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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.

Hey, there's still time to send a question in for the prayer Q&A that's coming up in April. Just follow the links in the show notes. There's a place you can submit written questions or send in like a Vox, vocal question if you prefer talking with your mouth instead of your fingers.

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](#).

Here's the thing that I think maybe gets overlooked. The Bible talks about loving God and about loving your neighbor as yourself. And I think that often we're so well-meaning about investing in our relationships with God and with others that we might neglect the whole "as yourself" part of the equation.

Prioritizing a healthy relationship with ourselves—I like to say it's being a good friend of myself—is so important. So this month BetterHelp Online Therapy wants to remind you that you matter too. One of the ways we can be good friends to ourselves is through therapy. I always say that my therapist is on team Healthy Annie. And I'm so grateful for the way she's helped me over the years.

BetterHelp is 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 in under 48 hours. Give it a try and see why over 2 million people have used BetterHelp Online Therapy.

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

Intro: Today on the show I get to talk with Rebecca St. James. Yes, the Rebecca St. James that had 14-year-old Annie belting out all of her hit songs along with her. After a nine-year hiatus, one of the defining voices in the history of Christian music is back at it.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

She's since become a wife and a mom and has lots, a lot of life in the in-between time. And it's so fun to hear from her about what that journey has been like and about all that she's learning as she stepped back into the music industry.

And y'all have got to check out her new music. Her EP is called *Dawn*. It features a new worship song that she sings with Brandon Lake called *Battle is the Lord's*. I cannot quit it, y'all. I can't wait for y'all to get to know her if you don't already or to catch up with a dear longtime friend to so many of us.

And with as much as y'all enjoyed the for KING & COUNTRY episode last week, this is their sister. So we're just having family time over here with all the Smallbones, Joel and Luke. And now here is my conversation with my friend Rebecca St. James.

[00:02:51] <music>

Annie: Rebecca St. James, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

Rebecca: Annie, this is such a joy. I mean, we've been talking about getting coffee or tea for like how long now?

Annie: Months.

Rebecca: Months and months.

Annie: I know.

Rebecca: So we get to have our coffee tea moment together right now.

Annie: Just with everyone, are you a coffee person?

Rebecca: I am a coffee person.

Annie: Well, you have a lot of children.

Rebecca: I'm a mom of three young children. I'm definitely a coffee person. How do people do without that? I mean-

Annie: I know. People always think I'm younger than I am. Part of it is not being married with kids. And the other part is I'm like, "I've slept every night. I haven't lost any

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

sleep?" So I don't need coffee because nobody wakes me up. How old are your three?

Rebecca: Seven, three, and one.

Annie: Oh my gracious!

Rebecca: Busy mama.

Annie: Yes. But you have time to break away for us. Thank you.

Rebecca: This is so special. I'm so stoked.

Annie: I am too.

Rebecca: I'm so stoked.

Annie: I mean, so many of our friends listening are probably feeling the thing that I feel of like 16-year-old Annie would actually not believe this moment.

Rebecca: You are so sweet.

Annie: I mean, all of us have been fans of you for decades.

Rebecca: You're so sweet.

Annie: What does that feel like that we all grew up together but you didn't know?

Rebecca: I can't really get my head around it too much. It trips me out a little bit. And people do kind of know things about me, my journey that I don't even know that they know.

Annie: Sure.

Rebecca: I was saying actually to somebody earlier today. It's like my life has been kind of on display since like 13. I went on my first trip at 13 and then full-time with music at 16. So it's kind of all I know is that people kind of know my business. And I think I've tried to live my life where I don't have anything to hide. So people can ask me just about everything.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Okay, this is funny. You'll like this. One time I said in an interview because somebody asked me on the road what my favorite snack was, and at that point it was prunes, Annie.

Annie: Prunes?

Rebecca: I know.

Annie: Why?

Rebecca: I don't know why. I liked the taste of them and they were super healthy. And I was just unembarrassed just saying prunes. I got prunes at in-store appearances-

Annie: No.

Rebecca: ...in the signing line for so long.

Annie: Oh, I'm sure.

Rebecca: I mean, it was just like, "No, why did I ever say that? Why don't you just pick something cooler?"

Annie: Why did you say cash? My favorite snack is cash.

Rebecca: There you go. That could have served me a lot better than the prunes. What the heck?

Annie: That is hilarious. One of the things we do is we send an email on Fridays, it's called the AFD Week in Review, and we tell people who were interviewing in the next week.

Rebecca: That's fun.

Annie: So then they give us questions. So people exploded at the idea that you were going to be here. But one of the questions that I'm really interested in as well is the difference between the 90s and now. So tell me about the difference in the industry but also the difference in Christiantime. What do you see different now that... You've had an EP come out last summer, summer of 20 but now the new album's out. So you're back in it.

Rebecca: Yes.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Annie: What's the difference?

Rebecca: I mean, the industry is so different. I feel like I'm a student right now kind of learning from people that are at least a decade younger than me what is going on? Because when I was first starting out, and again, it's like, oh, gosh, I'm so aging myself but it was cassettes-

Annie: We were all there with you. Just a reminder.

Rebecca: Thank you for saying that. It was cassettes and CDs.

Annie: And in-store appearances.

Rebecca: And in-store appearances. I'd often do like two and a half-hour show and then go to the in-store appearance after the show as kind of an after-party.

Annie: No.

Rebecca: Oh, yeah.

Annie: How do you do a two-and-a-half-hour show and then go to sweet spirit in Marietta, Georgia, or wherever and you would do an in-store?

Rebecca: Family bookstore.

Annie: Oh, gosh!

Rebecca: All of the different ones. So yeah, we worked our tails off definitely. But the other difference was you had to plan your kind of album stuff so far in advance. Like six months out when you're still in the studio working on your album, you had to kind of have all the marketing, everything going so that you could do print marketing to let people know about your album that was coming out next month.

Annie: To mail it.

Rebecca: It was just so far ahead. And now it's like you make changes, you let people know almost like the week before, "This is coming out." I mean, it's just so instant. So it's very different. It's something very different.

Annie: What have we lost making everything go so much faster?

Rebecca: Maybe some intentionality. I don't know. It's just so different to me, I suppose. It feels a little kind of like, huh, next thing, next thing, next thing. Whereas before it was a little bit more of like a kind of a building towards this ministry event, this kind of slow, steady thing.

And I think that's something that we just have to be careful of in this very instant, kind of social media-driven world is that sometimes we need to slow our lives down a bit more intentionally. I just keep hearing people, and you're probably hearing this too, just saying, be present. Like you being present is a present, as in a gift, to people.

And especially with kids, Annie, and they're growing so fast, I remind myself of that a lot. Just be present. Be right here. Get down on our 3-year-old imagens level and just look her in the eyes and go, "I'm right here." You know, play the Lego. Do the things.

So I think some presence. Some actually like being in the moment, just not like being on your phone as much. These are some of the challenges that I think that we all are dealing with. Because it's too easy to be in 10 different spots at once.

Annie: I was with a family here on Christmas morning. My actual family on Christmas later. So I was here at Christmas morning. And it's a family I play with the kids a lot after work. And I'm there for brunch and then I'm still playing in the afternoon. I'm there-

Rebecca: Love it.

Annie: ...and one of the daughters says, "Do you not have to go to work today?" And I was like, "Am I that dad from Elf? It's Christmas. I don't have to go to work today."

But I realized kids just want us to stay. They just want us to stay. And they're used to me saying, "I'm late to this because of work," or "I'm going to dinner so I'm not going to stay till you go to bed." Which is fine for me to have a life. But I mean, Rebecca, I died when she was like, "Are you not going to go to the office?"

Rebecca: You are remembering what day it is—Christmas day.

Annie: My gosh. My gosh.

Rebecca: I'm giving myself a break. One day.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Annie: Touring. Is touring different than when you did it?

Rebecca: Touring right now I feel for us has been more like these dates, you know, here and there. And I've heard this from other people, too. It's kind of spot dates. I think getting the ball rolling post-COVID on considerable block touring has been a little bit hard for some.

And we're trying to do what we're doing as a family too. So getting the five of us, going on a plane and... The kids actually love it. They're like, "When are we going on a bus again?" Going on a plane or a hotel it's such an adventure.

And honestly, for me, having done nearly 20 years of music first time around and then having a break from it, coming back to it with the kids' view of it is seeing it in this new kind of adventure. Like through this lens of adventure.

One day we had to spot dates that were both in Ohio and we went to the Science Museum, COSI, I think it's called, and it was just awesome. It was just sweet finding those moments in between the shows to make an adventure.

It's igniting more of the sense of play rather than just kind of gearing up for the next thing. Which I think starting as young as I did I think that was so much of my world when I was younger. It's like, what's the next thing that I'm gearing up for? So learning how to be present and seeing it with an eye of play and adventure and that God wants that for me too is new. And I love it.

Annie: So for our friends listening, your brothers are for KING & COUNTRY.

Rebecca: That's right.

Annie: Two of them. There's a lot of them. But of them are for KING & COUNTRY. So forgive me that I don't know this. We y'all born in Australia and then came to the US?

Rebecca: Almost all of us. So all the boys and I was born in Australia. And then my sister was born here in the US. She's 14 years younger than me.

Annie: Okay. So you get here and you're a teenager and you immediately jump into music?

Rebecca: I had kind of done a little bit before we moved. My dad was a Christian concert promoter. So he would bring Petra and Amy Grant and White Hat and Stryper, all

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

these bands to Australia and tour them around. So I went to my first show at six weeks old.

Annie: Wow.

Rebecca: Christian music was kind of always just a part of my life. What was your original question? Gosh. Mom brain is a thing.

Annie: I love it. It's great.

Rebecca: It's such a thing.

Annie: About coming over here.

Rebecca: Yes, coming over.

Annie: I want to hear that, why you gave your life to this so early.

Rebecca: So 13, had grown up around pushing music, Carman was my hero. *Revival in the Land*, that album, just... I would do the champion and put my arms up in the air and we decide which of my brothers was going to be the devil, who is fighting who.

Annie: Totally. Totally.

Rebecca: But anyway, I loved his albums. And he's so sweet to me. He's kind of like an uncle. And he asked me to tour with him at 13 and open for him in Australia. Then my dad had a little record label. I did a little worship album on his label, moved to the US at 14. And then some guys from Forefront Records, otherwise known for DC Talk and Audio A, Eddie DeGarmo saw me sing here in Franklin outside of Nashville and they asked me to be a part of their record label at 15.

Annie: Wow. Were y'all in school?

Rebecca: Homeschooling.

Annie: Okay. And then you just grow up in it. You're one of the faces that all of us attached with that season of life, right?

Rebecca: Thank you.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Annie: It is for me. You are just one of the ones that when I think of who I grew up listening, Rachael Lampa is in that crew, and Jaci Velasquez. You know, there's just a lot of y'all that were kind of singing to us at the same time.

Rebecca: I had Jaci on my podcast recently.

Annie: Did you?

Rebecca: It was so awesome.

Annie: Oh, we'll link to it.

Rebecca: We were just laughing and then going real deep about life and marriage and parenting and learning.

Annie: Were y'all friends back then?

Rebecca: We were. I tell a story how I painted a room with her at her new house—we were painting together—and how we just bonded over that in the peak of everything, which is super, super busy for both of us. But we did get to see each other. But mostly at festivals. A lot of it was in passing.

Annie: What was your experience with God that whole time? Let me ask it even better. Did you feel like you worked for Him or did you feel like you were doing ministry and you had a good relationship with Him? For a lot of us, you had devotionals that taught us how to walk toward God. What was it like for you, though?

Rebecca: I gave my life to Jesus at eight in Australia at my church, which was just beautiful. I remember very intentionally giving my gifts and my talents to God at 12. And it was amazing because it was very soon after that Carman tour happened and all of those things happened. And God just opened up doors for me.

So I just knew that I wanted to be a world changer. I wanted to serve God with my gifts, whatever that looks like. And I didn't know what that would be, but I had an inkling that music could be a part of it just because it was mostly what I knew. Like I just been around it so much. I feel like I didn't know what I was diving into, I think. There was so much of like feeling of inadequacy, I think.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Rebecca: So prayer became my lifeline. It was like, "Okay, I'm about to go out in front of 2,000 to 6,000 people on this Carman tour, and I'm 13 years old. Which now having a nearly 8-year-old, I see what a baby I was.

Annie: I'm thinking about all of our friends with kids who are like, "My 12 year old could make such a commitment to God, that their whole life is shaped like that." That is wild.

Rebecca: Yeah. I have context now for what a baby I was. But I remember literally just getting on my face before going out on stage and just begging God, "Lord, if you don't give me strength to go out there, I won't be able to do this." And He gave me strength. And that prayer has been my lifeline since.

But I didn't go to college for this. I didn't study for it. I'd practice with my dad. While other kids were going and swimming on vacation and I was practicing for the tour. So there was just this sense of, okay, well, if I could do it in front of my dad and I could kind of figure out how to perform these songs and sing them and he said it was good, then I can do it in front of thousands of people. And if I pray, that's my other preparation, and I'll be good. And He'll give me strength to do it.

Annie: Wow.

Rebecca: I think it was all very pure. And it was like, "Okay, God, you've opened these doors and I just have to faithfully serve you as best as I know how while relying on you. And it's probably a growing sense of inadequacy, actually, I think as the years went on.

Annie: But you never had a public meltdown.

Rebecca: Thank you.

Annie: I think that's one of the interesting things is what we're getting to see now that we have a new album from you, the same with Bethany Dylan is another one that comes to mind. She was on the show. Of course, you're human and have struggles, but somehow even through purity culture, even through the church being the church, even through people saying unkind things, you haven't walked away from this.

Rebecca: I definitely had my time away from active ministry. So when I got married, which God brought me my prince, which was just so amazing, because for a lot of years I was singing about this man that I hoped would come into my life and I felt called to

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

marriage. But I was singing the song *Wait for Me*, asking my future husband to wait for me and that I was waiting for him too.

That song became harder and harder to sing as years went by and he wasn't here yet. And hope deferred makes the heart sick. So my heart was sick in that department. I was pretty burnt out but I loved Jesus still. And I still knew that He was looking after me. There's definitely some burnout pain that I had to deal with when I did get off the road and some good ol counseling.

Annie: Good counseling ol.

Rebecca: Oh, yeah. Definitely, definitely. And just coming to God with my pain and realizing He could handle it. I think of David in the Psalms. He was just very honest. And God can handle it. He's the creator of the universe and He can handle our pain. But He wants us to come to Him not back away from Him in pain.

So I think my heart was just... I believed everything I was singing still, it's just I was so weary. I was just kind of beaten up by nearly 20 years of just working too hard, not having enough rest, not having enough margin. The way that it played out wasn't any kind of hitting the wall, like spiritual bankruptcy in the sense of "I just don't believe this anymore and I'm throwing in the towel." It was more my body and my emotions, and my mental state was telling me "you've got to stop doing the singing thing," but I wasn't listening.

So I think I'd been red lighting. Literally red lights going off internally of saying, "Warning! Warning! Just stop. You got to rest more. Just come off the road for a while or come off the road." And I probably had been pushing through that, because I'm a hard worker and I just keep going and I'm Energizer Bunny, and I'll have a sabbatical and I'll be good. And just kept going.

Finally, my voice started shutting down on me-

Annie: Really?

Rebecca: ...and kind of panic attacks on stage and things like that.

Annie: On stage?

Rebecca: Not traditional ones. Not to where it's like, "I think I'm going to die." You know, thank the Lord for that grace. But to where I just couldn't breathe enough to sing. I remember one particular moment somewhere in Europe, I think it was Norway,

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Scandinavia, and I was singing, I think, *Here I Am to Worship* and it's a whole bunch of teenagers. It was before a show. It was an afternoon event before the show there and I'm literally squeaking out *Here I Am to Worship*. It's like my voice won't work.

I just handed it off to them. I just did "Here I am..." and they just kept going. But it was just that moment of going, "Oh, my goodness, there's a big problem here. I gotta slow down or stop." Because my body was shutting down only when I couldn't protect it. Does that make sense?

Annie: Yes.

Rebecca: We're very holistic creatures.

Annie: Yes. You can correct me if I'm wrong. An interesting thing I've watched across being a grown-up in Christian dome for two decades now—I haven't always been grown-up Christian, but after two decades—is that it seems to me that when men burn out, they blow up. We see a real public something happen. They kind of do something to throw their life away. And when women burnout, they-

Rebecca: It's more internal.

Annie: Yeah. We just-

Rebecca: Back off.

Annie: Yes.

Rebecca: Interesting.

Annie: That's what I've observed. I'm not sure that's always true. And it's, of course, a bell curve. And someone's going to be like, "Well, this woman did this and this guy just disappeared." But overarching, when we talk about stories of people in our faith who have publicly fallen apart where we've seen it, it's mostly men. But I think it's because women just disappear. I think we just internally pull out of the whole thing.

Rebecca: Yeah.

Annie: I've been real inspired by you to take breaks... Not to not take breaks but to like, oh, you can go through really hard parts of this and it not take you out of it.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Rebecca: Thank you. I receive that. Thank you.

Annie: I've watched that. Once we became friends, I was like, "Oh, now I can tell her."

Rebecca: That means a lot.

Annie: Well, it's true. I want to be like that. I want to have hard things happen and not quit.

Rebecca: Thank you. You know what I had to learn in the quiet times of after finishing music and I just kind of quietly retired. Like you said, I just kind of quietly moved here-

Annie: Moved out west, right? Moved to LA.

Rebecca: I've actually done some acting out there. So I had moved to LA for some acting, but I did meet my husband out there. I kind of had a sense that I might meet him in LA. Just an amazing miracle story.

But I learned after we got married, and I quietly retired and I had these moments at home of just being quiet at my spirit, really quieting down, I felt like God just said, "I want you to see your value. Even when you don't see yourself as being productive or accomplishing this or that or actively giving to people, I want you to know that you can sit in a room with someone and not say one word or do anything actively for them. And that you're incredibly valuable in that moment. Just your presence. Just who I created you to be..." I'm getting goosebumps talking about it. "Who I created you to be is enough and is a gift, just your presence."

So he wanted me to sit in that. Because I was so used to kind of like you said. Making an album, writing a devotional book, on tour, all at the same time. Like literally on the motorhome or the bus like making an album and writing and just being very productive for a chunk of my life. And then it was like I couldn't do anything anymore. I felt like I had nothing to offer to anyone but that was a lie of the enemy. Because who He made each one of us to be is so valuable and such a gift just as we are even in our weakness, even in those times where we feel broken and beat up and hurting, that we just need to show up yeah.

[00:21:47] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about another one of our incredible partners, [Indeed](#). One of the more common questions we get asked in the Q&A time on tour was whether or not we're hiring. It's truly a compliment that you guys see the work we're doing and think you want to be a part

of it. Well, we're not currently hiring. And when we are, you can be sure of one thing. We'll be doing it through Indeed.

And if you're hiring you, need Indeed as well because Indeed is the hiring partner where you can attract, interview, and hire all in one place. It's the only job site where you're guaranteed to find quality applicants that meet your must-have requirements or else you don't pay.

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Here Downs Books and at the That Sounds Fun Network we've been so impressed with both Indeed processes and with the hires we've made through them. Such talented team members who fit right into our culture and got to work. Indeed makes it seriously easy to hire great talent making it the number one job site worldwide, according to comScore.

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Sponsor: And I have one more amazing partner to tell you about, [Thrive Causemetics](#). You know something that sounds fun to me? I mean, if money were no object I'd be about having someone who would do my hair and makeup every day. Alas, money is an object and I'm actively trying to keep vanity and check in general. So I get to do my own makeup and hair. So I'm always looking for great products that take good care of my skin. I am loving Thrive Causemetics these days.

Thrive creates beauty and skincare products that are made with clean skin-loving ingredients. No parabens, sulfates, or phthalates. Just gorgeous, non-creasing, long-lasting makeup. I am here for Thrive's perfect eye pallet.

Those long-lasting neutral eyeshadow shades, okay. And the liquid lash extensions mascara cannot be beat. I can definitely see why it's one of their best-selling products. Ultra lengthening eye-opening mascara that lasts all day, no clumping, no smudging, no flaking? Yes.

It mimics look of lash extensions but no damaging glue or expensive salon prices. You guys have got to try this mascara. Over time the clean nourishing ingredients support longer, stronger, and healthier-looking lashes. Maybe my favorite thing about it is that it lasts and last until you're ready to remove it. And then the formula simply slides right off with warm water and a washcloth. No soap required. What?

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And now back to our conversation with Rebecca.

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Annie: I'm thinking about our friends listening who are moms that had a career, but now they're at home, or anybody who has done things like you've done and has changed course, and the course feels different. It's either a slower pace or it's not as public or you know, a pastor who's become a teacher. Change is a totally different visibility level. How do you learn the thing of that you're valued even if you aren't producing?

Rebecca: I mean, the counseling honestly was part of it. I'm an advocate for that because that was a counselor for me. He said, "Do you know that you can sit here not say anything or do anything and be a gift to me? Did you know that?" And so he's like, "I want you to sit in that." That was a gift from him to me. And I needed to hear that.

I also think I learned to ask more for what I need encouragement-wise because I think sometimes people look at women, strong women, and women like you just talking about that have done hard various seasons in their life and probably done a lot and very capable. And they look at a woman like that and they go, "Oh, she's

got it. She's great. She's golden. She's got it all together. She doesn't need encouragement."

But we actually all need encouragement. We're all fragile. We need encouragement. Like I said, that kind of two-winged. One, hey, let's encourage each other more. Who do you know in your life right now that just needs some encouragement? Just a text. Just say, girl, you're amazing and you're such a blessing. And you're doing it.

I've had friends that have just said that to me. It's like, "Yes. I'm telling you. I'm telling you. What a relief." Even with my husband, I've had to kind of... or with a friend, to say, "Hey, can you speak to what you see in me today? I need that. Can you just speak to what you see? What do you see?"

And sometimes we undervalue that or thought, "Ah, if people see that, then they're going to say it. Like, I shouldn't ask for encouragement. I don't need to. They should just say it. Come on. Can't they see I'm vulnerable?" And I realized that was a bit of a false expectation on my part because I think a lot of us can appear to be more put together or well-rounded than we are. But we all need it. So let's give it and let's ask for it.

Annie: Pastors' wives are in that spot of like-

Rebecca: 100%.

Annie: ...they have to look together in those churches. And they could use some real encouragement, but we think, "They're fine. They're fine."

Rebecca: I know.

Annie: We had Jennie Allen on talking about her new book, *Find Your People*. I said to her, "When are you supposed to go first and when are you supposed to let someone else go first as far as reaching out for these kind of things?" And she was like, "You always go first. You always take the initiative to ask for what you want and to ask for what you need and to invite someone to hang out." To give and to need. If everyone always went first, no one would ever have to go first.

Rebecca: I remember that actually in youth group and the vulnerability of that time. I remember being 13 or 14, just moving to the US, and just walking across the room in youth group was like the biggest deal. I felt like everyone was just looking at me. But they're not looking at me. I mean, they're insecure themselves.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Annie: You're Rebecca St. James. They may actually be looking at you.

Rebecca: It's so true. But I'm not 14.

Annie: I'm like, I hate to tell you, everyone knew who you are.

Rebecca: I was just this girl with a funky accent. They just say, "Say something." I was that girl. But I felt so self-conscious. And I remember my crying coming home from youth group and just my dad's saying, and mom, you know, just saying, "Hey, if you want to have friends, you got to be a friend." So initiate. Be the friend."

Annie: Yes. Can we talk about prayer for a minute?

Rebecca: Yes.

Annie: I love talking to you about prayer. We're about to do the whole month of April on prayer on the show.

Rebecca: Love it.

Annie: Theme in the whole month because that's what people want to learn. And me too.

Rebecca: Me too, 100%.

Annie: It's the only thing the disciples asked Jesus to teach them. Right?

Rebecca: Wow, I never realized that.

Annie: That's the only thing. They said, "Teach us how to pray." They didn't say about anything else. You're like, "You want to ask how to heal? Because we want to learn that too." But will you talk about what's your prayer life like as a mom? I imagine you don't have the same time in the morning I do. I get to get up and slowly make my tea and sit and read. That's not what your life looks like today.

Rebecca: Yeah, not right now. I want to grow in this area honestly in my life. I don't feel like it's where I want it to be. I would say a lot of my prayer life feels bullety. It just feels like, "Hey, God, here you go. Please be with our kids in this regard" or "I need you. Help."

I'm pretty good about devotional books. I have devotional books that I'm reading each day to kind of feed my soul in those moments. So I have five minutes with my

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

coffee and it's like, here is some truth and power scripture. And then honestly, when people ask for help or I know of needs, I will pray right then, because I just know-

Annie: I've seen you do that. That's exactly what you do. When someone says a prayer thing to you, you said, "I'll pray for you right now." And I was like, "Oh, she's going right now."

Rebecca: Well, you and I bonded over prayer. We did. I love that we got to go to a retreat together. It was so sweet. But I think also praying with the kids at night, that has been really good, because I not only pray for them and kind of our family. But if there's, again, pressing needs of somebody we know coming to Jesus with those requests with the girls.

And then oftentimes I'll just pray with them, over them. And then sometimes I'll have them pray as well. And just the things that they share and the trust in what they're coming to Him about is just so lovely to me and kind of ministers to me, because it's that childlikeness that... It's like I want to become more childlike the older I get. Just in my simple trust. Like I don't want to make it too complex.

Annie: You're giving that chance to living up close with them. It sounds we're touring with prayer. They're giving you their eyes to see the world.

Rebecca: We had such an interesting thing happened just this last month. Honestly, this kind of speaks to, I don't know, my season maybe with kids and life. Our daughter, Gemma, who's seven, broke her leg. Like her tibia all the way in half. I mean, just skiing straight through. Just fell wrong, the skitter pop off, just really, really bad.

I said to my husband when they came back, and she's still in shock... She looks like she's aged years in hours. But just the pain and what just happened. I said to him, "We have to know what we know about the situation for her. What do we know? What do we stand on?" And I said, "We know that God is good and that He's going to take care of her, and that He will redeem this pain in her life for the good of her relationship with Him."

And a day and a half later, she wouldn't move out of bed because the pain was that extreme. She just wouldn't. She wouldn't let us move her. She wouldn't move herself. She would get hysterical if we got close to her leg. That was traumatizing. I had to leave the room multiple times crying as a mom because you can't fix it for your child and you're in a rock and a hard place to remove her and then traumatize her. Do I wait for her to do it? She's not doing it. We can't. We're in Colorado. We live in Tennessee, we got to get home. It was just like a rock and hard place.

We prayed, Annie. We prayed together with her. And we held hands, my husband and her, and asked God to help her have the courage to move and let her daddy lift her out of bed. Within half an hour, she was out of bed without trauma, without hysterical experience, without even tears. And so she saw God meet her in that moment. So I think-

Annie: So even that was something for her faith too.

Rebecca: For her faith. But I think for me it's just that coming to Him as a mom, because I felt like a child in that moment. "Lord, I don't know what to do. I'm at a loss." And just coming to him as a parent, I'm so afraid. I don't know what to do. But then her seeing God show up for her, that minister to me. But it was prayer. It was like we asked and we saw.

Annie: One of the things I am trying to learn about prayer is once I pray to then also ask God to give me the eyes to see Him answer. Because I think a lot of times I miss His answer because I'm looking for something in the east and He's doing something in the west.

Rebecca: Wow. Do you do journal? How do you do it?

Annie: Yeah. Do you know what else? I also have a really big sticky notes that are like paper, like poster size. I have them hanging on my wall in my little room where I read in the mornings. And I write everybody I'm praying for.

Rebecca: Wow, I love that.

Annie: Well, because I realized I wasn't praying for anybody but me. And I was like, "Hey, journals for eight years, you're just about Annie. That's pretty embarrassing." So I was like, "I've got to see people's names and their need."

Rebecca: Wow, I love that. I'd like to do that.

Annie: I'll send you a picture of it. I'll show you.

Rebecca: That's great.

Annie: I don't show everybody what's on there but I'll happily show you. So it has changed how I journal too because she is looking for courage, even hearing that story, I'm

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

like, "Oh, God gave her courage in a way that y'all might not have expected." To even get up and move is like the day before that was not courage for her. Right?

Rebecca: Yes.

Annie: So you have to have eyes to see it.

Rebecca: I'm in a women's Bible study and we've been studying prayer actually.

Annie: Oh, yeah. The world needs to know that that group of women, when y'all pray, oh my gosh.

Rebecca: You know some of us.

Annie: People will tell me what books you're... I'm like the beggar outside the door whose just like, "Tell me what y'all talked about. Tell me what books to read. But yeah, that group, I mean-

Rebecca: It's a special group.

Annie: Y'all like really praying and God's answering.

Rebecca: We're diving in. So I do feel like I'm being challenged on prayer. I feel like I've started praying more about spiritual warfare. Lord, protect us. If there's something going on in this room or in this house, or in this moment that is just of the enemy... Kind of like in Jesus' name speaking to fear or speaking to overwhelm, or whatever it is. This is kind of a new level for me. I'm not really like walked in that before. So I'm growing actively right now.

But a friend of mine a couple years ago challenged me. It was kind of indirect. It was more just like through her life story. But she had had a very deep betrayal by her husband who was kind of stealing money from her dad and then cheating on her and all kinds of stuff. And so she had two small children at that point.

Those two children have grown up so beautifully and so well, and God has redeemed so much for them. They're solid in their faith. But they've seen some pain. They've seen some need for Jesus. She got remarried to a wonderful man, had a third child. That child has not kind of come up against some harsh realities in life like the two eldest.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

And she said to me one time, so challenged me, she said, "I'm concerned for our third child that he has not experienced the same realities of life as our two eldest did. And therefore, maybe doesn't know his same need for Jesus in the same way."

And what it challenged me to do is instead of just praying as a mom, like, "Oh, Jesus, protect our children physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally, in every way, just protect them from all harm," I've actually every now and then started praying, "Lord, protect our kids but allow just enough pain in their life that they know their need for you."

Annie: That is so brave to pray that. That is going to hurt y'all so much

Rebecca: Well, I think I saw it with this whole leg thing. It was a curveball that I didn't see coming.

Annie: That is hard. My gosh.

Rebecca: That's honestly my greatest fear in life, like public humiliation or failure. But bigger than that is that something would happen, really bad, traumatizing, or loss of one of our children. It's my deepest fear. And so to pray that and just say, "Lord, I know that the biggest thing in life is that they know you and have a truly real relationship with you. And so be gracious Lord, but do allow in their lives just enough pain that they really know to turn to you."

Annie: I don't know that I'm praying anything that brave. I don't. That is such a sacrificial way to parent. That is very brave. That is going to matter. That's raising three kids who will know Jesus as who He really is. Right?

Rebecca: But where the rubber meets the road on that is that I don't try to...

Annie: She broke her leg.

Rebecca: Well, but honestly I don't try to over-protect in fear.

Annie: Of course.

Rebecca: Even our son right now is 18 months and he is just everywhere. I mean, it's just like, if it's a danger to himself, if he can stand on a table or on the kitchen island, he does. He just goes after it.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Annie: Boys are so like that, right? Every time I facetime my nephew, I'm like, different injury, different injury on his face.

Rebecca: Anyway, I want to trust God more than I trust myself as a parent. So it's just like walking that out.

Annie: When you think about your music, what do you pray for your music?

Rebecca: For Kingdom fruit. I just pray that God will use these songs. There has been a lot of labor. There has been time away from the kids. I mean, they come in the studio. They're part of it, too. But it's been time away and it's been sacrificial in some ways. But just that God will use it to bring His hope to bring a revelation of His love, to bring a dawn, a spring, a sunrise, because that's what He did in my life. Like four years ago, He radically changed the direction of my life and called me back to music in moments.

Annie: Really?

Rebecca: Oh, yeah. I mean, it was just probably the most instantaneous life change I've ever experienced. But I can sing and write from that space and tell that story. God brings a sunrise in the middle of a really deep winter. He does it. Wait for yours.

Annie: I mean, Rebecca, that blows my mind because I think one of the things that church needs, we all need is seeing people do the long haul of faith. So the Lord bringing you back in front of all of us is going to stir up so many different things. He went, "I need you back now. I need you back now." And that time when before the pandemic began, before-

Rebecca: Yeah, it was.

Annie: And the album is called *Dawn*, right? Is that a new one?

Rebecca: That's right. The EP is called *Dawn*. And then the full-length album is called *Kingdom Come*. It's a single that I have with my brothers in for KING & COUNTRY and it's the title track of the full-length album. But yeah, the EP is *Dawn*.

[00:40:15] <music>

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Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

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And now back to finish up our conversation with Rebecca.

[00:43:31] <music>

Annie: So with *Kingdom Come*, I have this thought about Jesus teaching us to pray like that. Like, if God's will was going to be done and His kingdom come without us praying, Jesus wouldn't have told us to ask for that.

Rebecca: Wow.

Annie: Right?

Rebecca: Wow.

Annie: So what does it look like to you? When we're praying *Kingdom Come* and when we're singing along to this, what is it going to look like to you if God answers that? What if the kingdom comes around this album? What is that going to look?

Rebecca: It looks like revival.

Annie: Okay. What does revival look like?

Rebecca: So when we were writing the song, we wanted it to be-

Annie: Did you write it with the boys too?

Rebecca: I did. I wrote it with my brothers. And we went in the studio just hoping that God would give us something special. But every time you go into a song session hoping

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

for something special, and oftentimes, something may be, may be good and it might not go anywhere. But God gave us something special that day. We knew it.

And so we wanted it centered around the Lord's Prayer, the Beatitudes, Blessed are the poor in spirit. We wanted it to just have this undertone of revival. Like these were kind of the components that were coming together when we were praying that day and asking God to lead us.

So when I think of revival, I think of the revival that said, "If you want to see revival, go into your room, shut the door, draw a circle on the ground, step into it and say, Lord, let revival start in the circle and let it start with me. Let it start right here."

And I think revival looks like holiness. I think it just looks like Him capturing our hearts in such a way. And not holiness in the pious like, Look at me, I've got it all together and I'm so perfect. More in the sense of like I love Jesus and I so want to honor Him like a child that I want Him to infiltrate and affect every single part of my life. "So Lord just shine through me as I parent. Shine through me as I have this conversation with my sibling or my friend. Shines through me as I go to work. Live it out. Just shine through me. I'm your lighthouse."

So I think revival begins that way. I think it begins just like really living out that prayer. Let Your kingdom come, let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Let it start with us. Let it start with me right now in this moment.

Annie: Our pastor has talked about drawing the circle before

Rebecca: Mm, good. Good.

Annie: What would it look like if I asked the Lord to do revival in my life not in Titan stadium yet?

Rebecca: Totally.

Annie: Again, it's our eyes. My eyes think revival looks like Titan stadium full of non-believers who all get saved in one night.

Rebecca: Totally.

Annie: I want to see that in our city. I want to see that in Nashville. I want to see that.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Rebecca: 100%.

Annie: But also sometimes I'm like, are all these cranes revival? Is God building our city revival?

Rebecca: Wow, Annie, I like that.

Annie: I don't know. Do you think it could be?

Rebecca: I think it could be. I've heard people say that. That it'll start out of Nashville actually.

Annie: It makes sense because y'all are coming... every musician is writing... You work with Bethel Music. So many Bethel people are being magnetized here.

Rebecca: Drawn to Nashville. It's true. A lot happening.

Annie: And you came back here and kicked back up into music.

Rebecca: It's true.

Annie: So this album releases in the spring.

Rebecca: Yeah.

Annie: And there is something about getting out of winter. I think a lot of us-

Rebecca: Go. Go, go, go. You're so prophetic, man. You hear things. Wow.

Annie: Maybe.

Annie: I hope so.

Rebecca: No, you do.

Annie: I'll receive it. Thank you. I'm thinking about how a lot of us feel like we've been in a winter for years.

Rebecca: Oh yeah, definitely.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Annie: In each area of our lives we can go, "It's springtime here in my life or it's summer here. But man, it's been winter in this one area since I lost my job or since that relationship ended or since that person passed away." How do we find spring? How do we see the dawn? How did you see it?

Rebecca: Okay. Our winter looks like multiple big curveballs. For me it was miscarriage. Two miscarriages. Not being able to fall pregnant. Deeply painful.

Annie: Was it before the girls?

Rebecca: Actually, we had Gemma, our oldest, and that was so easy and good. Happened fast. So I just thought, "Oh, we're going good. I won't miscarry ever. Probably. This is all good." And then I miscarried and then miscarried again and just couldn't fall pregnant. And it was just so disillusioning. Like, "Lord, I didn't see this coming. I'm hurting at my feminine core right now."

And then my husband kind of lost his job unexpectedly and as a massive curveball. So his masculine core was being hit. Really hardcore. So on a purpose level, very, very painful. So we were both like in the season just going, "I don't even really have much encouragement for you and you don't have much encouragement for me. We're just guarded right now."

So in the middle of that, I was asked to sing actually in Alaska with my brothers at this event. And I mean, I was still struggling with panic attacks while I was singing and stuff. So it was definitely a little bit of like, "Okay, yeah, well, that'll be good. God will give me what I need." But anxiety kind of surrounding that.

And I remember feeling a sense from the Holy Spirit that He was calling me to speak about the miscarriages while in the middle of it. Not with this happy little bow, not everything wrapped up. But just in the middle of it just go, "Hey..."

So I was singing some worship songs, leading worship and there was an anointing on that time. But in this talk, I'm sharing about how we're in the middle of the pain, in the middle of the fire, which is the name of one of the songs on the album, and we don't exactly know what to do with this pain, but we're trusting God and His heart and that He will somehow redeem this hard time. Not a dry eye in the building pretty much. And I'm like crying, which I never hardly ever do on stage. So it was just a very, very powerful time.

And I walk offstage after that moment and tell my brother, Joel, "I believe God just called me back to music. My heart has been so changed in these moments on stage

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

that I think He just did the most profound work of my heart and called me to that. And I feel like He's also just saying, 'Hey, Bec,' which is what friends call me. Annie, you can call me back.

Annie: I will.

Rebecca: I know you will. "Bec, don't rush ahead of me. Don't try to plan this thing. I got it. Just watch what I'm about to do in your life. Just watch me." And it was almost like God had this twinkle in His eye just like, "Look what I'm cooking up for you." And I've held on to that because it was such an encounter with Him. I was not looking back. I was not looking to do music again or to go back to music at that point. I would still-

Annie: Why did you say yes to that one event?

Rebecca: Honestly, it was a part of a cruise that the whole family, all the Smallbone clan could go on and spouses and grandkids. So it was a take one for the team, even though I was still kind of emotionally winded really and still dealing with the panic stuff.

But in that, yes, right on that cruise and that time too, God called my husband as well, changed his heart about moving to Nashville. Like radically changed his heart. Nashville had not been on the table for us. We are just, "Yeah, California. We're good." So it was a double thing of God changed my heart, opened me to music and changed his, which was just extra confirmation.

So yeah, I think holding on and persevering. A friend of mine was talking about just long-suffering. I got a Marco Polo actually. I like Marco Polo.

Annie: We're about to go so hard on Marco Polo, you and I, now that is our new thing.

Rebecca: Really?

Annie: I love it so much.

Rebecca: I love it so much too.

Annie: It's the best.

Rebecca: You're in the car, you don't have to look at yourself, you can just leave a message. Got your little thing.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Annie: When I get ready in the morning, I put it on my mirror and pass through them and I answer them. Bec, this is our future. Here we go.

Rebecca: Here we go. You just heard it right here. Marco Polo it is. I love that girl. So anyway, she left me this message about how God is teaching her how to suffer well in that essence and long-suffering. I feel like that's been kind of like a part of the season.

It's like after He renewed me like that and showed me that I miss this connection that I have with the Holy Spirit when I sing, that was that moment of going, "Lord, I miss this reliance that I have on you when I sing and when I speak about You. I miss that intimacy that we have."

He did bring my heart into a new spring and He's given me a new song to sing because of that dawn. But He's also given me this message. Like, wait for your spring, people. When I speak, "This is what I'm saying. It's like wait for your spring. Hold on. Don't give up. Don't throw in the towel. It's coming."

Annie: I think the thing for us all to hear is you said yes in the winter. And there may be a world where that triggered a spring, right? I don't know. The Lord is so clear that some things are blessings and some things are rewards. We don't know how to measure those. But I wonder if our yeses sometimes make a way.

Rebecca: The sacrificial yeses maybe especially.

Annie: Maybe. In the middle-

Rebecca: Sacrifice of praise in the middle of the pain.

Annie: Yes.

Rebecca: Hmm, I've never thought about that. I love that. Who knows? I think a lot of it we won't know till heaven but-

Annie: That's right. Even then are we going to know? I just am like, "Does he have enough time to loop back through all the things I've made a list of?"

Rebecca: We got an eternity.

Annie: There's a lot of us. There's a lot of us that He has to deal with.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Rebecca: That's true.

Annie: But I often will say to the Lord if something goes sideways, not a serious something, if something small goes sideways, I'll say, "Add that to the list. I'd like you to explain." I have a running list.

Rebecca: I love it.

Annie: So we'll see when we get to it.

Rebecca: I love it.

Annie: I also would like to hang out with Peter. I've got a lot of things to do when we get there.

Rebecca: A lot on your list.

Annie: Yeah, I just got some things that I'd like to take care of.

Rebecca: Me too.

Annie: When you think about this album, when was your last album before the EP?

Rebecca: Hmm, let's think about this. It was the year we got married. So 2011. That's a long time. Like 10 years.

Annie: What do you hope for this one that is new?

Rebecca: I hope that this album kind of feeds the church in a different way than maybe some of my albums. It's a worship album that is just kind of a... I would say it's my own Ozzie mates lived in America for decades. approach to worship. It's just different.

But I just pray that when people hear it they're able to worship Jesus with it in a way that is unique to my other albums. That they can hear hope and sing hope through this album, and that it does ignite their own revival moment. That then is contagious.

Annie: Yes, that's it. Because after it happens in the circle, it goes out of the circle.

Rebecca: Yeah, 100%.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Annie: Oh, man. Are y'all going to tour it?

Rebecca: Yeah. I mean, my husband and I are just literally holding things so loosely. It's like, "Lord, show us how you want us to be directed in this time in our lives." I mean, when we say yes to shows or events, it's calculated because of having a family. We look at it and we like kind of prayerfully going, "Okay, Lord, what is the healthy yeses and what's the healthy nos?" Because I think for all of us in life there are both. We can't say yes to everything. Otherwise, it's an unhealthy yes.

Annie: That's right.

Rebecca: So I think if God brings kind of the right partnerships for the right times in our lives over the next years of touring, I'd love that. Because there's something about being out there. I think that's what probably this season of pandemic has been for a lot of us. It's like we freshly value that in-person communal moment that is a Christian event.

It's like gathering in Jesus' name, whether it's church or whether it's a Christian show or listening to a speaker like you, it's like, you know, I'm having this communal moment with these other believers. And I see their faces and I see their smiles and I see the hope and I see the joy. And I'm witnessing it in real-time. And that moment will never happen again.

Annie: Never happen again.

Rebecca: So there's something that I value about that that is so special. And I feel honored to be asked to do things now. So we'll just see. Hands up.

Annie: Oh, I love you. Is there anything we didn't say about the album that you want to make sure we say?

Rebecca: I think you covered so much, girl.

Annie: I think so. That time went very fast for me. And I can't believe it.

Rebecca: For me too. For me too.

Annie: I'm like, Oh, my gosh.

Rebecca: 100%.

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Annie: You're just welcome back here anytime.

Rebecca: Thank you.

Annie: I think you bring a seasonness. Not in age. We're very close in age. But there's a seasonness to you that a lot of us, especially women who are behind you and being public have so much to gain from.

Rebecca: Thank you.

Annie: I may just call you and say, will you come talk to us again?

Rebecca: Please, I would love to.

Annie: I'll Marco Polo you. Bec, we need you.

Rebecca: Here we go.

Annie: We need you on the pod. Come back.

Rebecca: I love that.

Annie: I'm grateful you're back in a public sense.

Rebecca: Thank you.

Annie: Because I think it will tell a lot of people a lot of things that we've been needing to hear.

Rebecca: Thank you.

Annie: So I'm very thankful. Okay, the last question we always ask. I've never got to ask you this. So because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

Rebecca: You know what? A good old healthy sweet chick flick sounds so awesome to me.

Annie: Oh, yeah?

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

Rebecca: Oh, yeah. Romantic comedy all the way. Guess what, girl? I watched *Sister Act 1* just the other day. And I was like, "This is so good." I'm crying in *Sister Act* when they're doing the choral moments and the redemption of how... But it's just so beautiful. It's so sweet.

Annie: *Sister Act 2* is a lifetime favorite.

Rebecca: Very little known fact. I auditioned for that here in Nashville and I almost got in. I got into the second round. Honestly the only reason it didn't probably go further is that I wouldn't make fun of sex.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Rebecca: They gave me a thing to read about the... I mean, it wasn't an actual part of the movie that made into it. But I had to kind of mock sex in it. And it didn't fly. I couldn't authentically do it. And so yeah. But I got into the second round with *Sister Act*.

Annie: Do you still do some acting? Is that something you see?

Rebecca: If it was the right thing in right moment, yeah.

Annie: Okay, album is out. I can't wait for people to get to hear it. Thank you for doing this. I'm so grateful you're here.

Rebecca: Such an honor. I've loved every moment.

Annie: So fun. That was really good.

Rebecca: Praise the Lord. You're just so sweet.

Annie: What a gift! What a gift!

Rebecca: You're such a soul sister.

[00:57:58] <music>

Outro: Oh friends, isn't she the best? Listen, she's our friend now. We just call her Bec. Don't even worry about it. Right? She's our people. I just loved it. I love that whole conversation. Y'all be sure to listen to the new EP, *Dawn*, releasing next week. It's

Episode 374: Rebecca St. James + Kingdom Come That Sounds Fun Podcast with Annie F. Downs

so good. And follow her on social media so you could tell her thanks for being on the show and how much her music has always meant to you.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that's how you can find me.

And I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home and do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same. And today what sounds fun to me is the beautiful weather outside. I'm thrilled about it. I am thrilled about it. That's what sounds fun to me—just being in it.

Y'all have a great weekend. We'll see you back here Monday with, oh, y'all, seriously, one of the most special conversations I've had in all my years as a podcast host. So we'll see you back here on Monday with the one and only Kristin Chenoweth. Will see y'all then.