually like you don't start doing the weird question game with God and voice, and all that stuff as much.

Alyssa: Mh-hmm.

Annie: That's one of the scarier things if we're not careful about prayer and listening to God is that, very quickly, you go from, "I believe God for everything to I'm not sure He's even real."

Jeff: Yeah, it's like, well, that is a swing but it happens a lot, because that's exactly what you're doing-

Annie: It's happened eight times in my life, no question.

Jeff: Exactly, exactly. And what it's showing, actually, I think, underneath that is a subtle revelation that you already think you're perfect.

Alyssa: Mh-hmm.

Jeff: And I don't mean perfect in like the world, but I mean like the spirit. You already feel like you're fully realized into the image of Jesus, which is not possible until the end. And so I don't know, I just think that that's like, if sanctification is a process then, of course there's going to be and you're not there yet, then at the finish line then, of course, there's going to be gaps.

Annie: Yeah, but, I mean, y'all, are saying you made some big decisions in the last year around a dream Alyssa had, so you still jumped, right?

Jeff: Yeah, and it seemed like the Lord confirmed it, which I think is you have to celebrate, you have to mark those wins, by the way. We're not altar people anymore, I can't stand that in our culture. Like, every time something happened in the Old Testament there was a marking moment, an altar got built. We build no altars, we don't mark any moments, we just move on, and it's just like you don't mark that moment, mark that moment.

Annie: I get tattoos, by the way, I get tatoos.

Jeff: Yeah, that's an altar, there you go. It's like mark the moment so that you can go back to it, so that you can tell your friends about it, if you have kids, you can tell your kids about it. That's what and literally, by the way, like most of the stories in the Old Testament when they talk about

altars, absolutely what He says like, "These are to communicate not to you but to your kids, kids, kids, kids, kids, [00:33:36] the generations." So and communicate-

Annie: So what are the altars that y'all are building? I mean, you got books out. What are the other ways you're doing that for generations to come?

Jeff: Yeah, I think for us, we're so high communicative that that's usually where it lands. Is just telling stories to the children like our kids, the children make them sound like we are 1900 children

Annie: The children.

Jeff: Yes. And they wear those flowy dresses, we are picking blueberries. We tell our stories to the children by the fireplace.

Alyssa: It's not. I think that year we bought an olive tree.

Jeff: Yeah, that year, for that specific moment, we bought an olive tree because I did some fun research on olive trees and it was a really cool representation of that. Where olive trees are one of the only trees in the world that are fire resistant. So most trees are actually like gasoline to fires, they like suck it in.

Annie: We all have them in our fireplaces.

Jeff: Exactly. Exactly. And olive trees are fire resistant, like they literally have something in the chemical composition of the leaves and whatever, that they still, of course, can burn out and they're also very drought resistant. So that's why when you go to Israel, you go to places like that they're famous for the olives, and the olive pressing, and the olive trees but yet you're also just like a wasteland at some parts. You like, "This is like nothing else is growing here." And I feel like that tree represented that moment for us, so stuff like that is a fun way to do it.

Annie: In the Garden of Gethsemane, when I was there the first time, and they said, "These trees are in the same place they were when Jesus was here." It's probably been five trees and I was like, "You mean to tell me, Jesus and I are seeing the same trees in the same spot?"

Jeff: Yeah.

Annie: I'm still not okay. Like I was a mess right there, but I'm still not all right to be like five trees ago He was here.

Alyssa: Wow.

Annie: That's why everybody's got to get to Israel. I'm like, "Everyone needs to go to Israel you have to see."

Jeff: I always talk about this, it's like it's crazy how it's an eastward journey. Where it's like, I was born in Seattle, Washington, I lived in Tacoma Washington, where it's like the stuff that you go to on the field trips that's really old is like, 70-years old.

Alyssa: Yeah.

Jeff: It's like 70, that's the field. Then you go to the East coast, and you're like, "Oh, my goodness, the White House, the Capitol."

Annie: Yeah.

Jeff: "...Boston, these things are 200-years old. You go across the ocean, "Oh, my goodness, Oxford, a thousand years old, like a thousand years old." Then you go even farther Middle East and you start getting into like that era, that ancient antiquity era-

Annie: I've never thought about this.

Jeff: ...like it's the center of where a lot of that stuff came from. And then you know, nerdy fact, you go even farther and then you get China, East Asia and that place is like, man, that's just dinosaur culture.

Annie: Yeah.

Jeff: Just like, epic relics of incredible storytelling and connection to civilizations forever.

Annie: Jeff, I have never thought about that. The history gets older the farther east we go.

Jeff: I know.

Alyssa: Is China more than Israel.

Jeff: Clear that out.

Alyssa: Because we keep going East.

Annie: Yeah.

- Jeff:** Well, it depends on where you're counting from.
- Alyssa:** I just thought Israel would have been the-
- Annie:** We're not editing this out, because both of us would like to ask our professor this story.
- Jeff:** No, no, no, no, you guys are make me nervous, I mean, just Asia is more east than the Middle East.
- Annie:** Yes, it is.
- Alyssa:** Israel is in the Middle East?
- Jeff:** Oh, I see, what you're saying. No, I think I can't answer that, someone has to write that in. But I think I've always read that there's both just very old, that's what [Crosstalk 00:36:49]
- Annie:** But then I'm like so is Eden in China? That's when my brain started going like...
- Jeff:** The way you guys, that's not what I was thinking.
- Annie:** We can't find it. It's in China we're looking in Israel
- Jeff:** First of all, I can edit it out. I was thinking that geographically, and I was like, okay, and I was like, "Yo, that got to get pulled out."
- Annie:** No, Alyssa and I were on the same page.
- Jeff:** I was like for the sake of our ministry, that's better get pulled out. But then it made sense, then it made sense. No, I don't know someone will have to write in about that. I feel like to my recollection and reading though, I do feel like stuff goes a little bit farther over there, I don't know. At least historically, because historic record keeping is not the same as maybe where the something was from-
- Alyssa:** So maybe.
- Annie:** Jeff, forgive me for not remembering this. My favorite of your books that you've written that I've read a billion times with the pink and blue cover?
- Jeff:** Oh, yeah, *It's Not What You Think*.

Annie: Ah, you talk about Israel on that one, don't you?

Jeff: Yeah, that one was probably the most significant, like kind of that the elevator pitch for that book is trying to understand the way of Jesus and Christianity, from a first century kind of Roman-Greco-Israel Jewish context and all those. Kind of like what was going on in all those worlds and all those societies, and how that affected-

Annie: That book will never leave my bookshelf, Jeff Bethke, I love it. I'm sorry, I couldn't pull the title that quickly, but I need you to know that I love that book so much. I think I texted you from the airport when I was like, "I can't stop reading this."

Jeff: Well, thank you. And that's actually one of my favorite I've written, I'm telling you, you probably have wrestled with this journey too, where it's one of my favorite I've written but not the bestselling one. So you're like, that's a very strange journey, but I love that book, so thank you.

Annie: Yes. Okay, speaking of books, we both, both of you I'm putting as we, we're collectively. Books this year, *Take Back Your Family*, Jeff is yours. Alyssa, *Satisfied* is yours. *Satisfied* is gorgeous, Alyssa, oh, my gosh! Oh my gosh, it's like a perfect hospitality book.

Jeff: Yes.

Alyssa: Oh, thank you.

Jeff: Yes. First one off on your own, it's been fun to watch. I am jealous, though, that she got the like, I've wanted coloring to be-

Annie: The font color, right.

Jeff: Basically, I've been slaving away in these in this paperback world for a decade.

Annie: Right

Alyssa: We did the cover photo together and I think we each took like at least 100 shots. And so then we argue-

Jeff: We argued over who took that one because we couldn't remember, they were so close to each other where we took. So it's either me or her who took that cover photo which is great.

Alyssa: But Jeff's dream is to have like that type of cover, so like you can have the credit babe.

Annie: Yeah.

Jeff: So we don't know who specifically took it, but if you read the back of that book it says, "Cover art Jeff Bethke."

Annie: Oh, man. Alyssa what's your hope for this one? I mean, your last one, the one for teen girls would have been the last one, right?

Alyssa: Mh-hmm.

Annie: I mean, this is like Magnolia level beauty and tips, and it's just fantastic. What's your hope for it? Why was this the next to write one?

Alyssa: Well, I think I was in such a season, it was o, gosh, like three four years ago now, when I-

Jeff: Books take a lot by the way guys.

Alyssa: Yeah. It takes a lot of time. Our kids are three, five, and seven now but they were even younger, I think I wasn't even pregnant with Lucy yet. And I just found myself like, "Wow, like I've gotten to this place where I feel like the Lord's fulfilled a lot of my dreams." Like we live in Maui, which I've always, that's a whole another story.

I'm married, I have kids, and yet I still like wake up in the morning and I feel kind of empty. Like, it's just not all that I thought it would be and so wonderful, but also like, it's still hard, there's still challenges and all those things. And I would go on Instagram too, after a hard day, to find inspiration or encouragement, and really to be satisfied. Like to have some type of satisfaction, especially as a young mom, when it feels like you don't see the fruit right away.

It's just nice to have some type of satisfaction and come away feeling really empty. And so I really wanted to create a book, and I put pictures in it just because, I think, as women we love beauty. And I put recipes in it too, I think meals are so important to provide opportunities to serve your community, to get to know people to have real intimate relationships, which we really longed for. But just they're like little essays and so it's for especially for the busy moms.

Jeff: To kind of pick up and you can go anywhere with it.

Alyssa: That you can just take it read a little bit instead of swiping up to go on Instagram, and coming away dissatisfied. You can open it read a chapter and like on Instagram you only get the 10% of what's going on in their lives.

Annie: That's right.

Jeff: Which is beautiful.

Alyssa: But when you come from having a really hard day or you're in a really hard season, or you're feeling these longings unmet, when you can sit down with a friend and say like, "Oh, you too? Like this is how your heart is and this is how the Lord's meeting you." And so it's really my hope to really just pour into women, especially, and encourage them, that even in the unmet longings. Even in the really hard, challenging seasons and days, there's like the Lord is our portion and He is so good, and He's more than enough, and He like satisfies our thirst.

So just talking about all the areas where we look to find to satisfy us, and even if they're really good, like friends or family, they still fall short in some ways. And so how the Lord really does meet every need.

Jeff: Yeah.

Alyssa: So that's my hope, is that women would, and I think the best compliment I got was a girl I hadn't met that said, "I read your book and it was so good. But no offense, I just shut it and opened my Bible." And I was like, "That is what I want."

Jeff: No offense taken. Now I would be offended, but there's no offense taken.

Alyssa: No offense taken. You are seeking the Lord and you are realizing that He will meet with you, and He wants to meet with you, and that you can come just as you are and like that is the greatest gift. So that's going to help.

Alyssa: Now, Alyssa is so gifted too, it's such a good book. I would say too it's for men like I read it, I absolutely loved it, I was absolutely encouraged. I mean, I'm sure you wrestled that same thing, I get so annoyed by a Christian-living book, somehow being pigeonholed to a woman's book, now, of course, it's going to be the main audience, just so you know who you're talking to.

Annie: It infuriates me, to be honest, I hate it so much. It infuriates me.

Jeff: It makes no sense, it just makes no sense. That bothers me. I would say men listening read the book, it's a phenomenal book. It is a great gift book for if you want to give it to someone else. But you said women love beauty, I can't get it, I love beauty, I mean, look who I married.

Annie: Nailed it. Nailed it

Alyssa: As he pushes me out of the screen.

Jeff: That's the point right there.

[00:43:24] <Music>

Annie: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, Mercy Project. We've been talking about different forms of trafficking and how serious they are this month. And in Ghana, for example, as you've heard us say thousands of kids are trapped in labor trafficking in the fishing trade for 12-long hours a day.

It's because their families can't afford to care for them and so they've been sold to a fisherman in hopes that a child could live another day. Sadly, many of the fishermen were once traffic children themselves. Our partner, Mercy Projects, has taken a creative approach to addressing the issue of child trafficking and with amazing results.

Their innovative strategy is forming partnerships with the villages and with the fishermen, to literally teach them a better way to fish that makes them more money and replaces the need for child labor. This allows the children to be released and reunited with their families. And over the last decade, more than 200 children have gone home to live with their families. Mercy Projects is creating generational transformation in Ghana, which I think is incredible.

At the beginning of December, they were 50 formerly traffic children needing a sponsor, and as a community we've been chipping away at that number. I'm hoping that we hear any day from Mercy Project that the need has been covered. But there's currently still a chance to help and that's where you come in.

For \$45 a month you can empower a formerly trafficked child to receive education and experience freedom. And this month Mercy Project will randomly select a new child sponsor to travel to Ghana with their team and 2022 to all-expenses paid. Meet your sponsor, child and their family see the project firsthand and experience the beauty of Ghana. Let's help all 50 of these kids start 2022 with hope.

Simply text THATSOUNDSFUN 74121 to help today. Imagine how much this gift will transform communities for good. Text THATSOUNDSFUN 74121 or visit mercyproject.net/thatsoundsfun.

[00:45:22] <Music>

Ann: Hey all, my name is Ann Wilson and my new Christmas album is called, *I Still Believe in Christmas*. And my favorite Christmas song is "Oh, Holy Night" I love just how it captures the night of Jesus being born and the beauty of it. And it's just always been a favorite of mine and I just think it's a really beautiful and well-written Christmas song.

Annie: And now back to finish up our conversation with the Bethkes.

[00:45:47] <Music>

Annie: Jeff talk about Take Back Your Family.

Alyssa: Yeah.

Jeff: Yes. So it was, first of all, the fact that we did two books in one year, we'll never do that again. So I don't think we calculated that as well as we thought. We were like, "Yeah, we can do it." No, don't do it.

Alyssa: Or something happened like just got even closer than-

Jeff: Yes, you know the Suez Canal stuff remember all that where the boat turned Alyssa's book was like in there.

Annie: No.

Jeff: Yeah, I mean, she wasn't the actual overturned one but she was a couple ships back. So it got there, but, literally, with only a couple weeks before launch day. Had to say "Okay, your book is coming out two months later." Which is kind of crazy and so that was a whole surreal thing.

Alyssa: And then it got pushed up.

Jeff: Yeah, that might have got pushed up because they wanted to make it more of like, at the last minute wanted to make it more of like back-to-school book. And, so, because they usually get released in October, so yeah, but I love that book.

I mean, it's very much at the heart of what I had talked about even a couple of last times on the podcast. Where our big season of what we feel the Lord has called us to is to try to equip, and encourage, and communicate, and teach people that God's vision for family is so much bigger than they think. It's so much more, they have the opportunity to flourish there more than they think. And most of the breakdowns that happens in most people's families is actually because they're so

submersed in a western model that is actually modern, new, and weird to pretty much anyone before 1900 not religious anyone like any other culture.

Alyssa: Yeah.

Jeff: And, so, the Scriptural vision of a family is so much more welcoming to all life stages of people in the church. More than like the Christian vision of like, the kind of put mom, dad, and two kids. And if you're single or something and you feel like on the outside of that, what I mean by that is the Scriptural vision for family is multi-generational. It's this long legacy-oriented team, where how do you know you're a part of a family in the Scriptures? Because you have the same last name.

So that's anyone, that's a single person, a married person, a young person, an old person. It's like this web and this network of relationships, that's actually the scriptural vision, that's very difficult for us to attain right now, given the kind of the water we're swimming in. But to know that and then to at least try to swim towards it, it's kind of what that book talks about. And the trite, cuter one says like, it's kind of like, the thesis of the book is opting out of the Western family experiment and kind of saying yes, to God's vision for a multi-generational family team on mission. So that's basically what it is.

Annie: I mean, I wanted y'all to describe both of them. Because if we're talking about altars that you're leaving your children. You are saying a lot about 2020 and 2021, in the two books you released in 2021, as a family.

Jeff: Yes. It was a fascinating year for us because, obviously, both of those books were in the works before all that stuff. And so when we get into a moment where people really had to look at their own heart. People had to slow down enough to assess the moment, their heart, their contentment level, the internet, all these different things and I think Alyssa's steps into that. And then the level at which it made people reconnect, I actually got stoked on that because, I think, it made my book a little easier and more fun. Where the stuff in my book is a very, like, most of my books, I go pretty out of the box. So it's a very different idea of family. It's not the usual like 1980s Christian.

So I was a little nervous about that. But what's fascinating is that the moment actually led to so many families being very like, "Oh, we can just kind of..." Just family is got way riskier is maybe what I'm trying to say.

Alyssa: Yeah.

Jeff: It's like, "Oh, if stuff can change that quickly then we need to do what we want to do. We need to go pursue that dream or do that thing." And, so, I think that was a fun moment for the book to collide with.

Annie: Yeah. That's incredible. I mean, I can't kind of shake as a person who doesn't have kids yet, not married yet, as you all know, I also have to get to leave a legacy all the time. Like I'm getting to build things that other people, what's that line from the Bible that is also quoted in Hamilton. Where you don't just want to sit under your own vine, under your own tree.

Jeff: Your own fig tree.

Annie: To what end? I want to sit on them, I don't want to sit under my own vine. I want to work until I'm done so that other people have got what they need, so that they will work for that. So hearing y'all thinking through the building the altars and releasing these I'm like, "Man, none of that is an accident. None of that's an accident."

Jeff: Well, one thing I'll say to that, too, is that just because you're fired up right there is everyone is a mother and a father.

Alyssa: Mh-hmm.

Jeff: Everyone is a mother and a father and the church needs more mothers, the church needs more fathers. There is an aspect at which one way that can play out is through biological children, but that is not the only way it can play out. The church has been built on for 2000 years, the mothers and fathers of the Church. And a lot of them have not looked like how we think the 1950s' *Leave It to Beaver*, *Pleasantville Family*, American group looks.

Alyssa: Yeah. The Saints.

Jeff: And that to me, The Saints, it fires me up that I think that's the church needs more mothers and more fathers, and all of us are and I think all of us can lean into that. Now, being a mother and father means you have children at some level, that essentially this is the heart of discipleship, right?

Alyssa: Yeah.

Jeff: That you are using your gifts, your wiring, your talents, your treasures, your life to leave a legacy. Who are you building that tree for and who's going to sit underneath that tree, that's what it means to mother and father.

Alyssa: Yeah.

Annie: Jennie Allen and I argue about this publicly a lot about digital discipleship versus real-life discipleship.

Jeff: Yes.

Annie: We literally land on the exact same spot, we just come at it from two different places. But one of the things we're doing here, in 2022, is we've really outlined a year of digital discipleship of three different big kind of tent poles in our year where we're going to disciple the people digitally. Talk to our friends listening about how do you engage in digital discipleship and in real-life discipleship? Why do we need both? If you think we do.

Jeff: Me and John Mark just had an argument about this about two weeks ago for about three hours.

Alyssa: This is like a family discussion we've been having last month.

Jeff: Yeah, a family discussion, then also it can easily go to like preference and personality, which I think is fine. Whether a John Mark or me or you and a Jennie are the easy differences, but that's the fun part about the sharpening.

Annie: I am not brave enough to disagree with John Mark Comer. I don't know how. I don't know how. So good for you.

Jeff: I guess it-

Alyssa: Jeff could be the only one.

Jeff: No, I lost, but it was a valiant effort. It was a variant effort.

Annie: Okay. Well done to you. So where did y'all land?

Jeff: I believe in it. I believe in digital, I believe in it. Do I think it has crap? Yes. Do I think in general, it's actually a negative? I even would say yes to that. I think in general the internet is a bad force and influence, but that's net negative, not gross. I think the gross is that there's actually, and I'm talking like, financial margin that I'm not calling in that gross, that it, man, there's a lot of that. Here's my thing, where are the hearts, and eyeballs, and minds of basically everyone living today? They're on the internet, they're on the internet.

So if you want to be all high and lofty and say that like, "Oh, there's no attention spans there, it's not real discipleship." Well, you can go ahead, while a whole generation just basically just says, "Hey,

how's it going, satan." Or the satan if you are in Hebrew is the true name. But it's like, that's just basically what you're doing. Just, "Hey, go ahead and follow that guy, go follow the accuser." And for me, it's just I'm not okay with that.

So it feels like I wanted to put a foot in the sand and say, "Hey, now you need both." And I think you might want to listen to answer the next part, the local part, because we do believe in both. I think you have to make sure you don't only do one because it becomes deformed. Like we talked earlier about denominations becomes deformed if you're only local or if you're only digital at some level. Like your life is a representation and your life in 2021 is lived out online and in your real world, it should be.

So that's how I would say. I mean, the one last thing is and I care about this so much, I always try to think a little fun projects. Most of our stuff is kind of these digital-oriented ways of discipleship. Bible Builds is a Lego, Bible curriculum online because I want to teach kids and families the Bible really deeply and really in a holistic way. And there's this one idea I'm messing with, it maybe I'm too old for this.

I'm messing with this idea of kind of almost doing like a little like theology school on TikTok. Where I'm messing with this, like, can I do some type of you know explain books of the Bible in 60 seconds. Take hot Scripture questions, because there's a mount nourishment in the next generation of biblical and theological literacy. And we can say, well, some people just aren't wired that way but at the end of the day, I think, where the scholars go, so goes the generation.

Meaning like, we write it and people don't realize this, no one wants to talk about this. But we don't realize that like the fact that we can even read the Scripture in English is because of some smart people who decided to pour their life out.

Annie: And to embrace the technology of the next generation.

Jeff: The cutting edge, exactly, printing press and text and the Dead Sea, like all these things. And I just think I love that, I get fired up, but what would you say about the local parks just as important. And like you said, the conversation we're kind of having with of how do we make sure we do both.

Alyssa: Man, I don't have like a well thought out answer to this. I just think it's a wrestle, it's a wrestle in attention in the era we're living in because a lot of our lives is online, but we live in a physical place. And I think it can be hard because sometimes or maybe for a lot of people, the physical place you may be really lonely. You may not have a community, you may not have a church that you truly align with. You may not totally agree with leadership and so I actually-

Jeff: What I've never heard of that phrase.

Alyssa: So I actually think it's more, sometimes it's more difficult to be disciplined where you are.

Jeff: I don't think sometimes I think, always-

Annie: Me too, I think it's absolutely harder.

Alyssa: And, so, I think it is a lot easier to then go online. So I think online, it's like, do that be fed. What a gift that you get to listen to the greatest teachers-

Jeff: Yeah, we can access that.

Alyssa: ...and scholars of our day, and be disciplined by the Annie Downs and the John Mark Comers, and the Jeff Bethkes, what a gift that is? You should go there and those like, we as thinkers and teachers should be in that platform. But then you have to be part of your local community and it's going to be messy but like, that's what the church is. And we were just talking to mentors of ours a couple of nights ago-

Jeff: And one thing you can do is don't hold your pastor to the standard of a Jon Tyson, or a John Mark Comer. I don't think we realize there's a crisis at which we're rushing thousands to tens of thousands of American church pastors. Because they need to be someone who has world class and that's just not how it works.

Alyssa: Yeah.

Annie: And we're getting a 30-minute sermon that they've worked on, and with our local pastors we're living seven days with them.

Jeff: Yes.

Annie: And we are getting pastored in so many ways by our local people that John Mark cannot do, that Jon cannot do, unless we are at the Church of the City, New York.

Jeff: Yes, exactly.

Annie: Jon Tyson.

Alyssa: Yeah.

Jeff: Exactly.

Alyssa: But I think even in that, like, I've learned so much lately about how as great as those thinkers are they have their context. They're talking to their church in Portland or their church in New York, and where we live is just different. And so we can still take all that but there's something here for us to learn. And so all that to say, I think in your local community, I think, it really is like an act of obedience.

I think just like what you're saying about we all have a contribution to make. So asking, like, "What's my contribution? Why am I here?" The Lord, there's that verse in Acts of like, "He chooses the times and places and borders of where you're going to live." So there's a reason why you live where you live, with the people you live with. And how can you contribute and how can you learn? And then it really comes down to just obeying.

Jeff: Mh-hmm.

Alyssa: It may be like people you may not be totally like-minded with or it may be just really messy, but how can you just be faithful. Because I think there is something about being rooted somewhere, having like doing life with people, having them know your ins and outs, bringing a meal to a family.

Jeff: The one thing because I basically preach the gospel and how the internet should be used and is amazing, and I think that's good news. The one thing that it just inherently cannot do is it's not embodied.

Alyssa: Yeah.

Jeff: And we, again, we don't have a theology of embodiment, that literally our faith, like if God believed in kind of the digital-only model, He would have sat in heaven and like thrown a Bible down as a football. That's the disembodied version of the Word.

Now, do we need the "Disembodied" quote-unquote at some point? Yes. But we also need the uppercase Word, which is the embodiment. That's all John one is, it's literally saying like, "The Word embodied itself." And so our entire theology, our entire way of living, should be a living of embodiment.

We should try to embody take values and principles somewhere in your very body. And I think that's just something that we've kind of lost in our more Western kind of mind centric. Because I think the mind connects to the deed, that's why. We're so just like, "If you think it must be right." Rather, no, you have to live it, you have to own it, you have to be it, you have to show up.

That's why you look at like the Amish community, the Jewish community, some of these other communities that are a little bit more, I think, at least rooted holistic practices. You see Jewish men, when they pray, they'll, a lot of them especially the Orthodox, will rock back and forth. And you talk to them about that and most of them will say, "It's a small sign of just embodying the prayer." It's like they engage their five senses with their faith and that's an actual act of embodiment. But what were you going to say.

Alyssa: I think you can't replace the crying on your girlfriend's couch and having her hug you, and pray for you or-

Jeff: Yes, Amen to that.

Alyssa: But I think those embodiment are more like looking eye-to-eye to a mentor and being like, "This is the messy right now-"

Jeff: Confessing sin.

Alyssa: ...confessing, or a couple of minutes-

Jeff: Like I think that's just kind of weird to do online, like that shouldn't be on-

Annie: I did on Marco Polo this morning, only because I had literally gossiped and had to open it back up and go-

Jeff: Technically is online, but I met like a more than one-way audio platform.

Annie: Yes.

Jeff: I think that's it, like people who know you, like that's just a form of communication with an embodied person.

Alyssa: Or like last week, I went over to my friend's house and we did inner healing prayer together and it's just like this beautiful thing that you can't do online. It's like being together physically, there is something about it that I think we need to step into more like we're holistic people, we're not separated. The sacred and secular aren't separated, we're all one being.

Annie: That's right. I mean, but Jeff I knew where you and I would stand in this conversation. I was-

Jeff: Yes, I'm going to bat for that one all day.

Annie: Me too. Me and Jennie, we'll fight about it. You, John Mark, me, Jennie, we should all just get in a boxing ring we each get a corner.

Jeff: No, we should do, I feel like I got this vision in my head of almost like *Family Feud*. So they are on one side we'll be on one side, and we'll actually do like a classic debate on and having fun.

Annie: That's right, I think it will be really fun.

Jeff: Jennie if you are watching we'll do it at IF gathering. Do it at IF Gathering.

Annie: That's right. That's exactly right. Okay, you guys for all the things you're making, all the things you're doing, where can we go and see it all, online?

Jeff: The one hub jeffandalysa.com. So my name Jeff, J-E-F-F and Alyssa A-L-Y-S-S-A.com. And then I always tell people our Instagram so I'm probably most active there than anywhere else. Alyssa is, basically, offline doesn't exist on the internet you'll see her stuff-

Alyssa: Hopefully in January.

Jeff: And she doesn't post in like a year but yeah,

Alyssa: January 2022.

Annie: Here we go.

Jeff: She got signed on Instagram.

Annie: Okay, perfect. Hey, a question we're asking everybody, I've been asking everybody all year. So our friends listening are hearing this all over the shows, but your favorite Christmas song? What's your favorite Christmas song?

Jeff: So first of all, when you say favorite song I would say favorite Christmas musician, is what I jump to. And to me that's Kenny G. all day, Kenny G. all day. Like I mean-

Annie: What?

Jeff: No, we're talking like that is on for 60 to 70 days, every single day morning, lunch, and night from October.

Annie: You are telling me your whole Christmas is saxophone bass.

Jeff: All sax all day? Like it's just so, oh, it's the Sexy Sax right there that Kenny brings the key. Him, first of all, on his Millennium album he has, which came out like 20 years ago, he did a really fun rendition of how do you say that? Like "Auld Lang Syne" or whatever you know that one?

Annie: Oh, yeah, the New Year song.

Jeff: Yes. But he does a really cool version of that, where he's, for the Millennium, he spliced soundbites from the entire 100 years. So it's kind of like a history class in that song. So go look it up It's a very fun thing.

Annie: That's very cool.

Jeff: That's my jam and I haven't memorized, and I love Kenny G.

Annie: Does he know you love him?

Jeff: I need to tell him. I need to tell him. But that man grew up I mean that man is on Kanye's last album. That man was being-

Annie: I feel like we're four text messages from Kenny G.

Jeff: Well, I mean I literally I'm obsessed and he's from where I'm from. He also got rejected from the University of Washington which has the more premier music department. So he went to like a division two music department and school back in college and then, obviously, he blew up. So I think UDUB was like, "Man, what do we do with our lives?"

Annie: Right. Okay, Alyssa, do you have an equally as unbelievable answer?

Alyssa: No, I don't. I actually I can't think of my favorite one, but I will say our family's favorite one is "Come All Ye Faithful". So when Kinsley our eight-year old was two she became obsessed with Christmas and like Christmas pjs all year long. There was one month where she only wears her Christmas pjs all day. And then during bedtime she like got this little Christmas carol packet and she would make us sing five different Christmas carols. And finally, like by the time we had our second and third child, we're like, okay, "We need to choose one." And, so, every night is "Come All Ye Faithful" to all three of our children.

Jeff: Bedtime, so it's their bedtime song that we have sang for five years. Isn't that hilarious?

Annie: Yes.

Alyssa: So I feel like, sometimes it comes out and we're like, "This is our song."

Jeff: It's funny, until this interview, I didn't realize how weird that is. Just because it was like the other kids like we have sung a Christmas song for bedtime for five years, I just feel like that-

Annie: Every night?

Jeff: Every night.

Alyssa: And Lucy now will be like, "Mom sing the mermaid version." So I'll have to throw in mermaid with their like, Come All Ye Mermaids."

Jeff: That's like a three-year old brain, yes exactly. You have to spice it a little bit when you do it every day.

Annie: How many stanzas do y'all sing? All of the words or just one line?

Jeff: No, I do the second version.

Alyssa: Yeah, we just do like the chorus.

Jeff: Yeah, because five years ago we did the whole thing but five years in it, "Come all ye faithful." Knock on the door We're done.

Alyssa: I have to sing it out a little more.

Jeff: I kind of I start mumbling, "Come all ye faithful, for he is worthy, he is worthy, he is worthy." We love you, goodnight.

Annie: Yeah, I mean, I've never had a kid, but I love what you said Kinsley used to make us. I'm like I don't know if that's how that works but I guess it does. She makes us do Christmas songs.

Jeff: Exactly, yeah that's the good part of it too, we are just kind of like sighing we are like "Yes sure."

Annie: That was back before you wrote a parenting book now you're like listen now I'm learning it.

Jeff: Exactly.

Annie: Is there anything we didn't talk about that y'all want to make sure we talk about?

Jeff: No, this was so fun. We love talking with you.

Annie: Gosh, I love y'all, I'm so thankful we're friends. The last question we always ask because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you?

Jeff: A good book and a smoke old-fashioned that I made myself, now non-alcoholic if you're a Baptist.

Alyssa: And the fire, you do a fire every night.

Jeff: Yes, I sit outside not I don't do smokes every night. I'm like a Sabbath only a drinker at some level, maybe I'll have like a drink outside. But yeah, I go out and sit down at a fire by myself or if there's people here they're out there with me. But I probably do a fire every single night it's not raining.

Annie: What are you reading right now?

Jeff: I just finished, I think it's called *Four Thousand Weeks*.

Annie: You are the second person to say that this week.

Jeff: Seriously?

Annie: Yes.

Jeff: I've really loved it. Because I mean, I've read so many books on rest, and Sabbath, and time, and productivity, that I started getting a little tapped out. But this one was recommended to and for exactly the anti-reason of that. They're like, it's literally a book written like the first chapter is the guy is explaining and saying things like, "I'm so tapped out on productivity and trying to get better at my to-do list and time, there's got to be a way to do it that's just normal." And so I think that's the subtitle it's like *Time Management for Mere Mortals*.

Annie: Yes.

Jeff: And it's really good. It's really good.

Annie: Okay, Alyssa what sounds fun to you?

Alyssa: Reading and then also like being in a room with a bunch of friends and laughing really hard.

Annie: What are you reading right now? Are you reading something we need to read?

Alyssa: I'm just finishing up *The Pastor* by Eugene Peterson. I'm on a Eugene Peterson texts so I'm just like doing all his stuff

Jeff: It's his autobiography.

Annie: I did that a couple years ago I read Madeleine Engle's library. It's just so fun to pick an author who's got a handful of them and spend a year getting to know that author, I love it.

Jeff: I'm on a 100% on that too. If you find someone you like read the Canon, read the entire thing.

Alyssa: Like I read his audio biography and then I was like, I want to know-

Jeff: No you read his biography and then you want to... yes, you read *Burning In My Bones* first, which would be a biography.

Alyssa: Even though he didn't write it, that a biography?

Jeff: Autobiography is when, he auto like-

Alyssa: Okay.

Jeff: So you read a biography.

Alyssa: I read the biography and now I'm reading his works.

Jeff: Which is that's a fascinating thing to read is the biography and autobiography back to back. Like you someone else's version and his version.

Alyssa: It's fun.

Annie: I don't ever want anyone to write a biography because every one of my books is an autobiography.

Jeff: Exactly.

Annie: That's what we do, that's our actual genre.

Jeff: Yes. That's so true. Like there's nothing left to write about.

Annie: Yeah, don't do my journals.

Jeff: I've extracted every last ounce and story, and moment, and meaning from the last two years by the time the book comes out.

Annie: I have told you everything I was actually willing to tell you. So if it ain't in the book it's because I don't want it in the book.

Jeff: Exactly. So I don't want someone else to do it.

Annie: That's right. All right, love you guys. Merry Christmas. Thanks for doing this.

Alyssa: Merry Christmas.

Jeff: Merry Christmas.

[01:07:08] <Music>

Annie: Oh, you guys don't do you love them? I just think the world of them. Hey, be sure to pick up a copy of Satisfied and Take Back Your Family. Go follow them for all kinds of wise and helpful content, so you can tell that thanks for being on the show.

If you need anything else read 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 from me today, on this Saturday, my friends go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you and I will do the same.

Today, what sounds fun to me, I'm smiling ear to ear, because what sounds fun to me is telling you who's going to be on the show tomorrow. So y'all have a great day. We'll see you back here tomorrow for a special Sunday episode day 11 of the 12 days of Christmas with someone who has impacted my 2021 in some really profound ways. Y'all tomorrow we get to talk to Father Mike Schmitz. Tomorrow Father Mike is here oh my gosh, you guys, we'll see you back here tomorrow.

Rachel: Hey, this is Rachel Meyers,

Amanda: And Amanda Bible Williams of She Reads Truth my favorite Christmas song is the "Christmas Song" by Russ Taff. Just trust me look it up.

Rachel: And I love, love, love forever "Silver Bells" but specifically by Harry Cornick Jr. It takes a while to lead up to it but it is worth it such good a song.

[01:08:39] <Music>