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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. We have got a great show in store for you today. I'm also really happy to be in Seattle tonight. We are kicking off the last leg of the That Sounds Fun Coast to Coast Tour.

Six cities in the next seven days. I cannot wait. Seattle tonight, Portland, Stockton, California, Inland Empire California, Phoenix, and Denver. Y'all, we want you there, grab your tickets at [Anniefdowns.com/events](https://anniefdowns.com/events) and meet us there. You'll notice me. I'm the one smiling ear to ear on the stage because I get to hang out with you. I'm having the best time. Y'all, join us.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to take a moment to share about one of our incredible partners. This podcast is sponsored by [BetterHelp Online Therapy](https://www.betterhelp.com/therapy). We all know that relationships and friendships in our personal and professional lives take some work, right?

A lot of us will go to great lengths to help someone we care about, we'll go out of our way to treat other people well, but a lot of times we forget to prioritize ourselves. So this month BetterHelp Online Therapy wants to remind you that you matter like everyone else does and therapy is a great way to make sure you show up for yourself and other people. My counselor has been so helpful and I want you to have that as well in your life. And you can find it through BetterHelp.

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 be matched with a therapist and under 48 hours. Give it a try and see why over 2 million people have used BetterHelp Online Therapy.

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Intro: Today on the show I get to talk with one of all of our favorite people, Bob Goff. So here's some things we know about Bob. He's a Disneyland office resident, recovering lawyer, New York Times bestselling author, nonprofit founder, Mr. Chief Balloon Inflator, a motivational speaker, and author of books like *Love Does*, and everybody, always Honorary Consul to Uganda, founder of Love Does, an international nonprofit that pursues justice for children in high conflict areas such

as Uganda, Somalia, Afghanistan, Nepal, and India. And yes, we talk about Afghanistan.

And on March 1, he released his latest book called *Undistracted*. In his warm storytelling style, he helps us all know that we can harness today's distractions and find focus, purpose, and joy. I love any chance I get time with Bob, and today is no different.

So here's my conversation with one of my dear friends and the man we all love so much, Bob Goff.

[00:03:04] <music>

Annie: Bob, welcome back to That Sounds Fun. We're so glad you're here.

Bob: Yes, I'm loving it. I get to see your face. I wish we're like last time we met at some airport or something. It's crazy. I'll just take it as it comes. And then the vid knocked out all of that. So I'm really anxious to get back together with all my friends.

Annie: Are you starting to travel at all again yet?

Bob: I am just a little bit. I made a switch. It was maybe January, two months before the earth threw the sock drawer on the floor. So a couple years ago, I decided that to make good on what I said. I'd always said that when I'm a grandpa, I'm staying home.

So on one day in January, a couple months before all this crazy happened, I canceled 90 events. I said, "I'm out." So I bought a Young Life camp with our buddy Miles Adcox and we call it The Oaks. It smelled like 400 Junior High boys had not baked in half a century.

And so we stripped that down to the studs and rebuilt it. We put in a vineyard.

Annie: Oh, I didn't know that.

Bob: There's 50,000 bottles a year of wine will come to us. I haven't had my second class. The first class didn't go that great. So I was like, "Whatever." But it just seems so biblical. So we put in a vineyard. And then we have 27 horses.

Annie: And cows, right? Didn't y'all just have a new baby cow?

Bob: Yes. And fainting goats.

Annie: No.

Bob: It's so fun. Oh, tell me you've watched the YouTube videos of fainting goats.

Annie: I've seen them before. I just don't have any friends who own them except you.

Bob: Oh, yeah, totally. It's kind of like sweet Marie when she gets around a lot of people, clap your hands and she tips over. And then we just put in last, Monday and Tuesday, a chicken coop.

Annie: Oh, really?

Bob: So I'm learning Everything about chickens. This is nicer than the first three apartments I ever lived in. But it's got a cupola appropriately on the coop. I'll have to show you a picture. This is not your mama's chicken coop. This is nice. I expect golden eggs.

Annie: Is the goal to be self-sustaining?

Bob: I think what we were doing... We've got 1,000 Afghans arriving next week, I think. So the Afghan community is here and we want to grow food and raise things. We're feeding I think 500 families right now. A Love Does truck pulls up every week, and I think two or three times a week, and we just do this. So we're just into all kinds of mischief. So we've got this 300-acre playground with 60,000 square feet of buildings. We're like, "We're going to use it."

Annie: Yeah. So the 1,000 Afghans are going to live there?

Bob: No, no, they're just coming up. And we're just going to spoil them rotten. We are hiding the goats.

Annie: Love it.

Bob: Because goats are actually a delicacy. They're like, "We get to have goats?" So we're going to actually raise them, but not name them.

Annie: Right. Right. Right.

Episode 370: Bob Goff + Undistracted That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Bob: But I've named mine, you cannot have on this name.

Annie: That's right. So they're just coming up from all over? From around the country?

Bob: Just San Diego. We got 1,500 Afghan refugees here. That whole idea of "love your neighbor," we've got a school in Mazhar Al-Sharif in Afghanistan. But it turns out we've got 1,500 Afghans right here. So let's take care of both of them: the ones that are there and the ones that are here.

Annie: Can you tell me, I mean, as much as you want to or as little as you want to, what is happening with your work in Afghanistan now that the Taliban is back in power?

Bob: Oh, yeah, well, these Taliban people are so evil. I'm just sure they're going to have to screw them into the ground when they die. But God loves them anyway. And that part I'm just having so much difficulty reconciling in my mind. But fortunately, it is enough for me to reconcile it in my mind. It doesn't mean that we check out of that. But I want to check in on Matthew 5 when it says, "Love your enemy."

But it also says in these books of Peter, it says, "To make a defense for the hope that's within you." And I know some people stop there and they want to be Jesus's lawyer. But he said, "But to do it with kindness and respect." And so after the Taliban takeover, we went to the new leaders there and said, "Let our girls go back to school and learn how to read and write." And it was like we did this Jedi thing. Within three weeks, they were back in their chairs.

Annie: No!

Bob: Isn't that amazing?

Annie: Yes!

Bob: That is never going to be on the news nor do I want it to be because then they'll shut it down.

Annie: Right.

Bob: But I get 250 kids in their chairs. And they have been for, I don't know, two months now. So I just want to, instead of making a headline, what if you said, I want to make a difference? Lose the headline, make a difference.

And instead of going to the ends of the earth, what if you go to the end of your street? Instead of going across the nation, what if you go across the street? And so we see this opportunity to learn from the Afghan community here of so much. And we're learning so much about hospitality and generosity, and all that. The river is flowing unfairly in our direction from them.

Annie: I mean, I feel like that's such a thing for us all to learn. Even as I'm thinking about your new book, *Undistracted*, of like, okay, when you stop traveling, your calling didn't stop, your purpose didn't stop. You just went, "Okay, how about I just do something different? In this scenario, I'm just going to build a place where people can come to me and we can do workshops and writing retreats and on site workshops." So you just said, "Instead of me going to you, come to me."

Bob: Yes. So a lot of people... I totally understand why they tried to land the plane. They feel this growing urge to do something in their life. They want to connect more with people, to transition from the marketplace to something else that they think is more lasting. But they'll spend a weird amount of time doing it, which is fine. I mean, whatever blows your hair back.

But for me, I went full Cortez. I'm prone to that. It's a flaming Enneagram 7. I just burned the ships. So that would be the same thing walking into my own law firm I don't know how many years. 10 years ago, maybe. And I walked out of the I think 27th floor of the Washington Mutual Tower. I walked up to the receptionist and she said, "Who are you here to see?" I said, actually, "If you turned around, that would be my name right behind you."

And I realized I had moved on. I was still flying up to Seattle every day to do law stuff, I just wasn't going to the office to do law stuff. So I just got everybody together and I quit. I said, "I'm out." I could have spent a number of years trying to land that plane and sell it or something. I just took the key off my ring, I gave it to a guy who's been working for me for a decade. I said, "It's all yours. You don't owe me a penny."

Annie: Uh-huh.

Bob: And he said, "Are you kidding me?" Actually, he didn't say "kidding," but that's what he meant. And I've never gone back. I don't even know if it's there anymore. I sound like I don't care about the people. I just have moved on. New day, new Bob. And so it's a bad economic decision. But God didn't drop us here on earth for 4,000 weeks on average so we can make good economic decisions.

Annie: Right.

Bob: He made us here so we could make a difference. That we would know Him, we'd have to know ourselves, and we give a rip about the people around us. And so for me, it took the Cortez moment, like, just burn it down. You don't need to burn down people. That makes you an arsonist. But you can burn down your career.

Like what you can do is you can burn down some of the impediments that are perceived that are in the way. Like, I say, perceived impediments, like thinking about this idea of a distraction. Like gravity, that actually is a thing. But some of the things you're afraid that might happen, disapproval, whatever, that is a perceived impediment. I want to just call it out for what it is.

Name it, say that's a perceived impediment. Definitely, you got to deal with that one. But don't say that ain't gravity. Gravity is keeping your feet on the ground. But what's keeping you from actually going forward with your idea sometimes are some impediments. Kind of that idea it's the story you tell yourself. Everyone will leave me." That's the story. Little Bobby Goff came up. Eight years old. I don't know if you came up with some stories, I bet you did, to navigate your life that you didn't have tools for. And then rule: don't go deep with anybody. Outcome: be funny.

Bob's the funny guy. Because if I keep it fun, maybe you can relate to that. Keep it fun, then you don't need to go deep. There's a beautiful front side to that wave. It's fun and positive-

Annie: It's inviting.

Bob: All that. That's a really generous, engaging way to be. Yet at the same time, if it goes around the band and you're like Bob the balloon guy, needs to show up on stage or Annie the happy, but then we become a caricature of who we actually are. So becomes a distraction.

So if I'm always Bob the balloon guy, then the fact is I'm not always unicorns, confetti, and balloons. That is actually a really deeply feeling person. I get sad about stuff. I get punishingly introspective. Get that. But I just don't work that out in front of everybody. Sometimes that can get in the way of authenticity, though. So I think for everybody listening, you just need to figure out your ish.

Annie: Yeah, that's exactly it. Do you know what I'm thinking of Bob is when I quit teaching elementary school, I kept my teacher's license for six years after I quit teaching. So I want you to talk about distractions like this or things we have in the

way like this. Because it wasn't actually affecting this job for me to have in my back pocket a teacher certificate.

But man, the day I decided not to renew that, I went, "Well, no parachute now. Now we're jumping for real." Even though I had a teacher's certificate, that was my burning of my ships is I just didn't renew my teaching certificate again. And nobody even knew. But I knew that I had finally made the decision that this was the path I was going down and I didn't have a backup plan that could serve me in August.

Bob: So sometimes it's symbolic and sometimes it's actual. You actually didn't renew. It costs \$100. I know how much it costs to get a license to practice law, but a couple bucks in a couple years. And then I don't know, maybe five or six states I had a license to practice law in. But it costs \$100 to keep it alive. And I was thinking, "You know what, I could get like five lattes for that." And so I just didn't renew.

And then you get this like if you don't renew it, you have to go and take the bar exam all over again and all that. It didn't make what I was doing before not worthwhile. That was old Bob, though. So sometimes we can over-identify. And I understand why.

If you're writing a book—and you're a master at this—you can think about, for writers or aspiring writers, think about who you were, who you are, and who you're becoming. Like just think of three sections. Who you were, you could say 0 to 30. And you could say 0 to 60 would be who I am, a guy who's going to turn 63 here in a little bit. And then who I'm becoming is that other guy, right?

Annie: Right.

Bob: So what I'm doing is I'm not spending all my time and energy on old Bob, lawyer Bob, or writer Bob, or speaker Bob. It's like new Bob. And I'm going to spend a lot more time being him than old Bob who's on the bus?

Annie: So when you're writing *Undistracted*, how did you determine that line of old Bob a new Bob. Did it tell you and that's what made you write the book or what did you discover it as you were writing?

Bob: Annie, what you do... I'm going to teach you. Ever piloted a small plane, Annie?

Annie: No, Bob.

Bob: We should definitely do that. Come on. We should do that.

Annie: Okay, I'll come up there. We should do it sometimes, but ew.

Bob: Come on. Especially a seaplane, you take off and land on the water, is so awesome. It changes your life. Or you'll go swimming if you. But what they teach you when you're first learning, if you took your first lesson in flight school, you'd go out the first day, you'd fly. You take off. As soon as you hit about 40 miles an hour, you're up in the air.

And you're sitting in the left seat. It's crazy. You should go to your local airport. They'll hook you up with some introductory flight, hoping you'll sign up for something expensive.

Annie: Wow.

Bob: Right. Once you get up in the air, the concept is pretty simple. Don't hit anybody, don't let anybody hit you. So what you do is look through the window in the front. Like left to right, right to left. You're scanning the sky.

But then a pro tip. What you need to do once you scan everything, left to right, right to left, then take 10% of the sky and take a really hard look at it. Just 10% to say, "I'm taking a hard look, not just generally what's going on. That situational awareness. But to like take 10% of the sky and then move to 10% of the sky.

You could do that in your life. You could take everything that starts with an F. 10% of your life, faith, family, finances, fear, Ferrari, if you've got one, philanthropy if you can't spell. But just take 10% of your life and take a hard look at it.

I think this idea of writing a book was just me chunking up my life, just taking 10% of the sky and saying, "Let me look at stuff." If something was true in my life, maybe to ask myself, "Is that still true?" Or was it ever true? Maybe just say, "What's that connected to?" Is a kind of like Pinocchio—everything was connected to something?

So sometimes who's got all the strings in your life? Maybe to say, if you had this fear that something happened in your life, and you make up a story, "I'm going to be living in the back of my car," then you need to just say, "Where did that come from? What is that connected to? And if you can figure out what that's connected to, that's a great, practical way to figure out what's been going on in your life.

Think of any life hack. Oh, you know, the lodge up in Canada? We got a big freezer up there and we got all kinds of stuff in the freezer. Before we leave, we take a plastic glass and we freeze it and we put a penny on the top of it. And then we leave. And if we come back in a week or a month or whatever, we open the freezer, everything's frozen, we look to see if the penny is at the bottom. Because if the penny is at the bottom and it's frozen, meant it unfroze while we were gone.

Annie: Right.

Bob: So think of this kind of a life hack. To say, what happened while you weren't looking? What happened in my life when I wasn't really looking? And that's this faith journey. That if faith is important to some people, no doubt, that are listening to say, Hey, what happened to your life when you weren't looking? These are the things that are distracting you.

And I would just want to take a deep dive into there. To say, hey, if the pennies at the bottom, let's just say like, what happened? And let's just figure it out. And to say, Do we need to start over again? Or can we do something with this?

So I just want us to slow it down. Some of us are so amped. I mean, you and I both make coffee nervous.

Annie: Yeah.

Bob: And to say sometimes that's actually connected to something. Just figure out what it's connected to. Little Bobby Goff, super insecure. Older Bobby Goff, a little bit less insecure but more self-aware. Like I've displaced my insecurity with a little of awareness. And that's emerging day by day.

But an awareness of what's going on. That I don't need to be Bob the balloon guy every day. I don't need to be on an airplane in Cincinnati. That's terrific. But to say, You know what? I'm going to be out at The Oaks and I'll be tickling grandkids. And when I'm not doing that, I'll be down by the chicken coop, I'll be on the horses.

[00:19:17] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share with you about one of our incredible partners, [Epic Will](#). One of our very favorite things here That Sounds Fun is hearing from you and from our guests about the amazing stories God is writing in all of our lives.

And not always what we were expecting, not always what we were hoping for, but always stories we can trust Him with. Intentionally building our stories and legacies wisely is one of the ways we follow Him, right? It's why partnering with Epic Will matters so much to me.

Epic is the easiest and most affordable way I know of to create an estate plan. The expert team at Epic Will has developed an efficient and user-friendly platform that helps you think through things like who you'd like to be your financial power of attorney and who you would trust to care for your children. And in a few simple steps, it also helps you designate who your belongings go to and create your advanced directive so that no one is left making healthcare decisions on your behalf without knowing your wishes.

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And now back to our conversation with Bob.

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Annie: I mean, when I'm thinking about the penny at the bottom of the cup, I think that analogy is fascinating. I'm curious, what would that look like in our lives on like a Tuesday? Is that a moment where you go, "Oh, my life is unbalanced?" Or is that a certain thing that happens? How do we know if the freezer is frozen and unfrozen and refrozen again in our personal lives?

Bob: What we do is a little bit of an audit. Like you know one of those from the IRS?

Annie: Yeah.

Bob: But you don't want to constantly do it for yourself.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Bob: For a guy that sends a lot of money to Mogadishu and Afghanistan, I get a lot of the first. I'm talking about the second.

Annie: You're like, "We are checking on Bob Goff again."

Bob: And I'm so glad they do. I want my island to work that way. You got somebody sending that kind of dough to those places, like have your way.

Annie: That's the why.

Bob: I got no secrets. This is good. Let's do lots of that. So what I want to do is a little bit of an audit. And if you were doing the Wimbledon finals, you start on the far left

column. It would be everybody, everybody, everybody that has a tennis racquet perhaps. Think of these as an audit of everything going on in your crazy life. Everything from why you can't housebreak the dog. Our dog would walk across three IKEA carpets just to take a dump on a Persian rug. I'm like, "What the heck?" Like, This will do.

So everything from [unintelligible 00:23:54] to your biggest fear relationally or the biggest letdown or not just a misunderstanding, but something feeling betrayed or something. But let's get it all out on the left column. And let's start moving it to the right. Like say when you put this against this, what's more important?

Annie: Wow.

Bob: When you put this against this and as you move it to the right, I want us to just deal with what's in the like, quarterfinals, semifinals, and finals. I just want to deal with the stuff to the right. It's good to be self-aware but you just not good for that to be a distraction.

I don't want to just get wrapped around the actual figure out this dog that the only thing that's missed so far is the lawn. So I don't want that to have equal airtime with my sense of purpose and passion. Faith is important to me. So what am I doing? This is Matthew 25, "Hungry people, thirsty people, sick people, strange people, naked people, people in jail," James, "Widows and orphans." There's eight things right there. That is a lifetime full of work for an eight-year old, but definitely a lifetime leftover for 63 years old.

Annie: Right.

Bob: I got a certain number of shots on the shot clock. And so I've just go, like, "That's what I'm doing right now." And so what that meant is when I put that against going to Cincinnati, "I'm like, oh, no, no, no." I'm like, full team Oaks. And then I go, like, when I put that against tickling grandkids, I'm like, "Oh, grandkids." And when I put the team Oaks against grandkids, "Oh, grandkids all day long."

So it's not that it's good or bad. And some people I know where faith is important to make everything this cosmic battle between good and evil. They're just decisions. They're just distractions. And just to say, "Handicap those ponies," if you want to use that analogy. To say, which one's going to run longer and faster? Because here's the thing. You know the story about Paul Revere, right?

Annie: Yes.

Bob: He's got a message. Longfellow wrote a poem *The British are Coming*. Well, actually, before the Revolutionary War, everybody was British.

Annie: Right. Your point.

Bob: So it'd be like, "Hey, you're here."

Annie: Right.

Bob: But Paul Revere had an important message. He needed a fast horse. Here's the crazy part. Paul Revere didn't own a horse.

Annie: Really?

Bob: He went to a buddy at church. The guy at church had a horse.

Annie: And he borrowed his horse.

Bob: He borrowed it. He got a fast horse. And here's the other thing. Longfellow didn't get it right. But Paul Revere rode with two friends. He didn't ride alone.

Annie: Really? I didn't know that.

Bob: He was on the way to Concord to tell Samuel Adams, not the beer, the guy... to tell Samuel Adams that there's some... they were called British regulars. But it didn't make for a good poem. So they called it *The British Are Coming*.

So what I want us to do, put aside all the poetry and all the spin and what makes for a great story and to say, "What actually happened?" And what we have, each of us, is an important message. Just got to figure out what it is. And it might be several. You need a fast horse to get there and a couple friends who ride with. And I would say everything else is a distraction.

Annie: Wow.

Bob: You move that to the right in your life, you got an awesome life.

Annie: Okay. You got to have your message, your horse, and your friends.

Bob: This is it. What I want us to do, the message would be like, What's God putting a squeeze on here? I learned something about anacondas this week that you need to know. Anacondas are 25 feet long and 3 feet around. That's a big snake.

Annie: Terrible. It's terrifying.

Bob: And in my book, I'm showing you a book of phobias.

Annie: Yes.

Bob: It's a pop-up book. It's like all of my biggest fears. Like mine is not public speaking. But if yours was like spiders or something-

Annie: Oh, spiders. That's a big spider

Bob: ...just got this pop-up book of spiders. So the thing about anacondas is this. When they wrap around you, you'll only have a minute before they squeeze the life right out of you.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Bob: But you know what Anacondas are susceptible to? Alcohol. Isn't that crazy? One drop of alcohol on its nose, you'll be great. Here's the problem. You probably won't have a bottle of Maker's Mark with you? Or maybe. Who knows? And if you did, it probably will be squeezed out your sides.

But what I want to do is find what are the things that are distracting me the most. And to say, what are they most susceptible to? Like, I want to find out what the lies that are driving your life are most susceptible to. And they're susceptible to truth and obedience.

Like if we could just put a drop a truth and obedience on that, not just say, "Well, that ain't true," and that's your... Let's take a little bit deeper to say, "Bobby, you won't be rejected. And if you are, Jesus doesn't." And obedience to say that it's easy to read or see somebody like a needlepoint and be anxious for nothing. But to just say, "Let's figure out what it is that you're anxious about, what's far left in [unintelligible] here on the long list of everything, call it out." And then say, I'm going to exercise a little obedience over that thing. I'm just not going to give it as many spins as I have.

Annie: And does that directly connect with your message with your life? Often I find that that thing is also the thing that I probably should be talking about more.

Bob: Yes, totally.

Annie: Yeah.

Bob: And if your ideal is fear of rejection, to get real with that can feel really vulnerable because it is really vulnerable. It's like a fear factor for some of you going back to whatever your biggest concern is. And I'm not just saying face it alone. I'm saying face it with your faith.

Actually, let's turn towards. If facing it actually means something. Like to actually face it. Instead of turning around and like the opposite of the voice where all the chairs are turned around, to actually face it, and to say, "This is what it is." And then to bring a little bit of action, not just... That's Galatians 5:6. It says that the only thing that counts is your faith expressed in love. So if you're listening and faith guide your steps, just like to express it in love.

Did you know this thing? I love looking up for idioms. Like where a saying came from. Like cut to the chase, that means like, hey, kind of get what's up. Like just get to it. But it comes from Hollywood during the *Silent* movies is because Charlie Chaplin is just spinning his cane so they would always have a chase scene. And that's how people would understand what the movie was about, unlike, well, that'll pre -

Annie: I've never known that's what that means. It changes how you think about that whole idiom.

Bob: Get to how something happens. Get to the part in your faith. "Cut to the chase" means get to the do part. And the crazy part is some of us are so busy helping Baby Jesus out. I mean, read Revelations. He's out of the crib. What you want to do is just get to "why am I doing what I'm doing?" So we can kind of figure out that, then you'll like figure out what's distracted you from getting there.

Just get real. Don't say the way you wish it was. Just say like, This is what's been really happening. That I'm actually looking for approval or I'm looking for permission for something. And the truth, a drop of alcohol in the nose of that squeezer is that to say "I already have God's approval, I already have permission."

Now, you don't have permission to knock off a liquor store but you actually have permission to knock off some habits that aren't helping you. And so I want to go like, let's figure that out and go to school on it.

Annie: So what's your horse? Is The Oaks your horse?

Bob: That's my first pony. Yeah, that's my first pony. I'm going to spend my waning days doing that. I'm aiming for outliving everybody. But whatever period of time I have... I want to live... I have the same hope that you probably have. Actually, I'm learning about being a rancher. It's hardly Yellowstone out there but learning a...

Annie: Listen, if you get a single guy named Rip that comes and works for you, call me, Bob.

Bob: Send in your way.

Annie: Please.

Bob: We have a new intern.

Annie: Surprisingly, she just showed up.

Bob: Who knew! We had this cow. It's probably 700 pounds. It was my favorite cow. It has bangs. It's one of those fuzzy cows. The vet came out and said your cow is really sick. He said it has pneumonia. I'm like, "How do you get pneumonia? It dips down to like 70 here in San Diego. But it got really sick.

I rushed out the next morning and it was kind of over on its side, which isn't the way you're supposed to be. And I put its big head in my lap and I'm trying to like say nice things to it. And it breathes its last. It died in my lap and horns, the whole thing. And I'm emotionally incontinent. I was just gutted by this-

Annie: I'm sure.

Bob: And I'm just weeping with this dead cow. And there was a really nice guy over the barn and he came out and he said, "Bob, can I give your cow CPR?" Clearly, it was elsewhere but it was just such a nice thing to offer. I don't even know where the heart was and he weighs like 60 pounds. But that was just such a generous thing.

So we made a big hole—we have an excavator—we put this cow in there. I just was so gutted by the whole thing. I remember there was a little girl that's out there,

and I told her, you know, the cow is in heaven with Jesus. Now, I don't know if I got the theology right. She paused at the side and then she said, "That was a good cow."

I checked back in later in the afternoon because I want to make sure she was doing okay. And I said, like, "You know, are you okay?" And she's like, "Yeah, doing great." And I realized she was over it. And in that moment, Annie, I realized I'm the cow.

Annie: Wow.

Bob: Like, I'm going to have this period of time I'm here, and then there'll be a period of time that I'm not, which will be a little bit longer. And then people will think of me. And I'm just so down with having them say, "He was a good cow."

That's why I write books. I imagine you want to leave this legacy behind. I'm going to end up in a jar someday and I just want something leaning up against the jar. Like, this is what I thought for my kids, kids, kids, kids, kids. So I don't know. What do you do? Think about that. When you take to writing, like why you're doing what you're doing, just say what is that connected to. Tell us. Like, how comes?

Annie: That was my very first book. I remember thinking I at least want to have something that my kids and my grandkids can read. Because I would give anything to have an audio recording of my grandparents or a book from them. There's so many stories I don't know.

In fact, even at Christmas, Bob, one of my cousins sat down and asked my parents a question I've never asked them. And I'm listening to them answer, I'm like, "This is something I've never known about my parents." And it's just because someone got curious in my presence and asked them. And I thought, "Wow, I wish that was true with my grandparents." So I'm like, I write books for anyone who wants to read, but I really write books for the people who were here when I'm dead.

Bob: Yeah What happens sometimes, for people that want to be authors but you haven't authored yet, if that is even a word, just collect the story. Start with your own family. Jeremiah was my great grandfather. He got hit crossing a railroad track by a train. And what are the chances? They put him in a wheelbarrow, brought him to the house, dumped him on the front porch, and then walked away. They woke up in the morning, there he is, and just whatever. That was him. That was the story.

Well, there was this crooked guy a number of years ago, that did something awful to a bunch of people and stole a bunch of money. And I was a lawyer at the time. I'm like, "Oh, evil will not prosper here." So he changed his name, tried to disappear, he went missing and all that. I'm like, "I'm going to find you. It might take a minute, but I'm going to find you."

His wife accidentally subscribed to a magazine under their old name. I found them in this particular state, under an assumed name. I sent him a subpoena and we sat down for a deposition. And I knew he was a slippery guy, so I thought we need to climb on the family tree here a little bit to find out who begat whom.

So I'm asking these questions. As we got a little higher in the tree, he started saying these names that sounded kind of familiar. And the more I asked them, more familiar they got. Get this. He's my cousin.

Annie: No!

Bob: Oh, my gosh. I'm like, Oh my gosh. I have a crooked family tree. So anyway. So here's the deal, when the deposition was over and I told him, "This is going to make dinner awkward, but your wife subscribed to this thing. I found you."

So I said, "Hey, now that we're friends, I can imagine our family reunions are going to be a little stressed now." But I said, "Tell me about my great grandfather because I heard he got hit by a train." And he laughed. "Oh, my gosh, you're so gullible. He didn't get hit by a train. He ran out on the family." I think awful things run in my family, evidently.

And so what they did is they came up with a story. They made it all up. He got hit by a train, they put him in a wheelbarrow, they threw it on the porch and all that. They didn't know what to do with the shame and embarrassment and all that around them, the anger surrounding that. So they just came up with a story that lived on for generations. I was evidence of that. Because I had told my kids that you actually had a great-great-grandfather that was hit by a train. Let that be a lesson to you not to be... Well, let it be a lesson to us to figure out what the stories we made up to deal with what we couldn't find a handhold to deal with.

If you've seen somebody walk down the street, clearly a tourist, and they've got a big piece of luggage, but the handle is broken so they have to put their arms around it and carry it on their chest, that is your story without a handle. Take something that happened...

And I guess what I'm saying is the things that are distracting us, we just need to get some handles on them. Like when you and I meet, if I've got a big duffel bag in between me and you, you're not going to be me; you're going to be the duffel bag.

And so in the same way, if you want to meet real Annie, you need to find Annie who's got a handle on some of... Not have fixed it all but instead of meeting insecure Bobby Goff the balloon guy, like just me, who I've got a handle on that. And so have a couple friends that you can say, "Can you kind of talk me off the ledge? When I go full balloon boy, just say like, 'You don't need to do that.'"

Annie: We just had Jim Cress on for Valentine's Day.

Bob: Oh, what a great guy!

Annie: Right, just the best.

Bob: Come on.

Annie: And he talks a lot about that. About really the way to be a healthy partner is to be a healthy person. And so will you talk a little bit about setting those bags down? I mean, is that counseling to you? Is that onsite to you? Is that friendship to you? Where do we find the people that help us get that bag out of the way for between us in relationship?

Bob: You could find any analogy that fits. You could talk about anacondas or bags. I'm more of analogy person. The cheapest version of that is called Starbucks. Make whoever takes you there pay. And then just say, Let's have three minutes of authenticity. Let's just talk for three minutes. I'm not going to try to shade it, not putting a happy face on it. I'm not doing any of that. I'm not going to try to resolve it. That's what makes sure hokey Christian movies where they try to resolve everything that Jesus appears in the tree at the end. You're like, "Really?" Like It was just so believable until then.

So find something relatable that say something important. Find a new camera angle and don't resolve it. That's how I write every book. Relatable, important, new camera angle, don't resolve it. So if I were telling a story about rafting on the Nile with my son, getting stuck in an eddy, when he fell out, we were stuck in the eddy, then I would talk about being stuck in the eddy in your life and what happens. I would just never have him climb back in the boat.

Annie: Everybody will wonder.

Bob: People won't know why. In Alligator infested waters, you don't have to draw attention to it, just don't resolve it. That's why you watch the next series of whatever, because there's something inside you that's looking for some conclusion.

So if we give hokey Christian answers to some of life's most vexing questions, that becomes a distraction, because you feel like you need to have something. "My life was all messed up. And then now it's all awesome. And all you need is Jesus. And so what are you waiting for?" That is hokey. It's unbelievable. But it's just talk about "I was walking down this street with my bag when an Anaconda...

Find something super relatable. Just don't talk about opening up the shuttle doors on this spacecraft and doing your spacewalks. Talk about opening your front door and entering into the world. That kind of relatability. And I think when we can lose the big fanciful arguments, figure out where the myths were about who left to and why. And just get back to say, you know, there's a couple things I'm certain about and there's a bunch of stuff I'm just guessing about.

So if we could just get back to that, we'd move out the distractions about how people perceive any doubts, how people perceive Bob Goff, and just get to the way it really is, how they perceive you who are listening. To say, this is a perception, this is a reality.

[00:42:07] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation one last time to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [ZocDoc](#). There are some amazing doctors out there but the ones you really need to know about are the ones who actually take your insurance, right?

Well, with ZocDoc, you can focus on doctors who are in network , putting you on the path to see the doctors who truly are right for you. No more wasting time hunting down recommendations from family or friends that end up being out of your network anyway.

ZocDoc is a free app that shows you doctors who are patient-reviewed, take your insurance, and are available when you need them. You can read up on local doctors, get verified patient reviews and see what other real humans had to say about their visit so when you walk into that doctor's office you're set up to see someone in your network who gets you.

So go to zocdoc.com and choose a time slot and whether you want to see the doctor in person or do a video visit. And just like that, you're booked. Y'all ZocDoc makes it so easy. Find the doctor that's right for you and book an appointment that works for your schedule.

Every month, millions of people use ZocDoc. And I'm one of them. It's my go-to whenever I need to find and book a doctor. In the chaotic world of health care in the US, let ZocDoc be your trusted guide to find a quality doctor in a way that is surprisingly pain-free. Away with the chaos, you guys.

So go [to zocdoc.com/thatsoundsfun](https://zocdoc.com/thatsoundsfun) and download the ZocDoc app for free. Then start your search for a top-rated doctor today. Many are available within 24 hours. That's zocdoc.com/thatsoundsfun. [Zocdoc.com/thatsoundsfun](https://zocdoc.com/thatsoundsfun).

Annie: Hey friends! I'm so excited about heading back out on tour in February and March of 2022. That's right, we're taking the That Sounds Fun Podcast on the road. Not only will there be an awesome special guest at each stop who I'll be recording a live podcast with, but we'll also have comedy, new friends, fun coaching, exclusive content, confetti, and dare I say it, fun, so much fun.

I can't wait to see you at one of those tour stops. So be sure to grab your tickets at [Anniefdowns.com/events](https://anniefdowns.com/events). The only thing that will make it more fun is when you're there.

And now back to finish up our conversation with Bob.

[00:44:24] <music>

Annie: How does that play out? When we got on you'd had a whole bunch of phone calls already today because you put your phone number very kindly in your books. I mean, how does that play out when... Because that's what people are looking for when they're calling you. What they actually want is connection more than they want anything else would be my guess.

Bob: Totally. And then they'll go about it. Sometimes people that are good at people skills, you'd be one of them. But you just know you're good at that. You're good at reading the room. But other people are still emerging. There was a woman that called about a week and a half ago and she said, "Hello is this Bob?" I'm like, "Yeah, Bob here." And she said, "The devil is in my bathroom."

Annie: Bob!

Bob: "I had teenage boys too." I said, "Number one or number two? Just guessing." So I asked her, "Who's your best friend?" And she said, "Mary." And I'm like, "That's terrific. What if you call Mary up and have her come over? Because it would be smart to have a really good friend around to talk about what your perceptions are. Whether they're real or imagined it, but whatever, no judgment in that."

But if we could say to some of the things that are going on around us, even in justices, that's Romans 12, to say, so long it's within your power to live at peace with people around you. And I think there's some people, you're one of them, they're just really nice. You're not out there picking fights with people, are you?

Annie: No.

Bob: If I missed all those like drunk tweets or something?

Annie: No. I will tap back every now and again. But I've tried to only do that very rarely. But no, I'm not.

Bob: I'm a trial lawyer. I've got an opinion about everything. But I just keep it in the thought bubble.

Annie: Really?

Bob: I don't get it out of the thought bubble? What I'm working on right now is trying to keep it out of the thought bubble.

Annie: Just not even have it.

Bob: If I can live at peace, I'm good. And that's going light on doctrine, that's going big on Jesus, to say, Is there a way that I could bring... could I bring the temperature down a notch or two in this room right now, in the conversation.

And if it's a really loud room, and the only way to be heard is to shout, I ain't doing it. I'm so glad that there's a lot of people shouting, that's why it's really loud. But I don't feel like I need to contribute in that way. What I'm going to bring is peace to something. I'm going to be in Switzerland. If it wouldn't be disrespectful, I'd make a shirt out of their flag. Just give me a bar of chocolate and a bobsled.

I just want to bring the person that brings a piece. So that will be my offering. And it's because I'm trying to be obedient to that. Because I can think of all the stuff. I've never lost a case in 32 years.

Annie: Wow.

Bob: And it's not because I'm a good lawyer, I'm a good picker. I'm just not picking cases that get lost. And if you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, you can engage the largest social issue the days by the way that I react to them individually, not about the way that I shout about that corporately.

I'm so glad that there's clarion loud voices on those. And there are so many, that just most of those don't require me. But it does require my obedience in my life.

Annie: That's right.

Bob: I'm like, "Actually I need to cut to the chase. I need to actually do something about that in my life right now.

Annie: I learned a lot from you in this. Because we're built a lot the same in that I don't take loud public stances on things because I want everyone to feel like we're friends. And I want them to feel like they can come over here, wherever the here is, even if we don't agree on something.

And so when I get pushed about a topic, my usual response is, what does it say about you and me if you and I disagree? What does it say about our friendship? Before I even tell you what I think. Because if we disagree on this and that's going to make you walk, then there's eight other things we're probably going to disagree on before it's all said and done, so you might as well go because we don't agree on everything.

But how do you manage... This is like a very personal question for me. So if you don't want to answer you don't have to. But how do you manage the accusations of being lukewarm or the accusations of not standing for truth when the choice has been am I standing for truth, I'm just not yelling?

Bob: Oh, yes. Somebody asked me with every book that I write, because I don't write books with Bible verses in it because I'm not writing it for the guy in row three at the church, I'm writing for the guy at the tire store, the guy at the church adjacent.

So somebody said, "Are you watering down the gospel again?" I'm like, "Oh, I hope so. I just want to make it for thirsty people. I would hang a salt lake at the end of every pew if I could. I want people who are actually thirsty for some of the answers to life's most difficult questions that they want to hear it from somebody who's thirsty for the answers but not the person that thinks they're a professor and starts professing everything, but somebody that thinks they're a student is trying to learn and just kind of reporting the news. Like, Gosh, this is what I experienced." And so this whole idea of being misunderstood, I mean, they killed Jesus. What's a bad day for you?

Annie: You're right. You're right.

Bob: To say like, yeah. So I expect misunderstanding, but I assume friendship. If that isn't returned, if I assume friendship and they're more like... I think I'm an acquired taste. If they're like, "Oh, yeah, good luck with that," then I don't assume bad motives.

Old Bob would have assumed rejection just happened. And I think it might be just good judgment just happened. I just say I'm not the right fit for their life circumstances right now, which is awesome and understandable and to be applauded. So it doesn't born out of arrogance. But it's kind of like a right-sized humility to just say, "I recognize that we won't be for everybody and be some people, we don't understand and don't.

But I want to get back to our idea of cutting to the chase. There's a guy who I think is in both of our orbits that started this great, big movement. And he was pretty much everything I'm not. He's vulgar and everybody's grill about everything. And I would read what he write and I just roll my eyes.

He ended up in the newspaper over something. And I knew somebody who had his phone number. So I called him up, I said, "Hey, it's Bob Goff here." He said, "Bob who?" I get that all the time. I said, "I heard about this thing I read about you. I just want to say I'm really sorry. That's got to be really stressful."

And in a moment of authenticity, he said, "You know, what most people don't know, I've gotten three death threats this week. I need to move. I got to move my family. My mom lives with us or wife's mom, our kids." And then I said, "Hey, could I help you move?"

Annie: Wow.

Bob: And he said, "Well, tomorrow? It's all I got." I took an all-nighter from San Diego to where he was. I showed up in his address and there was a box just inside his door and it said, "China." I was assuming plates, not the country.

And so I picked up this box, the bottom falls out. I break every plate he owns. I have known this guy for one minute and he is the most vulgar, seemingly antagonistic person I've ever met. And so there we are. I came to help. You know that book *When Helping Hurts*?

Annie: Yes.

Bob: I was that book. And he looked at me with my empty box and he said, "Rookie move," and he moved on.

Annie: Uh-uh.

Bob: It started this friendship of ours that's lasted for years and it was all because I cut to the chase. And because I cut to the chase, I found out he was a really forgiving guy. I had him all wrong. Now, he is still vulgar and he's still a loud voice on some very important issues. But you know what? We're able to be friends even though we're so different.

And it wasn't because I was the hero of the story. I'm not. I was the guy that screwed it up. He was the hero because he was just kind to a guy who totally blew it within a minute of meeting. He could have said, "Hit the road, buddy. Dude, no brains, no headache." But instead, he was just kind to me. And what I want to do is to just find people like that. And more important than finding them, I want to be that guy.

Annie: Right.

Bob: That sometimes is hard when you're right. And for a guy who's right for a living, that's hard. Because I'm right. I'm paid to be right. I'm like always right. Even when I'm wrong I think I'm right. So what's that saying? There's two types of people: humble people and people who are about to be.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. That's exactly right.

Bob: Let's just beat that to the finish line. Just be humble to the finish line. Just get there first.

Annie: Be humble to the finish line. Man, I wrote down: expect a misunderstanding, assume friendship. That is really helpful for me, Bob. That is really helpful. Because misunderstanding hurts my feelings. You could say terrible things about me and I'm going to be like, "You're having a bad day. It's fine." I can forgive more quickly the people who drop the China than the people who misunderstand.

Bob: Because somehow it seems intentional. It seems like there's a barbed hook to that when it might be just somebody that's been terribly distracted by some things. If it's that, again, that disproportionate reaction, they aren't reacting to what happened you just said. They're reacting to their entire life. And Balloon Boy just walked in the room and be like, "Enough with that."

And so they say something untoward and instead of getting all butthurt about it, why don't I just realize there's a context for everything? And their context is clearly different than yours right now but it just means there's is a lesser version but there's a vocal version of it than mine. But I'm just like, China it's not a higher level of understanding of our reach, but maybe a deeper level for myself of what's going on and why I would take such great umbrage at whatever they've done. That thing to just say like when you've been wronged. I pretty got a big justice court in there. Mere tried death penalty cases.

Annie: Right.

Bob: For Pete's sake, I get to switch doctors. So, I got gears, but it doesn't mean that I'm even an enemy with a guy that's on death row. That it means that I've got another guy I'm learning and there's consequences. But one of the consequences isn't that you're removed from me. You may be removed from society.

Well, even these guys at San Quentin, we get a chance to go up there about every three weeks. There's a guy that plays or used to play professional ball, semi-pro ball, and he asked if I'd pitch batting practice. And I'm like, "Awesome. I haven't thrown a ball since high school. I wasn't any good then."

And so I got up on the mound in the yard at San Quentin, I threw the ball, and it kind of wind generally in the direction of the plate, and he just crushed. It was like a jailbreak break. And then I threw the next ball and he crushed that one. And then, Annie, you know what he did? He crowded the plate.

Annie: Uh-uh.

Bob: And that just pissed me off. You know what I decided? I'm going to brush him back. And I wound up, I threw the ball as hard as I could, it hit him right in the head.

Annie: Uh-uh.

Bob: Pro tip: Do not hit a guy who's in for murder in the head with a baseball if he's holding a metal bat. So we had a conversation. Like he had to decide if he's going to charge them out, I needed to decide if I was going to run away like a little girl. And I decided I was.

But I think if we could figure out why are we doing, why did it irritate me that he crowded the plate, I mean, it was his plate. He's the guy. He owns the place. So if we could just figure out, it's just another way of saying, what's that connected to? Take the thing that just press your button.

Brené Brown famously saying the people who press your buttons know where they are because they installed them. Like to just understand, like, why am I freaking out right now? If it's finances or fiancé's, like whatever it is, but what is it that's going on? What's that connected to?

And then a faith guy just have to bring that to Jesus. To say, "I actually have a right-sized understanding, there's still parts on the periphery you don't get but the core thing is this. Instead of saying, "Hey, I'm anxious and you said, 'Don't be anxious,' and so make me not anxious." Unlike, "Make these requests known." But if you don't know what you're requesting, you can't make it known.

So find smart people like you and Jim, just be exposed to new ideas. Do the heavy lifting bit from your knees. It'll work the best. And then from a really humble place to just say, "Hey, how can I show up a little bit more authentically in this? If I'm not showing up authentically, I'm Balloon Boy Bob today, then just say, "I wonder what's going on when? I wonder what kind of insecurity is making me do that. And it's just a fair conversation to have.

I'll tell you for the next generation, for everybody around you, dealing with all of your weird peccadilloes, thank you.

Annie: Yeah, right. Right.

Bob: Just do that. Because you're whacking out, you're becoming a really big distraction to some people around you as you're ricocheting off the walls, figuring out who you

are and why you're doing what you're doing. So you just think of it as an offering to the community of friends that God gave you, then just figure out some of your stuff.

Annie: That's beautiful. Bob, thank you for your time. We've used plenty of your time. But we do have one final question if you have one more minute. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what you do for fun.

Bob: Oh, you know what? I'm learning how to gallop.

Annie: Oh, yeah. You're our Yellowstone out there, Bob. You are John Dutton.

Bob: Yeah. Yeah. Give me the bread. Like I'll just have the big happy Mickey Mouse ears. Two Mickey Mouse ears. So I learned how to saunter. I think there's another word for that. That just like nothing's moving. And then there's the trot. That's like me juggling. I'm still juggling from the last time that happened. But as soon as you get to the gallop, your body get kicked as much.

Annie: Really?

Bob: Like you're just actually in the strike. Yeah. Because you're not going to ta ta ta ta. You're actually galloping. It's like the difference. So I'm trying to learn how to gallop. And I'm not quite there yet. But I know what I want. And I'm finding somebody who knows how to gallop. And so you could see the similarities. Like if you want to move, find somebody who's good at it—they're better at whatever it is that you can't do yet.

Annie: Do y'all all have big long stretches of land where, I mean, you're going to get to just gallop for miles or something?

Bob: Oh, yeah. It's really 300 acres in Texas.

Annie: It's close.

Bob: For Southern California, that's a chunk of property. And it's really been fun. What we do is we take friends, I'll take you out, we put them on horses and we go up and round up the cattle. It's like, you know, *City Slickers*.

I'll tell you a secret though. There was a mutual friend of ours that came out with her husband and they got on that horse and said, "Let's get the cattle." And I said, "Get the ropes out or swim over your head and say, Ye-ho or something." And what

I did, I told that rancher that when you see a bunch of people with ropes over their head, just put 50 pounds of hay out and the cows will see it and they'll start herding for the hay. Well, they thought they were the cat's pajamas. They were really good at this.

And sometimes there can be two things that are true at the same time. That they were actually pretty good at this and somebody put the hay out. And so I just kind of engineer this kind of love and acceptance. Put the hay out. Let people know why you're doing what you're doing. Let yourself know why you're doing it. But there's something kind of beautiful that you can do both. Yeah, like it's plan spot nerdy.

Annie: My goal in 2022 is to see The Oak. So I'm going to come this year.

Bob: Come on.

Annie: I want to see it so much.

Bob: Open invitation.

Annie: Well, thank you.

Bob: You are my guests. You say when, we will have the key under the mat.

Annie: Listen, I've still got a key to one of your houses that Maria mailed everybody.

Bob: Yes, it worked.

Annie: I'll tell you what. That is such a little interesting thing to do that meant the most to all of us. I've kept it. I mean, I moved houses and I know exactly where the key to y'all's house is. Bob, thanks for doing this today. I'm so grateful.

Bob: What a dream! Blessings on you.

Annie: Thank you.

[01:01:12] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, don't you love him? My gracious! Hey, listen, be sure to grab your copy of *Undistracted* and follow Bob on social media so you can tell him thanks for being on the show.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Literally embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and up and down the west coast this week. I'm so excited. You guys, please tell me you'll be there. Just let's all be there together. Okay, all the places you may need me. That is how you can find me.

And I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out, come to a live show, or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same. And today what sounds fun to me, we are in Seattle and I have got to get some chai. I know you thought I'd say coffee, but I don't drink it. I'm going to get some chai while we are here.

Speaking of, on my Instagram, every city we're going to we're asking for your recommendations of the best local places. So make sure you check out my Instagram highlights. And if you're coming to a show, you'll see where the best local places are to try. And if you live there, tell me where we've got to see.

Y'all have a great weekend. And we'll see you back here on Monday with a songwriter and singer of so many of the songs that make us smile and sing along, my dear friend Ben Rector. Y'all, you're going to love this one. We'll see you back here on Monday.