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**Annie:** Hi friends! Welcome to a very special 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.

Before we dive into today's conversation though, I want to let you know that this episode is sponsored by [BetterHelp](#). Almost every day, that's how frequently I run in situations that I wish came with a user's manual. Almost every day. Do you ever feel that way?

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And just a reminder that all the links to our sponsors, the transcript of the show, our weekly email newsletter, the AFD Week in Review, and all the details about our Advent series, all of those links are conveniently available in the show notes. So check it out.

**Intro:** Today's show is a little bit different than usual. For starters, it's coming at you in the middle of the first week of our Advent series. We are absolutely loving hearing from y'all about how you're listening and watching and how you're interacting with your Advent series guidebook. It is so fun and it's only the first week. We have three more to go.

But mixed into the Advent series, we also have some conversations with friends that we just couldn't wait till January to share with you. So each week until Christmas we'll have a Thursday episode of That Sounds Fun that is our typical format.

Only that's not entirely true for today, because as you may have seen on my Instagram or on YouTube, a few weeks ago, I got to visit the set of the series *The Chosen*. And not only did we get to tour the set that is a replica of first-century Capernaum and watch some of the filming process—you can see all that over on my YouTube—but we got to talk with several members of the cast, some of the writers and production team. It was incredible.

So today's show is a little different than usual because we'll be sharing conversations with several different people, all of whom are responsible in one way or another for this amazing show. I will introduce you so you know who you're hearing from. So let's start with George Xanthis who plays the character of John. And listen, we had to start talking about soccer.

[00:03:23] <music>

**Annie:** I mean, George, I want to talk to you about you being John but I mostly want to talk to you about Premier League.

**George:** Oh yeah.

**Annie:** Can we just go?

**George:** It'd be like a 20-minute-

**Annie:** I mean, we walk in and you've got your Liverpool kit on. And I need you to know I've got a Bellerin pink Arsenal kit on the way to me.

**George:** Bellerin is cool as well.

**Annie:** He's such a good dude, right?

**George:** Goes to like lectures and stuff and gives talks. He's a cool guy.

**Annie:** I think we're gonna lose him, maybe before people hear this. So I had to hurry and order the third kit that was pink.

**George:** Bright pink, is it?

**Annie:** It's bright pink. It's beautiful. We need to get you one.

**George:** Oh, awesome.

**Annie:** Thank you for being on That Sounds Fun.

**George:** Thank you so much for having me.

**Annie:** This is great. My first question is, what scene do you love the most that you've already done?

**George:** It's funny. My answer to this used to always be... because I'm one of the lucky disciples that's been there since kind of day one. But it's funny because John is kinda like an extra in the first four episodes. So some fans saw John. My first line is, "Go get caught in a net." And they're like, "Is that the John from the Bible? Which John is that?" And I just walk off and you don't see me again for a while. So it's kind of like an Easter egg.

But my first answer to that would have been the miracle of the fish the first time you really see John properly. And it's just such a fun scene to shoot. It was freezing cold. I was there with Zebedee, played by Nick Shakoour with one of the old big James'. And we had to, as Dallas always called it, the big green burrito needs to be pushed into the boat. And it was great because the struggle was real and they got some great footage from that.

But then once I did Season 2, Episode 1, it's called Thunder. It's based on John and James and how they got their name Sons of Thunder. So that for me personally was, as an actor, more enjoyable because I got to really delve into the character of John.

**Annie:** So you're a Groundlings guy.

**George:** I am, yeah.

**Annie:** So there's comedy in your background.

**George:** Yeah. I was talking about this before, like how can you use comedy in a show like *The Chosen*. And I think that's because the show is making the characters relatable. Like this version of Jesus at the wedding of Cana, he's dancing with everybody. The other thing is at the miracle of the fish, I always say this, it was... Dallas who told me, "This is going to be controversial, I think, but hopefully people get what I'm trying to do."

When Simon kind of collapses to his knees and looks up at Jesus, Jesus comes down to his level, and talks to him like this. He doesn't want to be above. So that relatability lets us play with comedy and then it just lets the audience in a little bit more. It makes the story more relatable, it makes... I don't know, it makes the message clearer, I think.

**Annie:** How do you feel about Season 3?

**George:** So basically the honeymoons over I guess is the best way to kind of put it because a lot of great things, sermon on the mount, has happened, and now the disciples are going out two by two, and kind of spreading the word—what they've heard from Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount.

For John, it's an interesting journey because John kind of wants to be a leader, but he has to be patient. So that's also a thing. That's like a common theme with John. But there's a lot of conflict in the season, which is cool. You know, different groups come in, the Pharisees, the Jews. I've seen an ancient Greek person, which was... I'm Greek background myself. So when I saw that Athenian person, I'm like, "Whoa, everyone's getting involved here." So really, really fun season.

**Annie:** There's no wrong or right answer here. But when you were researching John, did you read what he's written?

**George:** Yeah. I didn't initially. As soon as I got the role, I did. I looked at the book and wanted to kind of gauge what I could. But the thing I've been doing mostly is as things have been happening, I've... also when you stay in hotels, you've got Bible there, so it's really easy.

**Annie:** That's it.

**George:** And you've got a free book there. But it's cool to then read what... You know, whether it's I do that first, or I do the same and then see what is written. Sometimes it's a one line and we make a whole episode out of it. But something that's really cool, I saw this on YouTube, and it was nothing to do with *The Chosen* but they used my face, which was really awesome.

But they were talking about John, how his writing style is not like standard Judea, and like the others. It's actually more great because he's kind of does it like poetry. And apparently, James and John were very educated. They came from a wealthier fisherman family. And so when you read his book, if people go back and read it, it's different to the other books. He kind of tries to make it a little bit more dovetailing,

more of a story. So I'm sitting there learning literary techniques from John from his book in ancient times.

**Annie:** And the Greek connection is wild.

**George:** And the Greek connection is awesome. And then Dallas puts it in like in Season 2, Episode 1, Thunder, John goes, Well, you know, the Greeks use the word to mean you know this and that. And then there's also another Easter egg and Season 2 when I say to Simon Zealot, "You know what you're doing is smacks of Hellenism." So there's a lot of Greek Easter eggs there I think they've put in for me.

**Annie:** Being in this role and being so up close to Jesus, does it change how you feel about Christmas at all?

**George:** Yeah. I tell you what? I mean, Christmas we know is the birthday but the thing is-

**Annie:** Your best friend's birthday.

**George:** Yeah, best friend's birthday.

**Annie:** Technically.

**George:** Yeah. What happens is it makes you feel a little bit more connected to Jesus as a person. I go back to that example of the wedding at Cana. Seeing him dance, you know, that's a fun moment. And everything about Christmas is fun, but sometimes what happens is I start to think about what we're going to do in Season 6 and 7. And that's where those things pay off in the long run.

We're doing these relatable, humorous, fun things now in the good times but we know it's gonna end somewhere really, really kind of depressing and sad.

Ultimately, a nice thing with resurrection, obviously. But yeah, it just makes you see it in a whole different light, for sure.

But also with Christmas we've got a special one that's like, you know, seeing the birth of Jesus from the perspective of the shepherd. So the show has made me see so many different aspects of Christianity in a completely different way.

**Annie:** Yeah, signing up for seven seasons and knowing how the story ends, I mean, that's just not normal for actors. Do you feel like this is as different as it seems?

**George:** So there's an interesting thing I can say about as an actor approaching it sometimes. I don't know, this could be faux pas, but I use it and it seems to work on screen. Sometimes you can lend yourself as the actor to kind of poke in. So when John is in

a scene... I remember there was a scene where James and John are talking about someone not understanding something and James goes, "Do you think we're not going to understand it for a couple of days?" And John says, "No, I think it's going to be a while." In that moment, George came in and said to John, "A while means 2,022 years."

**Annie:** Right.

**George:** And then John kind of has this sinking feeling and Dallas kinda goes, "That was really good." It's like, Well, no one knows what John's thinking. But John's kind of got a bit of a hint because I do know where the story is going. That could be faux pas for actors-

**Annie:** Yeah, I know.

**George:** But that happens a lot. Same thing with the wedding. You know where the story is ending so you want to enjoy it more. We really enjoyed doing the dancing in that scene.

**Annie:** Yeah. Because you're gonna bring George to John no matter what.

**George:** Yeah. 100%. And the casting in this series is just, you know... The way it's been written as well, Dallas, Tyler, and Ryan have written this series so well. But the way that they cast, I heard Amanda, Dallas' wife had a big say in that. And every disciple is like the actor.

**Annie:** Wow.

**George:** It's amazing. So obviously George is gonna come in. I can be impatient sometimes, I can be impetuous, and emotional, have a bit of thunder. So yeah, I probably need people to tell me to calm down all the time.

**Annie:** Yeah, me too. That's right. We're gonna be fine. You're a Liverpool fan. That's what y'all so. Someone needs to tell y'all to calm down.

**George:** Same as Klopp, right? He's funny, but he can get a little bit crazy sometimes.

**Annie:** That's exactly right. Okay, so the last question we always ask. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you. What do you do for fun?

**George:** I mean, I have to say what sounds really fun to me is going to Liverpool to watch Liverpool vs Manchester City at Anfield, which I am going to do.

**Annie:** Oh yeah, I was gonna say, have you ever done that? You get to do it this season?

**George:** I'm just gonna go. I'm going to the UK, I'm gonna go with my wife and we're gonna watch Liverpool play. I think football always sounds fun.

**Annie:** I agree.

**George:** Always.

**Annie:** Those Saturday mornings, oh.

**George:** Can I tell you as well? This is a little bit faux pas as well-

**Annie:** I'm already.

**George:** ...and a bit unprofessional, but if I've got a slow day on set and Liverpool are playing, when they cut, I will head to my phone, put on the live game, and try and watch as much of the game as possible.

**Annie:** I need you to know if I'm speaking at an event and there's a game on and I'm not up, I am watching on my phone in the green room.

**George:** As stressful as it is, that sounds fun to me.

**Annie:** I agree. I agree. I wish Liverpool the best season.

**George:** Thank you. And Arsenal as well.

**Annie:** Thank you. Let's just meet each other at the top.

**George:** Absolutely. Absolutely.

**Annie:** Thanks for doing this, George. I really appreciate it.

**George:** My pleasure.

**Annie:** Oh, man, don't you love him? I love the role of John and the way that George plays him. Favorite character of a lot of people is the one I got to chat with next. It is Elizabeth Tabish who plays Mary Magdalene.

[00:12:13] <music>

**Annie:** Liz, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

**Elizabeth:** Thank you for having me.

**Annie:** Thanks so much for doing this.

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Annie:** I can just hear my friends listening already going, "Mary Magdalene."

**Elizabeth:** Oh, I love it. That's fun.

**Annie:** What is it like being one of the main women, I mean, really the front-running woman of the show? There's so many women who go like, "Yes, look at her. Look at her."

**Elizabeth:** It's incredible. I don't even think I realized I was a lead until like Season 2.

**Annie:** You're like, "Hold on a second. Where am I on the call sheet?"

**Elizabeth:** "Wait, oh, wow." The first two episodes of Season 1 were like just dream scenes for me. I was so excited to play these two very different sides of one woman that I could also relate to both sides so well. It has been a dream come true to play a character that has been written so well and has so much emotional complexity and psychological depth. The writers have done her justice, and I'm grateful for that.

**Annie:** I mean, you knew when you were signing on it was a seven-season gig, right?

**Elizabeth:** Not really.

**Annie:** No, you didn't.

**Elizabeth:** When we started we were just filming the first four episodes of Season 1, because it was crowdfunded.

**Annie:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** So we didn't know if we were gonna finish Season 1. And then when we finished Season 1, we didn't know if we were gonna start Season 2. So it's just been this really gradual thing-

**Annie:** Wow.



**Elizabeth:** ...that we're... You know, it's slowly growing. And now we're at a point where like, "Oh, they're writing Season 4. Like we're moving. We're tagging along. So it's all been exciting, little surprises over the years.

**Annie:** That is awesome. Okay, so you knew who Mary Magdalene was going into it.

**Elizabeth:** Oh, yeah.

**Annie:** And knowing her storyline, why was this a yes for you?

**Elizabeth:** It was nothing but yes, because I was relating to... the way they wrote the Lilith character, I was coming out of a depression at that point.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Elizabeth:** Well, I came out of depression because of the show, but like, I was in a depression that I was connecting to Lilith's sorrow, her grief, her anxieties, her self-medicating. And I hadn't read a character like this. That sort of character is usually in Hollywood films and it's a tragedy. It's over, you know?

**Annie:** Right.

**Elizabeth:** And in this, it was showing this second chance, this redemption, this new life that I was so eager to be able to play, but then also experienced myself in a lot of ways. So in so many ways, you know, it's also like it checks off all these things that I've always wanted to do, which is like do a roll with an accent, do something that is ethnically the same as me, which I've never been able to do.

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Elizabeth:** And to do a historical figure that I admire so much, you know, all of it is just such a dream.

**Annie:** I've never been an actress. How does playing a role like that... because you said it brought you out of a really hard season..

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Do these days on set, do these moments acting change who you are off set?

**Elizabeth:** Oh, that's such a good question. I think preparing for them, and then playing them and then watching them in the final edit are all these like points, these moments that have sort of the opportunity for change within me.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Elizabeth:** Like I have been changed from just reading the script. I think the end of episode one and Season 1, when I just read that before I auditioned, that changed me. In Season 2, playing the scene with Matthew and Simon where I'm vomiting at the end, but they're showing me so much love and kindness, playing that scene, I remember that changing me. I remember feeling different after that and feeling really like not just loved by these characters, but taken care of by my fellow actors.

**Annie:** Wow.

**Elizabeth:** So there are a lot of parallels that have influenced me. The character has influenced me, she's inspired me to want to be a better person.

**Annie:** Yeah, me too.

**Elizabeth:** And a lot of what I admire is that she's been able to use her pain in her past to help others to recognize it in others and reach out in ways that are, I think, more obvious in Season 3. You'll see that.

**Annie:** Oh, can't wait. So let's talk for one second about Season 2 because there's a moment for you in Season 2 that got so much hubbub around it, right?

**Elizabeth:** Yeah.

**Annie:** My question for you, when it was happening, I was thinking, does this make you feel a certain way as the actress behind this character? Does it make you... If someone said they don't like my shirt on the internet, it hurts my feelings.

**Elizabeth:** Oh, sure.

**Annie:** So I'm like, did you have feelings about the internet having feelings about what happened with Mary Magdalene?

**Elizabeth:** I think if I didn't trust in the writers and didn't believe in why they wrote it that way, I could have gotten nervous, I could have gotten worried about what people are saying. But I loved so much that they showed how human she is and how fallible everyone is.

We're just human and we make mistakes, and we will continue to make mistakes. And it's okay. It was this opportunity to show that Jesus is still there and still loves

her and forgives her. It's a nice example of that. So I felt so strong about that, and was so confident in the purpose of it, that all the haters or whatever...

Maybe they had strong reactions and it made them question some of their own beliefs or why they were reacting in a certain way. And I think the show provides so many great opportunities where people's beliefs kind of get into... There's tension there. But then it also opens up this line of communication, where we can talk about why we're reacting in certain ways, what our beliefs actually are. So I think it's just this really great point of engagement.

**Annie:** How's your experience of how well women are written in this and how uniquely women are written in the show?

**Elizabeth:** I love it.

**Annie:** I love it.

**Elizabeth:** I am so grateful for it. I am so excited about so many different types of women being portrayed. I think the problem for so long has been this like women are either the prostitute or the, you know, virgin or a wife. Like there's very limited options. And in *The Chosen*, they are writing really, you know, realistic women with complex backgrounds. You know, they're business minded, they're entrepreneurs, they're good with money, they're smart. And they're also really sensitive and aware of the emotions amongst the group. So I'm grateful to the writers for doing some good justice for the characters.

**Annie:** I agree. I agree. It always bothers me how few women in the Bible have names.

**Elizabeth:** I know.

**Annie:** I feel like the writers have done such a great job of naming them.

**Elizabeth:** Yes. Yeah.

**Annie:** I'm so thankful.

**Elizabeth:** We're all appreciative of it.

**Annie:** Right. Okay, the last question we always ask. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you. What do you do for fun?

**Elizabeth:** What do I do for fun? Like just watch movie after movie.

**Annie:** Do you? You just love watching movies. In the theater or at home?

**Elizabeth:** I love going to the theater. I love going to Arthouse cinemas and watching old movies, black and white movies. I'm a cinephile. Also, I co-direct a film festival called the Arthouse Film Fest.

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Elizabeth:** So in my spare time, I'm actually going through submissions-

**Annie:** You're curating.

**Elizabeth:** ...and watching Arthouse films from all over the world. It's International. We put it on virtually every Christmas season. So it's like December 26th to 31st.

**Annie:** We'll totally link to it. That's so fun.

**Elizabeth:** And then we're starting to do pop up screenings in different cities.

**Annie:** Listen, if you want to pop up screen in Nashville, I'll be there.

**Elizabeth:** Yes.

**Annie:** Come on.

**Elizabeth:** That would be so much fun.

**Annie:** We have the Belcourt Theater that is perfect for that.

**Elizabeth:** Really?

**Annie:** It's adorable. It is very cool. It's where you go see all the cool movies.

**Elizabeth:** Oh, exciting. Okay, we'll be in contact.

**Annie:** I'll be there.

**Elizabeth:** Cool.

**Annie:** Thank you for doing this.

**Elizabeth:** Thank you.

**Annie:** I really appreciate it.

**Elizabeth:** Lovely meeting you.

**Annie:** Thank you. You too.

[00:20:42] <music>

**Annie:** I mean, do we love Liz or do we love Liz? I know. She's amazing and just has embodied that character in such a beautiful way. The next friend we got to speak with is the character Thaddeus played by Giovanni Cairo.

Giovanni, thanks for being on That Sounds Fun.

**Giovanni:** Oh, thanks, Annie. I appreciate it. Thanks for being here.

**Annie:** Oh, man, it's been so amazing. Tell me the difference you feel because you've been in since Season 1.

**Giovanni:** Sure.

**Annie:** How different is it being here at like a permanent place?

**Giovanni:** It is fantastic. I actually just worked on the new sets for the first time two days ago.

**Annie:** Oh my gosh.

**Giovanni:** So I got to experience it with y'all.

**Annie:** That's right.

**Giovanni:** And just to see the detail and how big the sets are and just like the different dimensions to it, it's incredible. I'm just excited for things to come and to fill more of *The Chosen* throughout the years. So it's been great.

**Annie:** So that is exactly what I wanna ask you about. Because no, I've never been an actor. Haha. But you-

**Giovanni:** Still time.

**Annie:** Thank you. Thank you. I do have time. Most times when y'all sign up for things, when you get a gig, a job, we hope it goes well, we hope we get another season. But you knew signing onto this that Thaddeus was a guy in this story from start to

finish. Why is that a yes for you? Why don't you give seven seasons of your life to this?

**Giovanni:** Because I trust the message and I believe in the message.

**Annie:** Really?

**Giovanni:** Yeah. You know, before I booked *The Chosen*, I was at a place where my faith was not where I wanted it to be and my career was not where I wanted it to be. So I think as artists too, we strive to be part of something way bigger than ourselves, not just to be part of something that's a job. And what *The Chosen* I think is teaching is what Jesus's biggest, most important commandment was to His disciples, the Last Supper, which was "love one another as I have loved you."

I truly think that's one of the biggest messages that *The Chosen* is getting out there. And to be part of that. And I love my character and the way he's a peacemaker. Thaddeus. It was an easy decision for me. It's people I love too.

**Annie:** So we know your careers changed because we're watching it. Has your faith changed?

**Giovanni:** I think it's gotten stronger. I know it's gotten stronger. I've definitely gotten closer to God by doing this, I've gotten closer to St. Jude Thaddeus. I do a prayer every night to make sure like, you know, "Keep using me as the vessel, keep working through me through each scene, through each time I go out there." So it's definitely strengthened my relationship with my family, my friends, people I'm just meeting for the first time to be better with them. So yeah, I'd be lying if I said it didn't change me in that way.

**Annie:** I know you're a sports guy.

**Giovanni:** Looove.

**Annie:** So this may ruin our friendship.

**Giovanni:** Where are you?

**Annie:** But I went to Georgia-

**Giovanni:** Oh, it doesn't ruin our friendship.

**Annie:** Okay, great. Okay, great.

**Giovanni:** You beat my rivals, the Michigan Wolverines Slash because I'm Spartan.

**Annie:** Okay, great. This is even better.

**Giovanni:** I'm Michigan State Sparta.

**Annie:** State guy.

**Giovanni:** So thank you.

**Annie:** Okay.

**Giovanni:** We're like best friends.

**Annie:** Okay, great. That's what I was very concerned when I saw the Michigan in sports. I was like, "This could go south so fast."

**Giovanni:** No, no, no, we're best friends. I was watching that game and enjoyed.

**Annie:** How about those Dawgs? What a dream. Okay, what is your hope for Michigan State then? Ever gonna come back?

**Giovanni:** Just play national championship.

**Annie:** That's all.

**Giovanni:** But no, if they keep beating Michigan every year, which has happened the last two, I'm happy.

**Annie:** That's right. That's what matters most. Okay. Let me tell you the last question we always ask. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

**Giovanni:** What sounds fun to me? Life in general.

**Annie:** Oh, I love that answer.

**Giovanni:** Yeah. I think you create your own fun. So for me, it's kind of like embrace every situation you're in. What sounds fun at the current moment, talking with you. I think this is great. But I'm just looking forward to filming more of *The Chosen* throughout the year. That's a joy because I love these people I work with. So I'm just excited to get Season 3 of *The Chosen* out to you.

**Annie:** I was about to say, "What's different about Season 3?"

**Giovanni:** There's a lot of surprises coming up in Season 3 of *The Chosen*. A lot of surprises. Things get more intense. And in a way, the honeymoon's over and the disciples are gonna have to really deal with what it means to follow Jesus, as people start getting riled up around that are hearing the news. So, you guys are in for a ride.

**Annie:** Oh, we're ready. We're stoked about it. Tell me about how you think the audience is going to feel differently about Season 3 than 1 and 2.

**Giovanni:** Yeah, I think well for Season 1 of *The Chosen* it was kind of like you're getting the team together. The band of brothers, they're coming together. Season 2, it's obviously complete and things start to get a little tension with the Romans. But I think with Season 3, the intensity really ramps up because worlds start to collide. You know, with the Romans and the Jews and the Pharisees are now starting to continue kind of their search and probe more about what Jesus is doing.

So the word is getting out, which is great because more people are hearing about what Jesus has to offer and what He really believes. But at the same time there's people that disagree, like the Pharisees, with what He's doing. So the stakes are more higher than it's ever been. And things get a lot more intense for the disciples as we're trying to spread this word. So...

**Annie:** Again, me being not an actress yet-

**Giovanni:** Not yet.

**Annie:** ...when you are off set, can you turn off that those are the bad guys?

**Giovanni:** Oh, yeah.

**Annie:** Are these like your bros when you're off set?

**Giovanni:** I love these guys. Have you met Brandon who plays Quintus?

**Annie:** Not yet.

**Giovanni:** He's a sweetheart. But he's-

**Annie:** So y'all are gonna send me lunch?

**Giovanni:** But on screen you love to hate him-



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

**Giovanni:** ...because he's so good at what he does. But he's a sweetheart. Sean, who plays Shmuel, such a good dude. Such a great guy. But they're able to tap into these characters so well when filming *The Chosen* and it works. You know, it's very easy to tap in and connect with them when we're filming. But off, they'll grab a coffee with him and have a nice chat.

**Annie:** That just blows my mind. I don't know how you can... Quintus makes me so mad.

**Giovanni:** Good. He should. He should.

**Annie:** Maybe you are as nice in real life as you are in the show, and he's nice in real life than he is -

**Giovanni:** Maybe that's how it works.

**Annie:** Yeah, that's how it should work.

**Giovanni:** The next time I play a villain I'll let you know.

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

**Giovanni:** Maybe it'll change me. Who knows?

**Annie:** Can you do other things in the middle of doing *The Chosen*? Do you have time?

**Giovanni:** In between seasons, I try to work as much as I possibly can. So yeah, it gives us the opportunity to audition for other projects and work. But we're always anxious to get back.

**Annie:** So you're from Michigan, and LA, and Texas. Do you have a place?

**Giovanni:** So many.

**Annie:** Where do y'all stay when you're here?

**Giovanni:** Here we stay in Waxahachie.

**Annie:** Okay. Just like a big group... all of y'all are bros.

**Giovanni:** All the bros are around. Like on nights we're not filming, we'll have like game night. We're playing like different board games or... Noah who plays Andrew is

really good at Mario Smash Brothers. He's like ranked in the world. He's really good.

**Annie:** No.

**Giovanni:** Yeah. So anytime you try... I don't even try. I think I've tried once and I embarrassed myself. But yeah, he's-

**Annie:** This is the content the internet needs.

**Giovanni:** He's very good. Like you guys should film him doing so. He would love it. And he will trash-talk you like you're going down. But it's a fun game.

**Annie:** And then the next day y'all are just disciples together?

**Giovanni:** And then we're disciples. Then we go back to our times and live in our time. So yeah.

**Annie:** What does rest look like for you?

**Giovanni:** Rest?

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Giovanni:** I'm bad at it. Like anytime I have time to kind of just relax or watch a TV show, my mind's always going like, "What are you doing next? What are you doing next? What do you do next?"

**Annie:** You seem like that in real life. You seem like a guy who's always got the next thing going.

**Giovanni:** I do. I gotta watch my shows at night because then I'm forced to go to bed afterwards. I can't do it during the day.

**Annie:** That's right. Thanks for doing this.

**Giovanni:** No, thank you.

**Annie:** I'm really grateful.

**Giovanni:** Oh, Annie, I appreciate it. Thanks for talking. It's great.

[00:28:21] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation real quick to share about one of our amazing partners, [Rothy's](#). I love looking at my calendar for the next few weeks and knowing just how many people I love and I'm gonna get to spend time with.

The holiday is kind of the actual best for us Enneagram sevens. I've got a wedding and a concert and a couple of get-togethers to go to which also means your girl needs some outfits and I have to have the right shoes. I mean no outfit is complete without them, right?

For Chic and comfortable Flats that can be easily dressed up and dressed down or you know, brought on the dance floor at a wedding or for any seasonal gathering, shop Rothy's. Seriously versatile and comfortable.

And Rothy's just released the coziest merino wool slippers for when your day is officially over. Do y'all know how much I love slippers? I think you do. When you give the gift of Rothy's, you show you care about comfort, durability, and of course style.

You know this is my favorite part. All of Rothy's products are designed with the planet in mind so they are sustainably made with their signature thread, repurposed from single-use plastic bottles. And if you don't know someone's shoe size, Rothy's makes versatile bags and accessories that run from pocket size to tote size if you want to give them as a gift.

As much as I'm on the road, shoes that are comfortable and they go with everything are a must. My black Rothy's Points are on my packing list pretty much every trip. Rothy's are made to last. Plus, all their products are machine washable, which means they'll keep looking great through the New Year and well beyond.

Get stylish shoes, versatile and durable enough to wear all the time with Rothy's. And you can get \$20 off your first purchase at [Rothys.com/soundsfun](https://Rothys.com/soundsfun). That's [Rothys.com/soundsfun](https://Rothys.com/soundsfun).

**Sponsor:** And I want to tell you about another one of our incredible partners, [Chime](#). There are a lot of things vying for our attention every day, right? Family, jobs, friends health, our credit score. Wait, yes. Your credit score is important, but no, it doesn't need to be the main thing on your mind.

Chime is here to put building your credit score at the front and center of their attention. With their Secured Chime Credit Builder Visa credit card, you can start to build credit with your very own money. Chime reports your payments to credit bureaus to help you build credit over time.

Their members see an increase of 30 points on average, all of this with no annual fees, large security deposits, or credit checks to apply. So start your credit journey with Chime. Sign up takes only two minutes and doesn't affect your credit score. You can get started at [chime.com/thatsoundsfun](https://chime.com/thatsoundsfun). That's [chime.com/thatsoundsfun](https://chime.com/thatsoundsfun). The Chime Credit Builder Visa Credit Card is issued by Stride Bank N.A., pursuant to a license from Visa USA.

Chime checking account and \$200 qualifying direct deposit required to apply for the secured Chime Credit Builder Visa Credit Card. Regular on-time payment history can have a positive impact on your credit score. Impact score may vary and some user scores may not improve. Out-of-network ATM withdrawal fees may apply except at MoneyPass ATMs and Seven-Eleven or any Allpoint or Visa plus Alliance ATM.

All right, friends, let's jump back into our conversations. Now, I love this part. We got to not only sit down with the actors, we got to sit with some of the people from behind the scenes that are writing the words, making the show, and making it all possible. So here is a conversation with the co-writers of *The Chosen*, Ryan Swanson, and Tyler Thompson.

[00:31:40] <music>

**Annie:** Gents, thanks for being on That Sounds Fun.

**Ryan:** Thanks for having us.

**Tyler:** Thank you.

**Annie:** I'm so happy to get to chat with y'all. Okay, let me start with y'all both in writing since Season 1. You've been in this the whole time? Do you have a favorite episode that you've written?

**Tyler:** Of course?

**Ryan:** Yes.

**Tyler:** It's the same for both of us.

**Annie:** Is it?

**Ryan:** Yes.

**Annie:** What is it?

**Ryan:** We each have a 1A and 1B.

**Annie:** Okay, I want to hear them.

**Ryan:** 1 and 1A.

**Tyler:** We love Season 1, Episode 2, partially at the end when they're all celebrating their different Shabbat dinners. The Pharisees with all their opulence, Mary Magdalene doing it for the first time in her little studio apartment with a blind person and stranger she doesn't know and then Matthew having his Shabbat with the dog.

**Annie:** That is so heartbreaking.

**Tyler:** It just came together. And I've never been prouder. It was a long time ago when we first saw it, but I've just never forgotten that.

**Annie:** Do you feel differently about Jesus now than you did when you started?

**Ryan:** Yes, yes.

**Tyler:** Of course.

**Ryan:** I feel that I have a try perspective on Jesus that I've never had before because I get to be in those conversations with Tyler in Dallas. And so we're each speaking into the characters with a little bit of our own experience inevitably creeps in. And so how we see Jesus has changed. I mean, it's changed because it's been infused with how Dallas sees him as sarcastic and Tyler sees him as all-embracing and not judgmental. And those things have kind of opened up what had been a pretty static understanding of what Jesus was for most of my life.

**Annie:** What do you like about Tyler's writing?

**Ryan:** I love that Tyler can crack into the smallest fissure in a character, work with somebody's vulnerability, their fear, and open that up and have other characters speak into what then is motivating us from a negative side of things. Because that portends conflict, and it really helps the healing really when you can open those things up.

**Annie:** What do you like about Ryan's writing?

**Tyler:** He's so funny. But also we're the same but we have fundamentally different brains. So I will pitch something about a character and he sees it from a completely different light. He'll just say, "I have a different take on that." Very gently. And I love it. I love the perspective that he brings.

He just has so much experience. He tends to see the plumbing, he tends to see the architecture of a thing where I'm hung up on like the painting that's on the wall. I'm so much about the surface things, he's always looking deeper into how these things work.

**Annie:** I mean, even as humans y'all present very differently. So it's really interesting to think about y'all writing together and with Dallas on everything. So many of our friends listening are writers and people get real married to their book title or really like "this chapter no one can change." But an editor or another writer... Yeah, talk about it Tyler. Why? What is it?

**Tyler:** Kill your darlings.

**Annie:** Yes. Yes.

**Tyler:** I mean, with that being said, the text... We're not gonna...

**Annie:** Sure. Sure. Sure. Just be clear.

**Tyler:** Yeah, that we're not going to stray from.

**Annie:** But you're gonna kill that darling.

**Tyler:** Right. That darling is the capital D darling. But we're not going strayed from that but we do have ideas based on any given story in the Bible. And any of the three of us, I don't know about you so much, but I get attached to ideas that I'm hoping will survive.

But if they don't, I just trust both Ryan and Dallas as writers and I trust biblical consultants who come in and look at stuff and say like, "Hey, that tradition didn't develop until the third century in Judaism. You kind of like step outside."

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Tyler:** So we've learned to hold things with a very open palm. Anything that is not Scripture, we just kind of... we trust each other. Because even when I'm upset that something got killed, I will often say to myself, "But it always works out." The episode always turns out to be better no matter what we've lost or gained."

**Ryan:** Yeah, that's true.

**Annie:** I mean, this is a seven-season arc. Do y'all know how the whole thing... I mean, besides the Bible part. Like have you already outlined how the whole thing plays out?

**Ryan:** Yes.

**Annie:** So are you writing Season 4 now or are you... Okay, that's where you are?

**Ryan:** Yeah, we're on the homestretch. We're past-

**Tyler:** We probably look so tired.

**Annie:** I was gonna say, "Are y'all like normal writers that you like you've stayed up too late and you canceled dinners and the deadline is coming?"

**Tyler:** Yeah, very much.

**Ryan:** Yeah. I stayed in Texas for an extra week.

**Annie:** Really?

**Ryan:** Well, for sure. Not on this trip but... I mean, it's an all-consuming thing, because it comes from passion and we're led by Dallas who has the ultimate passion. I mean, how can we take a break when we're watching him direct and produce and write? It's a wonderful experience. But yes, it's all-consuming.

**Annie:** So yesterday we got to watch a scene filmed, and I won't spoil anything in case we aren't there yet of what people can watch.

**Ryan:** Cool.

**Annie:** But it's a scene in Andrew's house with Andrew and Judas-

**Ryan:** Philip?

**Annie:** Philip, yes. And they've just come back from the Decapolis. So if you can remember back, will you kind of tell me how that scene came about? Because it's hilarious. It's hilarious of how they interact with each other. When y'all are writing, are all three of you sitting around and talking about a scene or is one of you writing and bringing it together? Do you recall?

**Tyler:** Oh, my goodness, I'm really passionate about the scene.

**Ryan:** Oh, great.

**Annie:** Are you? It was so great.

**Tyler:** Well, because deep behind the curtain that scene used to take place in the Decapolis in draft one. This is how these drafts change. It's from six, right? It's the page one rewrite. That was an episode we had to kind of start over on. And instead of them doing that scene in Decapolis, we needed to move it into Capernaum. So all the things that they're describing about, they were probably telling the parable... This is totally no spoiler. People could just read the Bible for the parable.

**Annie:** It's a little bit about the show. You're right.

**Tyler:** Read the book. It's there. It's public domain. So yeah, they're telling the story of the parable, and people are reacting to it in this negative ways. And then we moved it from Decapolis into Capernaum into Andrews house where there's no detractors anymore. So we needed Judas to be like, "Well, that's a suitable reason for someone not to want to go to a banquet. They just got married. They're going on their honeymoon." So that was really fun. What were you gonna say? It seemed like you were ready to answer.

**Ryan:** Oh, I was thinking about the part of it where we are all together, which is well before this. And again, to Tyler's point, it was set in a different place. So what we ended up having to do was get back together, because we do go off and write in our separate places. Tyler and I are both in Los Angeles. But we're doing our meetings via Zoom and we're meeting up with Dallas the same way.

**Tyler:** Everything in Los Angeles is like two hours away.

**Annie:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. In Nashville, everybody song-wrote over Zoom for like two years. That is amazing.

**Ryan:** So then when we decided we had to replace it, we just wanted to keep the message intact because we liked the content in that scene. We thought it was funny.

**Annie:** It's really funny.

**Ryan:** We thought it was-

**Annie:** I mean, we got to watch it full-time.



**Tyler:** It's funny.

**Annie:** It's so funny.

**Ryan:** You know what's funny is that that scene actually was really ominous. Yeah, that same material. Like Judas is sort of... the way he's just kind of dismissive and flip with the story that these guys are obviously really fraught. They've just had this journey that's been horrible. If you place it in the mouth of somebody who's angry, it has a very different meaning. Like, because we don't believe you. So it had a different tone because it had to.

**Annie:** Okay, the last question we always ask on the show. Because it's called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

**Ryan:** We have this theme that runs through this season. This is a season for the Jesus story. In this season, Come Unto Me, His ministry moves from His Jewish congregation into the world. I'm so excited for people to see what we're doing. That sounds fun. It's fun to hear that live stream, the positive, the negative, the coming together. Because that's what we miss. The people say, "Well, somebody said negative thing." They came together to do it and they're talking about the Bible. So that sounds fun.

**Annie:** We'll take it. What about you? It sounds fun to you.

**Tyler:** You were on the set yesterday.

**Annie:** Yes.

**Tyler:** What Sounds Fun to me is a movie set or TV set is 150 plus people-

**Annie:** It's amazing.

**Tyler:** ...all working on one thing, focused on... You saw all the... It's fun. It's like you've got actors, you've got sound people, you've got lighting people, you've got set decorators, you've got hair and makeup. It's so fun. All the wagons are pulling in the same direction. That unity is... I just love being there. I've never seen anything like it.

**Annie:** It was so cool. Thank y'all for what you do. It's amazing.

**Ryan:** Thanks for coming.

**Annie:** I'm grateful. I'm excited for Season 3.

[00:40:40] <music>

**Annie:** Man, y'all know I love some behind-the-scenes stuff. So hearing from the guys who right alongside Dallas Jenkins is so fascinating to me. And we also got to sit down, I loved this, and chat with Brad Pelo who is the actual president of *The Chosen* here is that conversation.

Okay, Brad, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

**Brad:** Thank you, Annie. Good to be with you.

**Annie:** Thanks for doing this. Will you kind of explain what it means to be the president of *The Chosen*?

**Brad:** It's kind of like the president of the United States.

**Annie:** Is it? Okay.

**Brad:** No, it's nothing like it. Most productions don't have presidents, honestly. This is a very unique production in that it's created a community. And in order to kind of engage that community, which is what's special about *The Chosen*, we need a lot of people to do a lot of things year-round. Our social media team, our marketing, our merchandising, our gift-giving.

You know, as you might imagine, there's also this little TV show that we make, the production. So for half the year, there are 150 people on this arm making the show, but year around there's about 40 people that are doing kind of everything else. My job is to kind of keep everything running year-round.

**Annie:** Why was this a yes for you?

**Brad:** Coming to *The Chosen* was very unexpected for me. While I can look back now in my career and say, "Oh, now I understand, I did this thing that's really relevant now," I never expected to end here. In fact, at this point in my life, I thought, "I'm going to be involved in nonprofits and sort of giving back to the world." But when Dallas invited me to be part of *The Chosen* experience, I first spent time helping the distribution company, Angel Studios, then I came full-time to *The Chosen*.

That journey for me was unexpected because, believe it or not, I'm one of those fans who didn't want to watch the show, definitely didn't want to love the show

because I've seen it. I'd seen it. Love Jesus, just don't love His shows. But I finally fell for it.

My wife sat me down and said, "You're gonna watch it." It was in the middle of COVID. I watched it, I loved it. I contacted Dallas and said, "What can I do to help?"

**Annie:** Because y'all are already friends?

**Brad:** No, we weren't.

**Annie:** No! You just blind reached out, Brad?

**Brad:** Blind reached out and said-

**Annie:** And climbed your way to the president of the United States of *The Chosen*.

**Brad:** How about that?

**Annie:** Well done.

**Brad:** There was no scheming involved, I promise.

**Annie:** That is very impressive.

**Brad:** It was just little by little saying, "Can I help with this?" And then they called, "Can you help with that?" And little by little kind of found opportunities to serve.

**Annie:** Are y'all Dallas based?

**Brad:** No. Well, I should say my wife lives in southern Utah together with the other executive producer and his family live down in southern Utah right outside the Lions Park. I can sit on my deck and look at the mesas. It's just gorgeous. And we film part of the seasons in Utah. And then we have a home here, and unfortunately, at this point, I spend most of my time in Texas because we're in production.

**Annie:** I've asked this to all the cast and the answers have been interesting. But has your feelings or thoughts about Christmas changed since becoming part of *The Chosen*?

**Brad:** One of my very first experiences with *The Chosen* was around Christmas. I had introduced Dallas to this set in Utah that we ended up using during Season 2. We used it in Season 3 as well. And we were sitting around the kitchen table, it is Airbnb, and he was going full-on into production. And I said to him, "This is the

Christmas story. You started out with a short film that was about the birth of Christ. But the Jesus story is the Christmas story and we should be celebrating it. How would you feel if I were to produce, while you're producing the TV series at Christmas special, and we'll bring in Christian artists and we'll have monologues and we'll tell this story all over again? We'll just celebrate."

He was a little skeptical. He actually was like, "I'm not so sure you can pull it off." We didn't know each other well enough yet. But we pulled it off. And I produced the very first Christmas with *The Chosen*. And of course we've done a second one. And those have been beautiful project, and to me speak at Christmas time to the heart of *The Chosen*. It's worshipful. It's celebrating the very life of that had birthed in that season and made all the difference in our lives.

**Annie:** Okay, so tell me about the first billion.

**Brad:** You know, I made my first billion... Are you talking about people?

**Annie:** You first billion. Let's go! Teach me that. We're taking more than six minutes and you're gonna teach me that.

**Brad:** They commonly referred to me... The tech entrepreneur that runs our company. The first billion people was a phrase that came to *The Chosen* as I came to *The Chosen*, where everyone was already saying, We're going to reach a billion people. And I checked the almanac, because I think there's more than a billion people on this planet. And so we just adopted the phrase "The First Billion". We want this to keep going. And it will. It'll keep going.

It's great to have a target. It's not really an analytical target. We don't have an accurate way of counting anyway. But we're saying to ourselves, we're not making this for Christians. We're making this for the world. Jesus is the Savior of the world. If you're Buddhist, if you're Taoist, if you're, you know, named the religion, He is your savior, too. And we want to bring Him to everyone. And I believe the way we're telling the story is accessible to everyone.

**Annie:** Yes, yes. Okay, the last question we always ask. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you. What do you do for fun?

**Brad:** Oh, what I do for fun. I do this for fun.

**Annie:** Really?

**Brad:** Yes. Now I will say, you know, my wife would correct me. Shouldn't say, "No, no, no, the grandchildren are fun. We just had our 17th grandchild and we have our 18th coming this week.

**Annie:** How many kids?

**Brad:** And our 19th is coming next month?

**Annie:** Oh my gosh.

**Brad:** I'm a grandpa. That's what's fun.

**Annie:** I had 12 children. So we're just getting started.

**Annie:** Y'all have 12 kids.

**Brad:** Twelve naturally born children.

**Annie:** Yes. And there will be 19 grandkids this year.

**Brad:** Yes.

**Annie:** That's gonna be the first billion in your lineage. That's what's gonna happen.

**Brad:** It's the best part. The best part.

**Annie:** That's amazing. Thank you for the show, and thanks for being a part of this.

**Brad:** Thank you, Annie.

**Annie:** It's helping so many people.

**Brad:** It's been such a pleasure. Thank you.

[00:47:16] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! Just taking a quick break from this conversation to tell you about another one of our amazing partners, [Raycon](#). I know it can feel like there's a ton to keep up with during the holiday season. So your friendly neighborhood Annie is here to share with you one of my go-to gift ideas this Christmas: premium audio products from Raycon.

Raycon's wireless earbuds and headphones and speakers offer premium sound, useful features, and almost custom comfortable fit, and up to 54 hours of battery life, you guys. Anyone you give them to will for sure find a use for them right away, whether they use the speakers to start a party in the living room or they take a moment to escape the party completely and use the earbuds to catch up on their favorite podcast.

And as the one gifting them, your favorite part will be that they start at half the price of other premium audio brands, you guys. My Raycons provide great sound quality and their battery life is so ridiculously long. And they offer so many fun color options that they're sure to be one to fit the personalities of the people on your gift list. Raycon being good friends to us, so they've created holiday gift guides for everyone in your life: your fitness fans, your gamers, your on the go podcast, for music lovers.

And for the next month, Raycon will have a countdown to Christmas with a new pop-up flash deal for you to take advantage of every single day. You can find Raycon in stores now like Kohl's or Walmart. But let me just tell you right now, you're always gonna get the best deal at [buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun](https://buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun).

The Raycon website also offers free shipping, free returns, and "buy now, pay later" options, plus a 30-day happiness guarantee. Right now go to [buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun](https://buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun) to get 15% off sitewide with the code HOLIDAY, plus free shipping. Okay, that code is HOLIDAY at [buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun](https://buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun) for 15% off your Raycon purchase. [buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun](https://buyraycon.com/thatsoundsfun).

**Sponsor:** And I want to tell you about one last incredible partner, [Ritual](#). We can probably all agree that our eating habits during these last couple of months of the year don't always cover all the good things we are trying to consistently give our bodies, right?

I mean, studies show that over 97% of women between the ages of 19 and 50 are not getting enough vitamin D from their diet and 95% are not getting the recommended daily intake of key Omega 3. But Ritual is here to help us out. They did exhaustive research to formulate Ritual's Essential for Women 18+ multivitamin so they can help fill nutrient gaps in the diets of women ages 18 and up. The nutrients, they include support brain health, bone health, blood health, and they provide antioxidant support.

And because they want to provide the best supplements they can, Ritual invested in a gold standard university-led clinical trial to prove the impact of Essential for Women 18+ multivitamin. And they did it, you guys. The trial found that Essential for Women 18+ was shown to increase vitamin D levels by 43% and Omega 3 DHA levels by 41% in 12 weeks.

Studies like this are kind of unheard of in this industry and it assures us that we can trust Ritual. Ritual is committed to traceable and vegan-friendly ingredients, third-party testing, and always clear communication.

So Ritual just released Symbiotic+, a gut health supplement with clinically studied prebiotics, probiotics, and a post-biotic on one minty capsule. I am here for that minty flavor. Just one delayed release, Symbiotic+ capsule per day supports your gut with all the quality and traceability you'd expect from Ritual.

Right now, Ritual is offering my friends 10% off your first three months. So visit [ritual.com/thatsoundsfun](https://ritual.com/thatsoundsfun) and turn healthy habits into a ritual. That's 10% off at [ritual.com/thatsoundsfun](https://ritual.com/thatsoundsfun).

**Annie:** All right, friends, we got a couple more conversations to share with you. And we didn't mean to save them for the end, but listen, Quintus the bad guy, right, the bad guy, Brandon Potter sat down and chatted as well, and y'all are gonna love this.

[00:51:03] <music>

**Annie:** Welcome to That Sounds Fun.

**Brandon:** Thanks for having me.

**Annie:** I have to be upfront. I'm terrified of you. You are the worst.

**Brandon:** It's true. It's true.

**Annie:** I mean, have you ever played a character like Quintus? Have you ever been the bad guy?

**Brandon:** Oh, gosh, I've been the bad guy in many projects.

**Annie:** A lot. Are you the actual bad guy?

**Brandon:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Annie:** You just keep getting the bad guy. I should tell you something personal.

**Brandon:** I get to act as a joke, which has made me reflect at many points.

**Annie:** Certainly.

**Brandon:** Like, why do people relate to me on this level?

**Annie:** "Why is this the gig I keep getting?"

**Brandon:** Yeah, yeah. But you know, I do like paying rent. And honestly it's fun to show up to work every day and be a jerk.

**Annie:** Is it?

**Brandon:** Yeah, yeah. I mean, on screen.

**Annie:** Certainly, certainly. As a person you seem really nice. When you're playing Quintus, do you feel like he is a jerk as you're saying? You feel like he's a bad guy or are you tender to him?

**Brandon:** You have to be tender to every character that you play, especially the bad guys. Because if you start pretending like your character wakes up in the morning and says, "How am I going to be evil today?" then you end up playing this sort of tie the girl to the railroad tracks broad villain. That doesn't really have any humanity to them.

So you have to pick out something that you genuinely relate to. And I do relate to his desire for order or discipline. He thinks he's doing the right thing, he's helping people organize their lives. And that's not waking up and doing evil. He's trying to make the world a better place in his own twisted way.

And he's also a part of this huge story that he doesn't fully understand. And that's something that's easy to relate to. I mean, I'm working on this show, *The Chosen*, which is big, the cast and the crew is big, the impact on fans is big, there's no way one person can fully wrap their head around what all it means. So I feel like I can relate to being daunted and confused by something so much bigger than myself.

**Annie:** Yeah, me too.

**Brandon:** Yeah.

**Annie:** When you signed on for this... I mean, it's seven seasons, everybody knows it's seven seasons.

**Brandon:** True.

**Annie:** And normally for shows, like a TV show, you're like, "I hope we get picked up again," right?



**Brandon:** Right.

**Annie:** But you know the arc of this and you probably know who you become in the arc of this. So how do you stay in Season 3 when you know six and seven are coming?

**Brandon:** Sometimes that's a challenge. But it's made easier by the fact that we have skilled storytellers, the writers, and the director. We also have skilled actors. So when you show up to set and your acting colleagues are only playing this moment, they are present in this moment, it encourages you to do the same. So everyone sort of lifts each other up in that way. This is the moment that we're in right now. We're not in these other moments.

**Annie:** Giovanni, when I was talking to him, he was like, "Brandon is the nicest guy of all of us."

**Brandon:** That's so sweet.

**Annie:** And I was like, I'd have a hard time coming around that because we've only been Annie and Brandon friends for seven minutes. I know Quintus for a long time." When y'all are not on set, what's it like?

**Brandon:** It's such a wonderful environment. That's one of the things that separates *The Chosen* from any other thing that I've worked on is that, you know, everyone is already sort of bonded by the material. Like everyone believes in the project. And now that we've been working on it for three years now, there are real relationships. So for example, I only show up to set one or two days a year.

**Annie:** Oh, wow.

**Brandon:** So, I only have a few scenes every season. But that doesn't stop the folks who work together every day from giving me invites. "You want to come out? We're doing this thing. We're hanging out here." You know, we get a chance to sort of talk and keep up. That's rare and beautiful, and I'll remember that for forever.

**Annie:** You're in Texas.

**Brandon:** Absolutely.

**Annie:** How far away is your real life from where we are on the set? Do you live close?

**Brandon:** Oh, yeah, I'm in Fort Worth right now.

**Annie:** Oh my gosh. So you're just like, "Hey, I gotta go to work today, and just driving down the street?"

**Brandon:** Basically. Yeah.

**Annie:** Well, how has it been having this set? I mean, we got to see it yesterday. It's unbelievably beautiful.

**Brandon:** It's amazing. It's amazing. In the first two seasons, if there was a plane that flew overhead, we had to sort of stop. Like kids playing kickball on the street and a car. Now with this incredible set, that happens much, much less. We get to operate unimpeded which is pretty incredible.

**Annie:** What do you like about Quintus in Season 3?

**Brandon:** I like that he's gonna... Well, he's been able to do whatever he wants for two seasons. There's nothing to stop him.

**Annie:** I know. Problematic, Brandon. That's what I'm saying.

**Brandon:** I saw your face change. "Yeah, I know."

**Annie:** I was there. I've watched it.

**Brandon:** In Season 3, there's some friction, some opposition. Season 3 is going to be big. There's new characters that fans are going to love. The journeys that the characters that we know and love already, they get furthered. There's going to be some darkness, which makes the hope burn a little bit brighter.

**Annie:** Who's your favorite other character? Is there like a disciple you love watching when you're watching it?

**Brandon:** It was hard for me not to fall in love with Matthew. And not just because we had really fun scenes together, but just because who can't relate to someone who's an outsider?

**Annie:** And doing his very best.

**Brandon:** Yeah, exactly.

**Annie:** How is the audience gonna feel different about Season 3?

**Brandon:** I think that the journey they're going to go on is going to have some lower lows.

**Annie:** Really?

**Brandon:** I do.

**Annie:** You have to be the one to tell us that. None of the other guys can tell us that. The bad guy's gotta say it's gonna get worse.

**Brandon:** Obviously. Yeah, obviously. It always has to get worse before it's better. The night is always darkest before dawn.

**Annie:** So I write books. When I'm working on a book, at the end I go like, "Whoa, I'm different just because of that." How do you think you're different just from the first three seasons?

**Brandon:** The process of working on this show has 100% changed me. It's been a transformative experience. And it's because of the openness and generosity of the people who work on the show and the people who support it. I feel like I will compare everything I work on for the rest of my career to this experience.

**Annie:** Wow. Now I'm unhappy with you as a person because now I'm not going to hit Quintus. Because I like you so much-

**Brandon:** I mean-

**Annie:** I know. That's what I need. I need to be like, "Out of here. Just do something really awful before we're done." Okay, the last question we always ask on the show.

**Brandon:** Okay.

**Annie:** Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you. What do you do for fun?

**Brandon:** Oh, so I was thinking today... Okay, all right-

**Annie:** Another deep question.

**Brandon:** Another deep question. So I had the chance to do some productive things today. Or...or-

**Annie:** I love an "or".

**Brandon:** ...I could go see a matinee of *Maverick*.

**Annie:** You must. Have you seen it?

**Brandon:** I haven't seen it yet. And I want to see in theaters. I know it's gonna leave theaters soon.

**Annie:** Listen, I'm not the boss of you, but let me please answer.

**Brandon:** Okay.

**Annie:** You should go see it.

**Brandon:** All right. All right. All right.

**Annie:** You're gonna get productive things done once the movie is out of theaters.

**Brandon:** Perfect.

**Annie:** I need you to know that we saw it in a 4D theater where it blows air on you and it moves you.

**Brandon:** That's really kind of punches you in-

**Annie:** Don't do it. Don't do it. It's ridiculous.

**Brandon:** Okay.

**Annie:** I think you'll like it. I mean, we've been friends for a while now, so I think you'll like it.

**Brandon:** We're besties now.

**Annie:** I support. This is my thought too. I support it. Going to the movies is high level. I mean, can you get other things productive done afterwards?

**Brandon:** It depends how blown my mind is.

**Annie:** Oh, my gosh. It depends on if I can recover-

**Brandon:** That's right.

**Annie:** ...from that much Tom Cruise and Miles Taylor. The mustaches are legit. That you should be excited about. Thanks for doing this.

**Brandon:** Annie, thanks for having me.

**Annie:** What a joy to have you on the show! I am very sorry that everyone's gonna stop hating you over this. You had such a good-

**Brandon:** No, continue hating me, everyone. Continuing hating me.

**Annie:** Please still know he's the bad guy, you guys. Thank you, Brandon.

**Brandon:** Thank you.

[00:59:10] <music>

**Annie:** I mean, it's hard, you guys, when we actually end up loving the bad guy, right? I mean, Quintus has a soft heart under there, we just haven't quite gotten to it. But man, I like Brandon Potter. What a good dude!

So we're gonna finish this episode with my real-life friend, Katherine Warnock, who is the head of Original Content at *The Chosen*. Katherine and I met a year or so ago at an event and immediately we're friends. I loved everything about her. And so getting to see her in the context of *The Chosen* and getting to learn from her, it was amazing.

And so at the end of all the other conversations I had, I sat down with Katherine and just kind of wanted to hear her thoughts after I talked with the writers and the president and some of the actors. So here is my conversation with my friend Katherine Warnock.

Katherine, welcome to That Sounds Fun.

**Katherine:** Thanks, Annie. Good to be here.

**Annie:** There'll be a future where you have your whole own episode.

**Katherine:** I would love that.

**Annie:** Yes, we need to have you on.

**Katherine:** I would love that.

**Annie:** For stars, I'd have to thank you for letting us be a part of this and letting us talk about Season 3. This has been the best experience being on the set. So thank you.

**Katherine:** No, thank you for coming. It's meant the world to us to have you here.

**Annie:** Has it been fun? I mean, we are one of the groups... y'all had a couple of different groups coming through. What is it like to have... Well, for me and a couple of these girls, you're like real-life friends, seeing your workplace, but also a lot of these people that you know through media actually being here. Is it weird?

**Katherine:** I think it's so encouraging because we feel like little kids in a candy shop every day with the job we get to do. And to have you guys come in and each be so impactful and giants in your own right that we all just look up to you and to have you guys go, "No, this is amazing. This is extraordinary. God is doing something unique here," it's so renewing and refreshing to not only our spirits but our souls, our awareness. And like, "Okay, God, listen, you've got us in the good fight. This is worth it. Thank you."

**Annie:** It's like when someone comes in in the middle of your cooking, and they're like, "That part tastes good." And you're like, "Okay, I can finish." Because the sauce is good, great, great, we'll keep going."

So I got to talk to a whole bunch of actors and a couple of writers. So will you talk a little bit about the culture y'all have built? Because a) everyone is very nice. And no matter what they believe about Jesus, no matter where their faith is, for our friends listening or the people who've been in the show, they love being here. How did you do that?

**Katherine:** It's truly is a top-down. I call Dallas and Darrell, the cofounders of *The Chosen*, Dallas created *The Chosen*, they're mad scientists. But they're profoundly teachable and they really genuinely love people. And so it's a top-down. It's intentionality of the culture. And then you have our leadership team to where we all are just a bunch of big kids who really love Jesus and happen to just be really good at our job. So it trickles down.

And then you've got cast that are leaving Ridley Scott films and Marvel films because they're like, "No culture compares to what's on that set." Like, "I don't believe in this Jesus guy but I want to be part of that."

**Annie:** Yeah.

**Katherine:** "And you guys are changing the world. So I'm here for it." So that's like, every day. It's amazing.

**Annie:** As we're watching Season 3 release, as we know, we have four through seven coming. What are some goals we can watch happen that y'all are excited to celebrate?

**Katherine:** I know we say all the time we want to reach a billion people with the authentic Jesus. And I'm going... I just keep adding, "our first billion."

**Annie:** You did yesterday. It's like, "Our first billion."

**Katherine:** I'm always like, "O, o, o." And Dallas always kind of like, "Go, Katherine." And I'm like, "No, I'm after it." I used to be a high school teacher. And I'm like, "No, Gen Z, younger, they have to know this authentic Jesus that meets them in the mess, that meets them in the confusion and meet them in the instability of these times." And I'm like, I'm so here for it.

**Annie:** Will you talk about the Gen Z project?

**Katherine:** Yes. So we brought together nine GenZers from around the country, two happen to be international. And we said, "Hey, we're a global phenomenon show. We can't tell you the name. But would you come and binge Season 1 with us in a day?"

**Annie:** They watched the whole season in a day?

**Katherine:** Whole season in a day.

**Annie:** Did you feed them?

**Katherine:** A lot.

**Annie:** What did you feed them? Like Pizza?

**Katherine:** A lot.

**Annie:** Oh, that's awesome.

**Katherine:** We brought in some amazing catering. And then they had popcorn, they had beef jerky-

**Annie:** The snack of *The Chosen*.

**Katherine:** The snack of *The Chosen*: beef jerky and apple together. It's amazing. It's dynamite. So yeah. They came together and we surprised them with, "Hey, by the way, you're gonna binge Jesus." Oh, and their reactions were priceless and profound.

And so they did not hold back. They understood the assignment. They unpacked their frustration with Christianity and Jesus because they're all different faith backgrounds. We had a Pagan, we had a Universalist. We had someone that grew up in an abusive Christian cult. We had someone that hated Christianity. And when you hear her story, you understand why. We had someone that was seeking Jesus and was like, "This is so crazy." We had a devout Catholic.

We had vastly differing worldviews come together and they unpacked their lives and they unpacked this tension with Jesus as they met Him throughout Season 1. And then we continue to follow them there. The impact was so profound that we kept having them back. We kept doing more and it became this massive documentary. It's beautiful.

**Annie:** Where can we watch it?

**Katherine:** Currently, it's on YouTube right now as one of our live streams. But we'll license it out and we're gonna put it on the app really soon.

**Annie:** Okay.

**Katherine:** Google "Gen Z *The Chosen*" on YouTube and a bunch of will come up.

**Annie:** We'll link to it as well.

**Katherine:** Super fun.

**Annie:** How has been part of *The Chosen* changed how you see Christmas?

**Katherine:** I think for the first time ever I think about the messiness of Jesus's birth. I think about it humanity. I always just thought about God you're bringing in the Wiseman, all the shepherd, all these people are here, you brought them together to witness it. It was magical. It was mystical. It was only what you could have done. I always thought about that.

I never thought about the messiness of Jesus being laid in a feeding trough as his crib or the manure that they would have had to shovel out of the way just so that she could birth. And having three children myself, I understand.

**Annie:** Yeah, yeah. A set of twins.

**Katherine:** A set of twins.



**Annie:** Two for the price of one.

**Katherine:** There we go. So that the humanity can all-

**Annie:** I mean, that first season where Jesus speaks Egyptian and he says, "Well, I grew up there," you're like, "Oh, yeah. Jesus grew up in Egypt." Like my brain totally-

**Katherine:** It's like you were the refugee. Okay.

**Annie:** Yes. There are moments like that that y'all have written and created in this show that brings such life to Scripture that we've always known but didn't realize that it meant He would speak another language because of it. It's amazing. How do you feel about Season 3?

**Katherine:** Annie, I am so excited. I think this season more. Annie, there are two storylines in particular that I think will wreck people and give them such new life. One is, what do you do when you're seething angry at God? How does He respond?

**Annie:** Wow.

**Katherine:** How long does He let us process that anger? How long is He patient for? How does that work when you're angry at God? Do we have permission to be angry with God? That's a storyline that I think the church needs to hear.

The second I can't give away. It'll be a spoiler. But one day when you know more of my background, 'm going to be a weeping mess.

**Annie:** Do you know what happens four through seven? I mean, the Bible does. But do you know? Like, have you seen the ark?

**Katherine:** Yeah. So we have some really fun things of just... The most fun thing that we publicly share is Season 6, not Season 7, is when we handle the trial, death and resurrection of Jesus. So then that makes us just kind of all go, "Well, what's in Season 7?"

**Annie:** What's happen in 7? Yeah. I have some hopes for what Season 7 could be.

**Katherine:** You and me both.

**Annie:** Yeah. The last question was asked is because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you. What do you do for fun?

**Katherine:** What do I do for fun? I eat a lot of French fries.

**Annie:** Yeah? French fries are your thing?

**Katherine:** Oh, they're my favorite food on the planet.

**Annie:** I do not know this. Are we talking shoestring? Are you talking potato wedge? What are we doing?

**Katherine:** All of the above.

**Annie:** McDonald's or Wendy's? Because that tells what kind of a person-

**Katherine:** McDonald's.

**Annie:** Every day McDonald's. Everyday.

**Katherine:** The trick is to say, "Without salt, please."

**Annie:** Why?

**Katherine:** So then they have to drop a fresh batch.

**Annie:** Oh.

**Katherine:** And then you put on your own salt.

**Annie:** Listen, you heard it here first, everyone.

**Katherine:** That's the trick.

**Annie:** That is the tip of all tips. And then you bring your own salt, BYOS, and then you make it as salty as you want but you've gotten fresh fries.

**Katherine:** Yeah.

**Annie:** Okay, well.

**Katherine:** That's a secret.

**Annie:** Katherine, you are brilliant in every way. Thank you for being part of the show. But I just want to say to your face thanks for *The Chosen*. What a gift this is to so many of us. I love seeing... I mean, when you get to a billion people, we're gonna celebrate with you.

**Katherine:** We're gonna have a big French fry party.

**Annie:** Girl. I will bring the salt. I will bring the salt.

**Katherine:** Thank you.

**Annie:** Thanks for doing this.

**Katherine:** Thank you.

[01:08:07] <music>

**Outro:** Oh, you guys, don't you love them? Can you believe we got to talk to all those people? I mean, no chill. You can go look at my Instagram and see all the pictures. You can see on my face. I had no chill all day.

If you have not watched *The Chosen* yet, you guys, you can catch the first two seasons on their app for free. You're going to love it. And especially now that we're friends with the team, do you feel like you're watching your friends? I know. Season 3 will be on the episode soon.

And it's not too late to get in on our Advent series. You have not missed too much. Jump in with us now. All the details are at [anniefdowns.com/advent](http://anniefdowns.com/advent).

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram at 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. Today what sounds fun to me, well, we are celebrating a little bit around here at the office because our *Chase the Fun* friends, our Chase the Funners, just finished day 100. So we're just having a little celebratory lunch because we all finished too.

So that's what sounds good to me is our lunch that is on the way. Y'all have a great day. We'll see you back here tomorrow as we finish out our Advent series week on hope. We'll see you all then.