

[00:00:00] <music>

Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you today.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Athletic Greens](#). Okay, y'all know Lillian, our chief energy officer, keeps me scheduled and gives me all the reminders so I don't forget anything. You know what she doesn't have to remind me about? Taking my AG1.

AG1 by Athletic Greens truly makes it super simple. You can incorporate all the nutrients you need into your day with just one scoop. AG1 was designed with ease in mind so you can live healthier and better without having to do a lot. And all you do is mix one scoop of powder in cold water once a day. I like shaking mine with a couple of cubes of frozen lemon juice for a little extra zing. It's delish. Every scoop is filled with 75 vitamins, minerals, and Whole Foods source quality ingredients that provide all of these major benefits.

Listen, to this. AG1 supports your gut and mood, boosts energy, helps your immune system, and even supports healthier-looking skin, hair, and nails. And if you're traveling a lot like I am this fall, their single-serving travel packs are so handy. Just throw a pack in your bag. And they make it so easy to bring along with you. You don't have to set a reminder to order it or worry about running out because AG1 is delivered like clockwork every month, so it's so convenient to make it a daily habit.

If you're looking for an easier way to take supplements, AG1 is given you a free one-year supply of vitamin D and five free travel packs with your first purchase. I live for those travel packs. So go to athleticgreens.com/soundsfun. That's athleticgreens.com/soundsfun. Y'all check it out.

Intro: Today on the show, I get to talk with my dear friend Bianca Olthoff. She is back for her fifth time on That Sounds Fun, so you can go back and hear more from her, starting on Episode 18—she was one of our early friends—all the way to hear her on TSF Tour Live Show in July of '22. She's an amazing Bible teacher, a church planter, a leader, host of We're Going There Podcast on the That Sounds Fun Network. And she is all-around one of the best friends.

Her new book, y'all, it is called *Grit Don't Quit: Developing Resilience and Faith When Giving Up Isn't an Option*. Have you been there? Me too. We need this book. Bianca is helping us identify how to cultivate perseverance and rebound from loss. She's practical and wise and we get loud and have a blast together. I cannot wait for y'all to hear all of the places this one weaves.

So here is my conversation with my friend Bianca Olthoff.

[00:02:36] <Music>

Annie: Bianca Olthoff, welcome back to That Sounds Fun.

Bianca: I'm so excited. I'm back but this is the first time that I've been live in the studio with you. First time.

Annie: Yeah, that's true.

Bianca: First time.

Annie: We've never done one-

Bianca: No.

Annie: ...because we've been live on stage. And we've done virtual for all the others?

Bianca: We have. And then you were on my podcast and both times it was via Zoom. This is our first time.

Annie: This is great.

Bianca: This is literally a decade in making.

Annie: Yes. I mean, literally a decade in making. Welcome to the pod.

Bianca: I'm so excited to be here.

Annie: Something that we're going to show on the internet and show you in a minute is we have a new celebration here. When someone is on the show for the fifth time, just like Saturday Night Live, we have a Hall of Fame called the Hall of Fun.

Bianca: Oh my God, I have chills.

Annie: This is your fifth show.

Bianca: Oh, my gosh.

Annie: You're the first person who's been in the studio since we created the plaque and we're going to add your name to the plaque. We're going to show the video. We're going to add your name to the plaque today.

Bianca: I am so excited. I'm not even kidding you.

Annie: I know. It's beautiful.

Bianca: I feel honored.

Annie: There's like 12 of y'all so far that have been on the show five times.

Bianca: Okay.

Annie: But you're the first one in person that we get to add to the plaque.

Bianca: Okay, what's wrong with me? Because in my head, I was like, I'm gonna make it to seven and it'll be perfection to completion.

Annie: Yeah, yeah. Come on. We're doing it. I don't know what we'll do [inaudible 00:03:49]. Ten years of the podcast people being on five times is very awesome.

Bianca: I love it.

Annie: Thank you for doing it.

Bianca: Oh my gosh, thanks for having me.

Annie: Welcome to Nash. Thanks for being here.

Bianca: I just want to let you know that I flew here just for you.

Annie: I know.

Bianca: Stop, stop, stop, stop. No, no. You say that as in like it's bad.

Annie: I feel bad.

Bianca: Stop. Actually, I didn't fly it out of Orange County Airport, I flew out of LEX and I was like, "I'm gonna do a direct flight to Nashville and I am going to be with Annie live. We've never had this opportunity. It's been so long since I've seen you in person.

Annie: Thank you. I know.

Bianca: It was a tour. I saw you on your tour out in California. But that was what? A year and a half.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Bianca: I haven't seen you in a year and a half. This is a long time coming.

Annie: The internet fools us because I'm like, "Well, I know everything that's going on and I know how you are." You know what the internet does. But man, I'm really glad to see you. Before we jump into Grid Don't Quit, will you tell me how church is going? Church planting and 2023 is the backside of the wave of 2020 in a lot of ways.

Annie: So how are y'all?

Bianca: You know, it's such a great question. I have to give a shout out to Pastor Craig Groeschel because he did a podcast on the four methods of momentum. I mean, the alliteration in that is so Pastor Craig and so wise.

Annie: Oh, he's so good.

Bianca: He is very much like a leadership guru in my life. But he's talking about momentum, one of those moments was we're spiritual momentum. And the funny thing is, Annie, the Lord... we found this dilapidated movie theater in 2020, and in faith, we were like, "We're going to lease it and-

Annie: Oh my gosh, we're talking about this in Grid Don't Quit because the place you were in was like-

Bianca: Oh, girl. Girl. We did not-

Annie: I have not heard the story.

Bianca: Because I was embarrassed. I don't want to tell anyone how ghetto-

Annie: Getting a body oil from the strippers on Saturday night before you had church on Sunday.

Bianca: People are gonna think I'm lying and it's actually documented. No. Let's also talk about the day that we showed up and we're missing a toilet. Not a toilet seat. We're missing a toilet. There's a hole in the place-

Annie: Because it was a club too and then on Sunday morning y'all was in?

Bianca: It was a special events location. I don't even know what we call it. But it was a special events location. And everything from like concerts to Mariachi Festivals to exotic dancing. Clearly that I noted in the book. So we did not know what we were gonna walk into. Side note, there was two kitchens located in our facility that were rented out. One was from an Indian restaurant, one was for a Chinese restaurant. So there was one Sunday during preaching that the Chinese kitchen goes up in flames and the alarm is going off and we're just like, "Just keep preaching."

Annie: No.

Bianca: "Keep preaching." Because we didn't know what was going on. And there's people with like carts running through the backstage area. Annie, I can't make this stuff up.

Annie: You're Like, "I need to find a movie theater ASAP."

Bianca: So Covid happened, we found this building, we renovated it. Because California, unlike Nashville, we were closed for a really long time in California. So we launched the church right before Covid. Not prophetic. Not prophetic at all. And then we were actually closed longer than we were open as a church.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Bianca: Yeah. So when we opened up, we were in a new city, in a new venue.

Annie: You gotta do a new city even?

Bianca: Oh yes.

Annie: Oh wow. Well, I mean, Orange County's big.

Bianca: It is. It is still.

Annie: Still.

Bianca: Yeah.

Annie: I didn't realize y'all moved cities.

Bianca: Annie, when I say it's been an adventure, it's been such an adventure. So to say the spiritual momentum that the Lord has graced us with in this season is beautiful, I'm grateful. As lead communicator, I think it's a different paradigm that a lot of people still aren't used to. And that's okay. There's so many-

Annie: Because you're a female?

Bianca: Yeah.

Annie: Okay. Interesting.

Bianca: Mm-Hmm. Mm-Hmm.

Annie: Okay.

Bianca: So I think that's a model that some people are still not comfortable with. And that's fine. I just want people to love the Lord, read His word, and have their lives transformed. And if I can be the person that serves you spiritual food, yes, and amen. I know I'm not everyone's cup of tea. That's okay. That is okay. But for the people that come and make this house a home, it's beautiful. And I'm excited.

Fingers crossed... I shouldn't say, fingers crossed. Lord willing, we had a prison campus that closed during Covid. Annie, it was like overnight. Literally overnight we lost that campus. We invested \$75,000 into technology and seats to make this campus really feel like our home, and the team that were there, and all the other staff. So overnight we lost that campus. We didn't get to tell.

I don't want to make this up. You know, preachers, we love to exaggerate numbers. But for us, we were very proud. There was roughly around 200 people that were coming every single week.

Annie: To the prison campus?

Bianca: To the prison campus.

Annie: Wow.

Bianca: That was, in a local prison, an empire. So all that to say what the Lord takes away in one season, He brings it back a new strength. I already feel myself getting emotional. I can't do this. Dang it. Lord willing, we will have two prison campuses by the end of the year.

Annie: No way.

Bianca: So I don't know if it's gonna be the end of the year. There's so much red tape that goes into this.

Annie: Yeah, of course.

Bianca: But we're believing by the end of the year we'll not have one campus back, but we'll have two. The location that we left, they brought us back and they want to give us a bigger room.

Annie: Oh my gosh.

Bianca: ...and new technology. And we're just like... it's beautiful.

Annie: Are they both women's prisons?

Bianca: One's men and one's women.

Annie: Okay. We do a lot with God Behind Bars at a women's prison here in Nashville through Cross Point. And it is so sweet. I mean, you tell a story about a woman who you saw serving in your church after or serving-

Bianca: No, she came to our church and we baptized her. We actually had a pop-up event in Austin, Texas. And so she-

Annie: That was it. That was it.

Bianca: ...she drove and we were able to baptize her. It was a beautiful, beautiful experience.

Annie: So sweet. We have women who after God Behind Bars, after their time in prison, they end up going to our church. And it feels like you're getting to do this really special thing. I mean, I get letters from people who are seeing my sermons.

Bianca: Yes, Yes, yes.

Annie: There's like a portal.

Bianca: There is.

Annie: And I thought, "Man, we're getting to serve this community of people who need hope." It's so sweet. I love that. Okay, so how many Sundays are you teaching a year?

Bianca: I would give a percentage.

Annie: Okay.

Bianca: I'm about 70 to 75.

Annie: And who else is teaching?

Bianca: We have a teaching team and we're just really passionate. I'm passionate about raising the next generation and using their voices. So what we'll see in a lot of church paradigms, and there's nothing wrong with it, but naturally they'll take the voice of the senior pastor. So it's almost like the youth pastor is like the micro version of the senior pastor.

What I really have been super passionate about is I have run... Now this is my fourth cohort of teaching and preaching workshop that I do. And it's over the course of six months.

Annie: Wow.

Bianca: And I select leaders that I just feel, Hey, there is a communication gift on your life. I don't know if it's for preaching and teaching, but come run with me. I mean, Annie, I'm hardcore. I give them assignments. There's peer review. I pick apart, I'm like, You didn't hit scripture until eight minutes in. If this is the Bible study, you have 25 minutes to give, you have already squandered a fourth of your time. Where's the word of God? I will literally go through-

Annie: Smart B.

Bianca: We talk about theology, we talk about the Holy Spirit, we talk about energetical understanding before doing like a topical passage. So yeah. So every person that communicates that is from what I'll consider our home team has a unique voice. But the voice of the house is very-

Annie: The voice of the house.

Bianca: Yes.

Annie: That's really good.

Bianca: So the voice of the house is we love making the Bible come alive, we are passionate about the word of God, so we are gonna use a lot of scripture. I actually have a rubric that I ask for people, like, I want you to take a look at your sermon and I need there to be... We're also very story-driven because it connects. That's how Jesus preached. I was like, "I need at least 50% of your content to be biblical explanation, proclamation or understanding." Then you can bring in story and

maybe personal revelation that the Lord showed you or you can use a historical reference or another pastor. But I really need that to be very heavy with like, this is our voice, not Bianca's voice. This is our voice.

Annie: So I heard one of the older players on the US Women's National team do an interview after they lost that last game. And she said, "One of the things we have always told ourselves is these are borrowed jerseys and our job is to wear this now and then give it to the next generation."

And I have thought about that in ministry since I heard her say that this weekend. I was like, "Oh, all I'm doing is wearing a borrowed jersey. And all that's all we want to do with the network is pass off jerseys. And all we're doing at Cross Point is, are we wearing borrowed jerseys in a way that is setting the next team up to win. What you're teaching me is some amazing ways to do that. Your Bible boyfriend is Paul.

Bianca: It is.

Annie: People have some, which LOL, because you and I have taught for-

Bianca: We have.

Annie: ...an actual decade about Peter and Paul.

Bianca: Yes.

Annie: Talk about being the lead communicator-

Bianca: Hello

Annie: ...the pastor of your church-

Bianca: Hello. Hello.

Annie: ...and your bible boyfriend is the one that everybody uses to say women shouldn't teach men.

Bianca: This is how I have kind of processed it. Before we even started the church, people had... it was a bigger conversation. Paul specifically speaks about women teaching men. So the pastoring component is something completely on top of that. But people have had issues with me communicating the word of God since I started when I was 23. And for a long time, I really wrestled through and thought I was in sin.

Annie: Yeah, that's what I was about to ask you. Did you ever feel like we're wrong?

Bianca: Yeah. I did. I did. I'm gonna say what I walked through in experience and then I'll say where I land now. But in that experience, I remember very vividly my dad had invited... I worked for an anti-human trafficking organization called A21. And on one mission Sunday, my dad had invited me to come in and speak about A21. Well-

Annie: At his church?

Bianca: At His church. Historically, conservative women are not pastors, women are not in executive leadership, and women don't preach to men. So he brought me in, but it was like on Mission Sunday. So you can't speak about injustice without a framework of a biblical understanding. So I opened up and I started preaching out of Isaiah and I had men stand up, turn their backs, and walk out.

Annie: And probably men you've known because-

Bianca: My whole life.

Annie: ...it's your dad's church.

Bianca: My whole life.

Annie: Dude.

Bianca: My whole life. So after that, it was really a mind-bender for me.

Annie: I would've sobbed. I would've actually sobbed.

Bianca: Oh, I did. I did. Yeah. And I went to my dad's office and I'm like, "Am I wrong?"

Annie: Right.

Bianca: And then I felt like I brought shame. So in Hispanic culture, you never want to bring shame to your family. So I'm thinking I brought shame to my dad, shame to the church, shame to God. And as I was processing it afterwards and journaling and praying, I realized one day I'm gonna have to meet my maker and He's gonna ask me what I did with His son. And I really had to wrestle with saying, I would rather err on the side of telling people about Jesus than not. So if I'm wrong, I'm gonna be so wrong, I'm gonna be so wrong but so many people are gonna hear the gospel of God.

Annie: Wow.

Bianca: So that's what kind of have released me. Again, I'm not everyone's cup of tea. That's totally fine. Some people like Rocky Road ice cream. Some people like bubblegum. I think bubblegum ice cream is disgusting. But everyone likes a certain flavor. Right?

Annie: That's right.

Bianca: So I might not be everyone's flavor. That's okay. Now, as lead communicator at our church and sitting in a role of church planter and pastor for the Father's House in Orange County, it's been... for me, I've read a couple books. Pastor Brady wrote a book on *Let Her Lead*. Kris Vallotton wrote a book called *Let Her Reign*.

One of the Chris' insights, which I thought was really fascinating, was when Paul wrote to a Greek church, a Roman church, and a Jewish church, how he addressed women were all very differently. He's talking about cultural context. So if you take a look at, in light of scripture, how much that Paul affirmed women, it doesn't really line up that Paul would be misogynistic. And we have to believe that Paul was under the auspice and authority of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and there's no greater liberator to women than Jesus.

Paul was just bringing structure in. So that's how I understand it. If I get to heaven and Paul's like, "Oy vey, Bianca, what did you do? Why did you do this?"

Annie: I hope he does. He's gonna say that to me for eight reasons. I am sure of it.

Bianca: But then I'd rather say, you know, when I meet him, like, "Thank you. And even if you don't agree with what I did, I'm really proud of the life that I lived telling people about Jesus." And for the people that are watching this online, I keep on tapping my eye. I'm not crying. I'm not crying. I don't know what's wrong, but my eye won't stop watering.

Annie: Why is it? Is it since you've been here?

Bianca: I don't know. You know what it is? It's Nashville.

Annie: I know.

Bianca: And you're ragweed and the air. My sinus is a little crazy.

Annie: Tell her story by Nijay Gupta. Have you read that one yet?

Bianca: Oh My gosh. It's on my list to read. Somebody recommended it to me.

Annie: Dude.

Bianca: Okay.

Annie: He does such a beautiful job of going, Okay, here's what Paul said one time. Here's what Paul modeled with his life. So you have to look at the whole thing and look at that. He says a thing at the end that... I didn't cry the whole time I read the book. I just was very learning. And he's coming on the podcast and I want him on, so I need to read it. Maybe the first sentence of the last chapter, he says, "What men say that women can't do the Bible says they already did."

Bianca: That is so good, Annie.

Annie: What men say women can't do the Bible says they already did.

Bianca: They already did. Come on. You know who has really good research coming out?

Annie: It's also not just men who are saying women can't do it. There are women who are saying women can't do it.

Bianca: Oh, honey.

Annie: So this isn't us versus them. This is, there is a group of Christians who say, The Bible says this, therefore women can't teach men. And there are other Christians who say, where you and I would be is the bigger picture says women have every gift that the Bible offers, as do men. And the healthiest families are led by men and women leading the children toward a good adulthood. And I just want to be one of the mothers.

Bianca: And the church says hallelujah. Yes, Annie.

Annie: I mean, I'm like, we would never tell mothers not to mother. Don't tell mothers not to mother, right?

Bianca: Mm-Hmm.

Annie: I don't know. I don't know. I actually do know.

Bianca: That's good.

Annie: I actually do know.

Bianca: That's good, Annie.

Annie: We wouldn't say that. Even if we're wrong, I love your... like the thing I want to say to the Lord is, I went too hard. The only thing He's gonna accuse me of when we get there-

Bianca: Doing the most.

Annie: Doing too much.

Bianca: I did the most. Bianca, you did the most. And I say, "Thank you. Thank you. Thank you."

Annie: He's like, "You're gonna mow the grass for about 300 years because it was too much but you're in, and I appreciate it." I've never thought of it like that. And that is such a helpful... If you're gonna go too hard for the gospel-

Bianca: Let me be wrong that way.

Annie: Let me be wrong that way. Don't let me be wrong because I-

Bianca: I should have said something and I didn't. And now someone has led a life and lived a life of sin because they didn't know, they didn't know the truth of the gospel. So let me get it wrong for the glory of God.

Annie: Right. Let me get it wrong for the glory of God. Oh, I love that.

[00:18:46] <Music>

Sponsor: Hey friends! Just interrupting this conversation to share about one of our amazing partners, [Allie + Bess](#). I've been loving my new pieces from Allie + Bess. Their famous stretch bracelets and beaded necklaces come in the most beautiful colors and make it super easy to wear jewelry every day. Are y'all as ready for football season as I am? I am ready. I think it starts this weekend, y'all. It does. It starts this weekend.

And Allie + Bess has got our accessories ready, y'all, with the launch of their bestselling game day collection. They designed bracelet and necklace stacks for over 50 teen color combinations, so you can represent the colors you love, red and black over here you know it, your local elementary and high school colors, your favorite colors, your pro team. Whoever you love to cheer on, they've got them all. I've got the whole Athens collection, that red and black, Go Dawgs. And I'm so excited to wear these pieces all season long.

Their brand new tailgate stacks in the collection are even sweatproof and waterproof so you can tailgate in them all day long. The Athens tailgate stack of bracelets, y'all, with some dainty and some chunkier styles, will take any game day outfit up a notch.

If you're new to Allie + Bess, let me tell you, they have the sweetest story. They met working in the medical field. And in 2019, these two best friends started making bracelets together just as a hobby. You know, how we feel about hobbies around here. They didn't plan for it to become a business, but God had other plans.

Their bracelets caught the eye of friends, family, and the rest of the internet on an accidental Instagram post that went super viral. And now four years later, they've created an inspiring community employing local refugees as the artisans who make their pieces.

The Allie + Bess team has been longtime listeners of the pod—we love y'all too—so they wanted to do something super special for all of us. Now they are offering you friends in their friend group 30% off your order with the code ANNIE30. So you can shop all of their pieces as well as an exclusive collection just for us at shopalliebess.com/tsf.

That link and all the links you could ever hope for are conveniently in the show notes below. Or you can find them every Friday in our AFD Week in Review. So make sure you check those out.

Sponsor: And another amazing partner I get to tell you about, [Simply Modern](#). Now, I haven't been hanging out on social media too much lately, but I am here for back-to-school pics and posts of my MiniBFFs. What a fun time of year! Oh my gosh. My old school teacher Heart loves this time of year, especially getting outfitted with all the supplies you need for the school year. You may have seen Simple Modern's 40 Ounce Trek Tumbler with the Handle, or some of their other awesome products at Target, Walmart, or Amazon. They are the perfect brand for getting back into your routine this fall.

Simple Modern is not only tumblers either. They've got backpacks and drinkware and lunch bags, and so many fun colors and designs. And they partner with Disney, Marvel, and more. Maybe the best part is that they give 10% of their profits to organizations and nonprofits that are committed to causes like solving the water crisis and fighting human trafficking and ending homelessness. I love that.

I also love when water bottles keep my water cold. And that Simple Modern Tumbler keeps its promise,. It's a game changer, especially when it is as hot as it has

been outside. So go to simplemodern.com/thatsoundsfun. And by sharing your email, you'll get a unique discount code just for you. And you can bundle and save for back to school. This should be your go-to brand for your family.

Okay, now back to our conversation with Bianca Olthoff.

[00:22:07] <Music>

Annie: Okay, *Grit Don't Quit*. What book is this? Four?

Bianca: Four.

Annie: Well done.

Bianca: Thank you, friend.

Annie: You're an amazing writer.

Bianca: Thank you.

Annie: As I was reading this, there's a couple of spots. I mean, I literally wrote on my notes.

Bianca: I love it.

Annie: Such a good writer.

Bianca: Oh.

Annie: I mean, such a good writer. You're such a good writer. It makes it very easy to read. Okay-

Bianca: Hold on. I'm really flattered right now. I need to tell you that means a lot coming from you.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Bianca: I think I've really struggled in like being okay with my voice, my written voice, and my spoken voice, and I fought so hard for it. So thank you. From one writer to another, that means a lot. Thank you.

- Annie:** You're welcome. Okay, this whole book is about not giving up. It's about having grit. One of my questions... Let me go to page 11 so I can ask you my exact question.
- Bianca:** For those that are listening, Annie has literally put like Post-It notes all across the book. This makes me feel so loved because Post-it notes are my love language.
- Annie:** How are resilience and grit different for Christians? That is interesting.
- Bianca:** Oh my gosh, I love this. So as I've been talking about this and thinking about this, I wish I would've added this. So now all your podcast sisters are gonna get like the bonus on the floor-
- Annie:** That's right.
- Bianca:** ...on the floor content. So a resilience and grit are the world's definition of perseverance and endurance. And so-
- Annie:** Because my Peloton instructors, who I don't know where they are in their faith, they talk about resilience and grit all the time.
- Bianca:** All the time.
- Annie:** So this isn't a Christian concept.
- Bianca:** No, no, no, no, no. So there's been so much great research about defining what grit is and who has grit. But what I thought was really missing was the narrative of like, yeah, but how do you get it? And we, in our culture, we have ascribed, oh, that person's gritty. And it could be socioeconomic. Or that person's gritty. And it could be business.
- It's almost as if resilience has been allocated to people of poverty. And I'm like, no, no, no. It's poverty or privilege.
- Annie:** Interesting.
- Bianca:** Poverty or privilege. Like, you will see gritty and resilient people. But we also see that in the scope of scripture.
- Annie:** Poverty of any kind does require more from you, right?
- Bianca:** Yes.

Annie: Poverty of spirit, poverty of friendship, poverty of money. Doesn't that require more...? Because if I can't get from here to the airport, I'll either walk in or I'm paying for an Uber. And one's gonna cost me more and grow more grit in me.

Bianca: Mm-Hmm.

Annie: Okay.

Bianca: Yes. So as a Christian, what makes perseverance and endurance different? What makes resilience and grit different? Well, the world is telling us that it's in our strength and the most beautiful thing. For followers of Jesus, and I know that everyone who listens to this podcast is not a believer, and that's totally fine. But listen, this is one amazing benefit. Like there's a lot of benefits to-

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Bianca: ...to being a believer in Jesus. But one of the greatest benefits that we have is an understanding that this is not in our strength. Annie, at lunch we're gonna talk about all the things that are really going on in my life and my world. And people look at me and they're like, How are you doing this? And I'm like, it is because the spirit of God has gone before me when Paul writes, oh, here I'm talking about my Bible boyfriend again.

Annie: There you go.

Bianca: All right. All right. Listen, Paul says, when he speaks about a peace that passes all understanding... Annie, I've preached out passage before, but I've never known that. I'm telling you, in this season of my life, I have a peace that passes all understanding.

Annie: Wow.

Bianca: That is the outworking, the Holy Spirit. So no matter what we are dealing with in our lives... I'm not trying to dismiss pain, I'm not gonna talk about like loss doesn't matter. No, no, no. I'm saying in spite of that, we have an advocate, we have a comforter. We have one that intercedes for us at the throne of Jesus. For those that feel like I'm not naturally resilient, I'm not naturally gritty, I'm not a gritty gangster, I'm not somebody of perseverance, you and yourself may not be, but unlock the gift that God has given us.

Paul says in Romans 10 that the same... I'm speaking about Paul again.

Annie: I know. You love him.

- Bianca:** The same spirit that resurrected Jesus from the grave lives in you. If that is true, if that is real, if we really believe the words of Paul, no matter what is in our lives, though it might be painful, might feel like loss, might make us feel blue, we have a strength that the world does not understand. And I want people to know you don't have to do it in your own strength. You can give it to the Lord literally and He will give you strength.
- Annie:** Tell me why this is the theme that the Holy Spirit is saying to women right now? You, Hosanna... I mean, there are the-
- Bianca:** There's something in the water.
- Annie:** The joy of my seat is I read everybody's books and I hear everybody's albums. So I see themes because I read all the books and I go, these women didn't have a meeting and go, "You know what we need to talk about in the fall of '23, we need women to be resilient. That hasn't happened before. Why is that happening?"
- Bianca:** You know, I'm gonna be cautious with my words, but I'll just say it. I think that there's a... we can call them prophets maybe.
- Annie:** Okay.
- Bianca:** It's people who put their ears to the ground and what's the rumbling underneath. So I would say that Hosanna is one of those people. I think that there's some music that's coming out as well. But for me to take a look at the cultural landscape for this cultural moment, what am I seeing? And what are some things and ways that I can provide practical handles for people to love the Lord and live a life of fullness?
- So, Hosanna is doing this with spiritual disciplines and I'm doing this with like some open a candle whoop bars and saying, no, no, no, you're stronger than you think. You're stronger than you think. This is how we get there. So I had a conversation with a woman, much like this, across from a table at a coffee shop. And she was going through a divorce and she said, "But I'm not like you." Because I was encouraging her. And she's like, "But I'm not like you."
- Bianca:** I didn't know what that meant. She said, "Well, you know, you had to be resilient. You were born in East Los Angeles and your family didn't have money, and you're the daughter of immigrants." And I'm like, "Dude, when did it become about my personal history? The same power that resurrected Jesus from the grave is in me and it's in you. So really walking her through this understanding. She was at a very dark place and hers was contemplating her life through suicide."

Annie: Wow.

Bianca: I think that coming out of Covid, I started to... and listening to people, the cries of the people, Moses said the Lord told him, "I have heard the cries of my people." The cries of the people became Moses's calling. And I'm listening to the cries of the people and that has become my calling.

Annie: Wow.

Bianca: I've got to put language around people and just... I can't sit across every coffee table with everyone, but I can give you a book that is practical, biblical, and scientific to help you really get a grip on like, how do I not quit when all I want to do is throw in the towel?

Annie: I think because I'm not writing a trade book like this right now, I'm not listening like that. And the other thing that we cannot do is write a book that comes out when it comes out knowing what we needed when it comes.

Bianca: Hello.

Annie: You wrote this book a year and a half ago.

Bianca: A year ago. Yes. Yes. So there is no world because dear, everybody listening, there's a process. You write the book and you turn it in and it gets edited. Then you do another round and then they edit it again.

Bianca: It's the longest process.

Annie: It's the best conversation to have with new authors. Because they're like, I want to write a book. And I'm like, If you get a deal, dear, everyone, if you get a deal in August of '23, that book is coming out-

Bianca: In '25.

Annie: ...in spring of '25. So if you want it out by Christmas-

Bianca: Self-publish.

Annie: You better self-publish.

Bianca: Thank you, girl. We should have a whole podcast about that.

Annie: That's it. Because people are like, I've gotta tell my story. And I'm like, it'll be available in 2025. Anyway, so because of that, that isn't what I'm paying attention to. I'm paying attention to some other rumblings. I just can't sort yet, maybe I don't want to sort why we need perseverance so much right now. What is about to happen with God and the planet that He is saying to you, to Brandy Wilson with *Better Than Okay*, to Sissy Goff with *a Worry-Free Parent*. I mean, He is saying y'all... Dr. Russell Moore. I mean, all these books are saying, y'all have got to get into scripture, you've got to settle down and you've got to hold on.

Bianca: I'm not gonna say, "Hey, what is coming? I'm saying, what is here? With a tap, a touch, a swipe, we can get something at our doorstep. We can get groceries at our doorstep. We can get Amazon at our doorstep. We can get a hookup at our doorstep.

Annie: That's it.

Bianca: Everything is so instant-

Annie: I Love when you told people not to make out, by the way. We're gonna talk about it. I died laughing when you were like, "You know what ain't gonna make us better by making out?" I was like, well...

Bianca: And I also told them myself because I made all those decisions. All those mistakes that I said, Hey, yo, don't do, I've done. So, it's coming from a posture, not a judgment, but of like stupidity.

Annie: Loved it.

Bianca: But-

Annie: We can get all that at our door is what you're saying.

Bianca: Yes. We can get all that now. So then we've lost the art of waiting. We've lost the gift that it is to persevere because I mean... Another Pauline reference, but it is the process that leads us to perseverance. And Paul says that that's a gift. That's a gift. So I think that we've lost the art of sticking in a church when someone hurts your feelings, sticking in a marriage when you're tired of smelling them, sticking it out in parenting when you just want to beat your child the next week, sticking in a friendship that you've had for a number of years. But you know what? Things have changed. People have changed. But instead of having hard conversations, we just write them off or ghost them, or give up. No, no. We are losing out a lot of richness because we're just giving up. We don't want to do the hard.

Annie: I need you to know I'm doing that right now. And some girls at dinner last night did the kindest thing to me and just like stuck it to me. And they said, number one, this looks like high school. Yeah

Bianca: Whoa.

Annie: I know. And they said, and number two, you didn't set a boundary. You made a boundary and you didn't share it.

Bianca: Wait, wait, wait. To clarify, you made a boundary in your head, but you didn't clarify it.

Annie: I said, "I'm done here. I'm not in this friendship anymore. This isn't working for me."

Bianca: Got it. Got it.

Annie: And I walked. And they were like, "Well, part of the reason this is looking the way it's looking, the immaturity of it is that you set a boundary you didn't communicate. When we were done eating, I said, "I'd like to thank you both for saying really hard stuff to... that is hard to say to a friend. And they said two pretty challenging things.

Bianca: Wow.

Annie: But it's because I walked instead of having a hard conversation to see if there is perseverance worth marking on the other side.

Bianca: You want to know what's so beautiful about this? I mean, I don't know where we're going with this podcast, but I think-

Annie: Me neither. I'm having a great time.

Bianca: Me too. I'm having the best time. One of the things when you write a book on quitting, it's like I have to talk about like, well, when do you quit? Because-

Annie: Oh, I wrote that. How do we know when the door's closed?

Bianca: Look, you're such a good interviewer.

Annie: Page 58 to 60 you give us a chart.

Bianca: Girl, I love a mere good chart. Okay. I love mere chart. This is the only book that I've done in appendix because it was things that I wanted to include. Because I told

my editor, I was like, Dude, I need to make sure that people aren't saying I'm gonna stay in a dysfunctional marriage, I'm gonna stay in a dysfunctional job, or stay in a dysfunctional friendship. That's not what I'm advocating.

I'm just saying, what's the process that we go through to see what alters and changes in our life? So I have a disclaimer right after chapter four, and it's a Kenny Rogers line. "You gotta know when to hold on and know when one to hold them."

Annie: Know when to hold on and hold them. Yes.

Bianca: So I want to make sure that like, hey, if there is infidelity, if there is abuse, if there's these things, please. I'm not saying that we stay through that. And then also at the end of the book, I help people walk through questions to ask before we quit. And that could be leaving a church, that could be leaving a friendship. That could be, I hate to say this, but leaving a marriage. Because it doesn't matter the scope of this cultural moment. People are gonna make the decisions that they're gonna make. Let's try to help people make the best decisions that they can make.

You had mentioned the chart. I do think that there are wise ways that we could... let's workshop this situation with some friends. I don't write this in the book, but I am a firm and ardent believer that relationship and community is wildly important. We have to do a good job at classifying. So I start off with like casual friends, then there's close friends, and then there's core friends.

Annie: Oh, that's good.

Bianca: Now casual friend is somebody that you might see at the gym, or maybe your kids are on the same team. You might go on a picnic one day or follow each other on social media.

Annie: You get coffee once and say, "We'll do it again," and then don't.

Bianca: Yes. Yes. And there's no bad blood, there's no beef. It's fine.

Annie: It's just not enough time. It's marginal.

Bianca: Exactly. And the expectations for each other are very much the same. Where it gets sticky is a close friend. So a close friend is someone that you do actually are in community with. Maybe it's like a small group at your church, or you serve on a ministry together. Maybe you've gone on a couple mission trips. Maybe you might have even gone on vacation once or twice, or your kids hang out. There's definitely more touch points within this.

Then there's core friends, scientifically speaking, we only have capacity for three to five people in this core group of friends. What happens is that people move from core to close. And if we aren't having conversations, it could lead to a cluster. So what happened is that you gave somebody access that didn't give you the same level of access or the same level of attention or fill in the gap. I don't know what happened. I'm not trying to guess. But there was something in your life that you said, "I'm giving more than I'm receiving." And that's okay, but I'm drawing a boundary. What didn't happen?

Annie: An uncommunicated boundary.

Bianca: Yes. So let's add a little bible, add a little bit of communication. Matthew 18:15 says, "If your brother's offended, you go and talk to them about it. What does that require? Maturity. Why are people quitting? We want to be immature. True.

Annie: That's why they said, "You're acting like you're in high school is because you're lacking maturity."

Bianca: And you have some really, really good friends.

Annie: I have thought about it for 12 hours. Or I've been like, "They are so right." The reason this, and... They are so right. You're right. And biblically, I should. Well, I don't like to should people around here. But biblically my move... it is not about how long this friendship keeps going. It is if someone has offended you, go to them. Go to them.

Bianca: Yeah. And you know what can really be amazing, which we are not talking about enough, is that let's say you guys were core friends, you have the conversation, like realistically, the level of reciprocity doesn't feel balanced and I just wanted to be honest with you. What you can discover is a really good close friend or a really good casual friend.

Once those boundaries are set, it says like, Oh, I know where you land in my totem pole of friends. It's the same.

Annie: You and I have a mutual friend where we had that conversation.

Bianca: Wow.

Annie: Where I said, You have me here. I can't meet the expectation and so I'm disappointing you a lot. And she said, Oh, and you have me here, and I feel like I'm not being cared for. And I was like, Let's adjust.

Bianca: Wow.

Annie: It was a beautiful conversation. It was so helpful.

Bianca: And you guys are good now?

Annie: Yeah. Yeah. Because we know exactly where we fit. So I'm not letting her down and she's not letting me down. So it does not look the way it looked, but it is healthy for both of us. So when we see each other, we know exactly where we fit.

Bianca: I love that.

Annie: So glad to see you.

Bianca: So great.

Annie: That is so helpful. That was my top question as I was reading this, because perseverance requires us to keep going when we want to quit. We aren't meant to keep going in everything forever. And that is hard to sort out because did God close this door to this workout class 45 minutes in, even though it goes for an hour? I feel like the Lord told me to get in my car. But he didn't. So how do you suss out the Lord's voice versus our own desires, I'll use the word our own flesh, how do you suss out that?

Bianca: So I'm gonna make this a little biblical and then a little bit practical. I wrote a chapter on what I refer to as a holy hunch. You know, discerning the voice of God feels very overwhelming and intimidating to people. So, again, just wanted to make it very practical. What are ways that we can hear from God? Of course, literally through the literature of His word. God's word is active and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing bone and marrow.

I'm an advocate, God speaks through His word. But God speaks corporately, which is why it's important we go to church. God speaks communally, which is why we need small groups or good friends. But God speaks personally. So I walk people through how do you hear God personally.

I want to push people to really seek out the voice of God because I do believe that the Lord is honest when He says, those who call upon me, I will answer. I want to take Him for His word. So I'm gonna push that. So that's the biblical side.

But then the practical side of discerning, like, Hey, when is it time to leave? This is in the appendix. It's not in the book. Because it felt weird to talk about when to quit when I wrote a book about dating.

Annie: I loved it.

Bianca: But in the appendix, I talk about like, here's a couple questions. Number one, is it me? So sometimes we think that our time at this job is done or our time in this dating relationship is done, or our marriage or fill in the gap. But the question is, is it the situation or is it me? Am I discontent? Is there something in me that I will never be satiated or satisfied? So that's a super important question.

And sometimes we might need some help getting a counselor or a therapist or a good trusted friend or a mentor to help walk through what are some spots that we don't see in our life.

Annie: When I'm healthy, I don't quit unless someone else agrees with me.

Bianca: Yes. That's so good. That's wisdom. That's wisdom. That's wisdom.

Annie: I'm with you. Often they're like, no, you just want to quit because you're tired.

Bianca: Yes. Yes. Another great question to ask is being able to identify what exactly is frustrating me. What exactly is frustrating me? My counselor always asks like, what's the issue behind the issue?

Annie: Oh, right. Mine is always like, "I don't care what you're doing. I want to know why you're doing it."

Bianca: Yes. Yes. Exactly. So we can't just feel this nebulous thing like, Oh, I'm tired, I want to quit. Well, what is it about this situation that's making you tired? Identify the problem, then ask, is this me? And then this is the third question I think is wildly important: Can I fix this? Because you might be the answer to your problem. You might be the solution to the question. That puts onus on us. That puts responsibility on us. That is maturity. And again, we're talking about maturity not being a thing that we really want right now.

Annie: Right.

Bianca: Question number four is-

Annie: Which I just want everybody to confess to themselves. We don't always want maturity.

Bianca: No.

Annie: It's not easier.

Bianca: No.

Annie: And it is totally okay to go, "Oh, you know, the reason I'm doing it like this, I don't want to be mature about this. I want to be immature about this. This was easier when I was 10."

Bianca: Exactly. Exactly.

Annie: Tell yourself the truth.

Bianca: My counselor gave me this question. This is not a question in the book. This is just another free and fuzzy for the podcast listeners. But my counselor had said, is this easy or is this right?

Annie: Oh, right.

Bianca: So I'm like, I have to choose the right. I have to CTR this. I have to choose the right on this one because we're prone for easy. Question number four is, is this the best decision for my future?

Annie: Wow.

Bianca: This is the one people don't want to answer.

Annie: No.

Bianca: Is this the best decision for my future?

Annie: No.

Bianca: Because then that forces us to weigh, like, wait a minute, should I stay?

Annie: Yeah. Because walking outta that class at 45 minutes will feel better but that's not gonna fix me in the future.

Bianca: And then, again, this is question number five. This was a hard one. I actually learned this. Theologically, I was raised in a very conservative church with a conservative family. So this language was very foreign to me, but my gosh, it has been amazing, eye-opening.

I was at a job and I was so overwhelmed, and I just felt like clearly this is not of the Lord because it shouldn't be this hard. But my gauge and metrics for quitting was, It shouldn't be this hard. I am a true Enneagram seven.

Annie: Same.

Bianca: Moment of conflict, I'm like, It's a sign from God, you know?

Annie: Yeah. Yeah. And she looked at me and she looked up from her laptop and she said-

Annie: Your boss?

Bianca: No, it was a co-worker.

Annie: Oh, a co-worker.

Bianca: A co-worker who's I think like 10 years younger than me.

Annie: Wow.

Bianca: She looked at me very seriously and she said, "Are you released?" And I was like, "MM, I don't know what that means." And I was like, "I'm so sorry, like what do you mean?" And she went to talk about this concept that's not stated in the Bible, but we do see this like hand over Jacob as he wrestles with the Lord. And then the hand comes off, and when the hand comes off, then he can move forward. So she explained this to me. It's just like if you don't feel like the hand of the Lord is off of you to move forward, then stay and wrestle.

Annie: Wow.

Bianca: So I stayed in this job another two years until I was released.

Annie: Geez.

Bianca: I have stayed in churches, I have stayed in friendships because I didn't feel like I was released. And this is gonna require us hearing the Holy Spirit. This is gonna require us being rooted in the word of God. Because you could answer all those four questions and feel justified with a green light. But if you are not released, I believe in free will. I believe that we can make decisions. And I believe that people are making decisions that are easy, but not right. Those are two vetting process. Hearing God, and then also asking ourselves these five critical questions.

Annie: And community. I have to have community to help me make those decisions. I mean, I wrote a whole book, *Looking for Lovely* about quitting. I mean, my community has to tell me, you can quit now or, you've got to keep going. Like they did last night. You cannot walk away from this like this. You can walk away from this, you cannot walk away like this. I find that I am most deceptive to myself about perseverance. It's probably the thing that I'm most deceptive to myself about, about what I should quit and what I should persevere. Is that weird?

Bianca: No. It's not at all. It's honest. You know what that shows? Maturity.

Annie: Oh. What? Good. I need a few areas.

Bianca: No, no, no. Well, ownership of it makes you realize it. Like a friend of mine had a skin disorder that it started small and it just kept on growing. But she saw the same thing all the time. And it wasn't until someone said, "Hey, that's not normal." And then once she saw it, then she started treating it. So you see it, guess what? Now you treat it.

Annie: That's it. That's it.

[00:43:05] <Music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation one more time to share about another amazing partner, [Ritual](#). Okay. So I find this fascinating. Did you know that you can swallow skincare? If your bathroom countertops look anything like mine, it is covered with skincare options and solutions. We're not obsessed, right? We're just passionate and thoughtful.

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And now back to finish up our conversation with Bianca.

[00:46:15] <Music>

Annie: In the book, you tell the story of when Paul was stuck in Malta and was waiting in Malta. We all know that I don't spend a ton of time researching Paul, but I have not paid attention to this part. And this is where you tell people not to make out, which I thought was such a trick. I mean, one of the reasons you've have to pastor your whole life is you're so good at acronyms and lists and-

Bianca: Oh, thank you.

Annie: So you're like, here's what you do when you're waiting. You work out, you get out, you clean out, you go out, you sting out.

Bianca: You have to make it memorable because people are gonna come to church and then they're gonna leave and they're gonna forget it.

Annie: That's right.

Bianca: So I want to make it like, Get it.

Annie: And then you say, but here's what you don't do. Freak out, make out, checkout, or takeout. So will you talk about where does our body fit in perseverance? Why working out? Why does that...?

Bianca: Ooh, Girl, we're gonna get sciencey. We are gonna get sciencey.

Annie: Please do.

Bianca: Sciencey is not a word. So everyone who thought maybe I was smart, just proved that I was home-schooled.

Annie: You're smart. You're smart.

Bianca: First of all, anyone who knows me, they're gonna say, "Well, yeah, Bianca, you like to work out. But what they don't understand is I like to work out because of how I feel in my... not just in my body, what I feel in my brain. What we need to let people know or remind people of is that there is a flushing out of toxins and a release of chemicals within our body that help us think more clearly. And to be honest with you, Annie, if I'm feeling stuck or I feel like I can't hear God, I have to work out.

Annie: Oh my gosh. If I go on a walk, He's out there somehow.

Bianca: Let's talk about both of those. Because what to do in the waiting, I put what to do in the waiting, go out. You have to be in nature. When the Psalmist says that the creation speaks of who God is. When there is eco-theology, that's a whole other topic for another day, but how we sense God in the environment.

Annie: Ecotheology?

Bianca: Girl, can I tell you?

Annie: I'm gonna Google that so hard.

Bianca: Okay. I'm gonna tell myself right now. I had this BMW car and it was like a little sports car.

Annie: I remember.

Bianca: I freaking loved it and I traded it in to get an electric car because I read a book on ecotheology and it wrecked me. I am the girl that goes through trash. I was at a party and I was so appalled because there was two trash cans, one's clearly trash, one's recycling. I went through the recycling and pulled out all the trash because it's messed with me. We as believers, we need to be at that... This is another podcast for another day.

Annie: Oh man, we got a series.

Annie: Will you do an eco-theology series on your show?

Bianca: Oh my gosh, I have chills. Maybe that's a sign. Holy Spirit hunch. I should do it.

Annie: I would love. So now I am driving an electric car. I recycle. It is part of my responsibility to love the Lord.

Annie: Wow.

Bianca: And this is not just about thinking about future generations, this is about thinking about my now and how I love God now and how I love the world now. He's given us this beautiful world and we're so dismissive of it.

Annie: Right. Right.

Bianca: So when you are out in nature Annie, and you feel like if I want to hear God, I go for a walk that is actually biblical and it's also scientific. When you are out in nature, you are realigning your circadian rhythm. We are familiar with those sundials.

Annie: Sundial. Right.

Bianca: Do you know that our bodies are natural sundials? So when we are out in nature, we align. So if you're jet lagged, you're gonna want to take off your shoes, stand on grass, and stand there for 10 minutes. What you're doing is you're realigning your

body to where the sun is. I know some persons out there is like, this sounds like hippie-dippy stuff. No it's not. Actually, it's science. You can go check it out.

So when you're out in nature and when you go out, which was what to do in the waiting, you are actually being amongst God's presence. For working out. Not only is it releasing toxins when you sweat, but then also releasing chemicals in our body that heal us. It also clears our mind for the things that are weighing us down.

Annie: Wow.

Bianca: So we have to think of alternatives healthy coping mechanisms. People say coping mechanisms are bad. No. Bad coping mechanisms are bad.

Annie: Right. We have to learn to cope.

Bianca: This is why you should make out and take out. Take out. We're gonna eat. When we're sad we're gonna eat our feelings. When we are lonely we're gonna make out with whomever, whenever, however, you know?

Annie: Mm-hmm.

Bianca: So I wanted it to be very like-

Annie: Talk to me a minute about, in marriage, is there times when making out or sex are a bad coping strategy in marriage with your husband or wife?

Bianca: You know, I want to default to some experts. What I will say just in pastoring people through that, yes, I have seen it. I want to make sure that there is-

Annie: That's not just a single problem of like hitting up the last guy that you were seeing and saying, Come watch a movie. It is in marriage you can go toward sex or physical relationship in an unhealthy way with your partner

Bianca: On the flip side, with your partner when married, you can go to not having sex. And what you're doing is you're isolating as a coping mechanism. Got it.

Annie: Okay.

Bianca: So it hits double ways. When you're single and you're choosing, that's one thing. But when you're married and you're choosing not to have sex or choosing to engage in sex as a coping mechanism, both are unhealthy.

Annie: It's why I love talking about that the Bible invites us to sexual purity. Because that is not about, when do you have sex? It is about for your whole life, whether you are married or single, what does it look like to be sexually pure? Your sexual purity as a married woman is different than mine.

Bianca: Totally.

Annie: But your motive going into sex with your husband or going into sex with your wife matters just as much, whether that's a coping in a healthy way or coping in it in a healthy way just as much as whoever I text.

Bianca: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Annie: Great. I didn't know that. Thank you for teaching me that I think that's so important because half our friends listening are married and are going out, making out. I haven't ever had an affair. You're like, no. How you treat your husband is a coping mechanism.

Bianca: And how you are just having sex to cover maybe bad behavior and you're using it and you're weaponizing it. So your husband brings up an issue with you and instead of addressing the issue, you just-

Annie: You take your shirt off.

Bianca: Yeah.

Annie: Okay. Wow.

Bianca: Mm-Hmm.

Annie: Okay. So when you are this waiting in Malta part of it, how long do we wait? I mean, how long's Paul there? How long are we waiting? How do we know that Rome is ever coming? You and I can have this conversation. We don't know that my husband's ever coming. I hope. But what if Rome doesn't come?

Bianca: So for some biblical context, Paul the apostle is accused in kangaroo court of some issues and he, as a Roman citizen, has the right to appeal to Caesar. So the Jewish council's like, Oh, well, to appeal to Caesar to Caesar you shall go. So they put him on a boat that is going to Rome, the most powerful place in the world to speak to the most powerful man in the world. This is happening. This is happening.

Paul knows that he's going to go to Rome because that was the destination, but it was also confirmed through an angel. God spoke to Paul, but then a physical

manifestation of an angel appears to Paul in the middle of a storm and tells him it will happen.

Annie: Wow.

Bianca: So Paul has a confirmation. So anyone out there that's like, "I don't know if Rome is happening..." Do you have a promise from God that you know God has told you this will happen? Now, I could say, The Lord has promised me a six-pack. I don't have a word from God on that. You know, I just made that up. That's a desire. I want a Ferrari. That's a desire. But if the Lord has promised some things in my heart, anything I have not seen, and in full candor and disclosure, the reason why this chapter meant so much to me is because I am on Malta.

Annie: Wow.

Bianca: I am on Malta. The Lord has shown me what our church will be. The Lord has shown me the call of my life and the things that He's going to do through me. I'm nowhere near Rome.

Annie: It ain't happening. I know.

Bianca: I'm nowhere near Rome. But one of the things I just never saw in this passage was that Malta, which means refuge, the Lord will provide refuge in the midst of our storms and allow us to heal and remind us that what was intended to take you out hasn't. So for those familiar with Acts 26 and 27, Paul is bit by a viper while building a fire on this island called refuge.

Annie: His life is insane.

Bianca: It just gets worse, you know. I'm just like, he has every reason to be like, "That's it. I quit. I'm done."

Annie: True. True.

Bianca: "Goodbye. See you later. Adios. I'm done." And yet he still perseveres. And what we see is the fruit of his perseverance, not just through the course of his life, but the course of his writings that are read by billions of people. And our lives are transformed, our theology is understood because of the writings of this man.

So he's bitten by a snake. What I didn't see is that a chapter later when he's invited to a house of prominence. So here is this prisoner invited to a house of prominence, and there's ministry to be done on Malta. He did not know that.

So one of the things that I just see is that our adversity could lead to doors of opportunity. So whatever you're going through right now, people have to hold on. You know what? I don't know why I'm here, but the Lord is going to use me here. Now, if Paul was just like, bump it, I'm gone and goes and go and ends his life in the ocean, which is a choice-

Annie: An option.

Bianca: And it's an option.

Annie: I think that about Jonah all the time. You could have drowned yourself in there.

Bianca: 100%. 100%. So if Paul had lots of options. And when invited to this house of remnants, he didn't have to go. But he did. So when the Lord opens doors, walk through them. And at what point did Paul realize, I'm here for a reason? Because Paul laid his hands, Scripture says in Acts 27, that he laid his hands on Publius' dad. One, what an unfortunate name.

Annie: Yeah.

Bianca: Publius... it's just. I'm so sad.

Annie: So close to some other... Yeah.

Bianca: But he was an official and a bad and boujee, you know, guy that's on the island. And Paul laid hands on his father. Hands. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. So the hands just three days earlier, the hand that was bitten is the same hand that healed. So what I'm holding onto in my Malta is all the things that the enemy is throwing at me and how many vipers have been hanging off of me. How many people in my life that have been snakes and are hanging off of me and people are looking at me to curl up and die, to shake an angry fist and say, bump you, God, I'm done? But what I am holding onto is the hands that are bitten are the hands that are gonna heal.

Annie: That's it.

Bianca: And Paul does get to Malta. And Paul does get to Rome. Paul gets to Rome. So for people out there that are like, Well, I don't know if Rome's coming. Did God promise you Rome?

Annie: Yeah. That's right.

Bianca: Then wait on Malta and do ministry in the waiting.

Annie: My theory with the Lord has always been, "I will either get to the Romes you've promised or I will see you first." And if I see you first, then we'll talk about it. We'll talk about it and I will understand. But I'm not gonna give up on Rome until I see the Lord.

Bianca: Amen.

Annie: For everyone assuming, that is not just about getting married or having kids. That is about ministry I want to do, that is about hope for my family. That is about what I want to do with my life. There are all these... Like you. You and I are big dreamers about what God has invited us to do on this planet. I have a lot I haven't seen. I have a list I haven't seen that I get super frustrated and say to the Lord, Hey, hanging on my wall where I pray is a list of things I want you to do that I think are what you've called me to. But you have to open the doors. I can't open the doors and you're not opening the doors. But man, you even saying like, he had no idea that on Malta there was ministry there and that it was a refuge.

Bianca: Yeah.

Annie: Come on.

Bianca: I know. When I read that, I wanted to get a praise hanky. I was at my desk. Don't ask me why I had a white cloth napkin on my desk. I have no idea. But I literally raised it and I said, "Oh, Jesus. Oh, Jesus, you're too funny." People say God's not funny. He's ironic. He's very Jewish. He's so ironic and is so funny to me. It's so funny.

Annie: I love it.

Bianca: And then people are like, the Bible's boring. No, you are boring, that's why you don't see it. He's so fun. God is so fun.

Annie: That's right. One of the things that Dr. Moore says in his book is, we were taught to be scripture quoters, not scripture readers. And I was like, Oh boy. That is so true. That is so true. Okay. B, anything we didn't say about the book you want to make sure we say?

Bianca: I just want to encourage somebody. I really do feel like there's a heaviness and a darkness on the globe, not just our nation. And if I could just bring a little light of hope to somebody who just feels like the quit isn't quitting a job or quitting a relationship, the quit is quitting life, they might never ever get this book. But I just

want to say that your life has value. Your life has worth. And there's ministry on Malta to be done. Don't give up.

Annie: Yeah, don't give up.

Bianca: Just put one foot in front of the other.

Annie: The Lord has numbered your days.

Bianca: Amen.

Annie: Don't number your days.

Bianca: Amen.

Annie: He has numbered your days. That is a good word. And we are thankful for the friends who are hearing that today that really need to hear that today.

Bianca: Thank you.

Annie: This is the day they need to hear that. Okay, before we go, we gotta talk about two more things. You know I'm gonna ask you what sounds fun to you because it is your fifth time on the show.

Bianca: Yay.

Annie: But also, can we talk about A21, particularly Charlie and Annie, my two newest best friends in the world?

Bianca: Honestly, my life is forever impacted and better because of Charlie Blythe and Annie Dollarhide. I know that's not her new last name, but I met her at Dollarhide.

Annie: She has a very Greek last name.

Bianca: I was gonna attempt it and I'm too embarrassed. I won't. I won't.

Annie: I can read it to you on my phone. I can't tell you... I mean, we were in Greece for eight minutes and we're like, "Hi, can we be friends forever?" I mean, I loved it. The whole staff of A21 in Greece that I met, I love them all.

Bianca: You were texting me pictures of you guys and I have mad FOMO. Don't do that to Enneagram Seven. I was like-

Annie: It was so fun.

Bianca: ...I want to have Halloumi and eat there with you guys too. This is so sad.

Annie: It was great.

Bianca: I love them.

Annie: Annie and Charlie, they're the kind of women that you go like, Oh, you've given your life to something. And people may know you or may not, a lot of people know Charlie and Annie, but a lot of people know Charlie. And it is just... I think they're so fun. We had the best time. I'm sorry we lived in three different countries.

Bianca: I know.

Annie: It makes it complicated to go-

Bianca: So complicated. So complicated. But you know, the best thing about them is that their spouses are awesome too. So like, shout out to Dan Blythe because I thought Charlie was so cool. She's so posh and she only lives in black and white. And she's very English. Right? And then I meet her husband, Dan, and I was like, "You are so cool. All my homeschool dorkiness is like revealed in front of you." They're the coolest, most beautiful, most kindest, most spiritual couple. I love them. And then Annie and Aris, love them to bits and pieces. They have the amazing love story.

Annie: Oh, their love story is so sweet.

Bianca: It's so cute. It's so cute.

Annie: I should have them on. Wouldn't that be fun?

Bianca: Oh my gosh, that sounds like fun.

Annie: Maybe they'll do for Valentine's because their love story, which she was... because she told it to me, of course, because we were there a ton of time together.

Bianca: Spins three countries, seven years, I mean, come on.

Annie: And him being a lot younger and the whole thing.

Bianca: The whole thing.

- Annie:** And she's just being like, "I don't want to get married. I'm just gonna serve the Lord." And him being like, "I think I-
- Bianca:** And then the spirit of cougar will come over you and then you'll rock the cradle and start dating a fetus. And I'm like there for it. Come on.
- Annie:** Oh, I need to have both those couples on.
- Bianca:** It'd be so fun.
- Annie:** I felt like it was truly God's gift to me.
- Bianca:** Wait a minute, I have this vision of grandeur. If they come out here and if it happens, I'm flying here. I'm flying here.
- Annie:** Oh please.
- Bianca:** I'm flying here. I won't be on the show. I'll just be the live studio audience and like amen you. They're the best.
- Annie:** We found a pool in Athens, Greece on the actual hottest day. We found it on the internet, and you paid... It was the top of a hotel and the hotel just let people pay to go to the pool. And we had like five hours that afternoon. So the three of us hike our tail feathers across Athens, Greece-
- Bianca:** Oh my gosh.
- Annie:** ...sweating. It was 108 degrees. We were sweating and dying to the pool on the rooftop. And we had lunch and had drink and-
- Bianca:** Oh, that sounds like a dream.
- Annie:** It was the best. We sat in the shade except Charlie. I was like, "Charlie, it's 108 degrees." She's like, "I live in London." I can't do her accent.
- Bianca:** Exactly.
- Annie:** She's like, "I live in London. I'm cold all the time. This feels great." And me and Annie were both like, "Annie's in the shade. Annie's in the shade. Oh, I just love them. I'm so glad you got to work with them for a season and-
- Bianca:** And I did.

Annie: ...stay friends with them.

Bianca: Good season.

Annie: I had to sing their praises while we were together. Okay, B, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you.

Bianca: I'm gonna tell myself and tell you that I love Taylor Sheridan. I think he's so fun. And Yellowstone 1886, I mean, all of it. All of it. All of it.

Annie: *Tulsa King*?

Bianca: That's my next one. That's my next one. Is it bad though? Somebody said it was kind of bad.

Annie: Oh, I don't know. I'm only four episodes in, so if anybody's watched the whole thing and it's pretty bad. I saw it on my flight home from Greece. Three of them were on there and I've watched three in one.

Bianca: Okay. Then that is next.

Annie: I mean, Yellowstone isn't good. I mean, bad as in like it's not enjoyable-

Bianca: Like violent or something. I don't know.

Annie: Yeah. But they take him to the train station on Yellowstone. So it's not like we're not seeing violence on Yellowstone. I like that you've drawn a really bizarre line.

Bianca: Can I tell you another thing that's fun?

Annie: So that's what you love. *1886*, *1923*.

Bianca: Yes.

Annie: Anything Taylor Sheridan.

Bianca: And then also *The Bear*.

Annie: I loved *The Bear*.

Bianca: Okay. Honestly, honestly, you know, they're in Season 2, right?

Annie: Oh, I've already watched Season 2.

- Bianca:** Oh gosh. I'm behind.
- Annie:** Oh, you haven't seen Season 2 and you feel this after Season 1?
- Bianca:** Listen, I wrote a book, sister. I have been under a rock.
- Annie:** I'm thrilled for you because Season 2 is the exhale of beauty that you didn't know TV could do.
- Bianca:** Okay. It's so good. It's so good. It's so good.
- Annie:** I'm so happy you haven't seen Season 2. So for you guys who have not watched it, *The Bear* is about a chef, Michelin star chef who has to go back-
- Bianca:** Three Michelin star chef.
- Annie:** Yes. Yes. Has to go back. Could you speak... You're in my love language more than Michelin stars?
- Bianca:** No. No.
- Annie:** Michelin stars are my love language. Take me to a restaurant, I will not buy a piece of clothing for a year-
- Bianca:** Because we're experiencing-
- Annie:** I want to eat at places that I have experiences and wear the same shirt for two years. Watch me not care.
- Bianca:** Love it.
- Annie:** So anyway, he comes back and runs his brother's sandwich shop because his brother dies. So season 1 is great. But Season 2, Bianca, they kind of dive into each person who works at *The Bear*. Oh, Dude.
- Bianca:** Okay, don't tell me. Don't tell me. I'm so excited. And then the last thing that is so fun-
- Annie:** But they say the F word a lot, everybody. Just your warning.
- Bianca:** FYI. Yes. Yes.

- Annie:** There's not a lot of scenes... there's not a lot of violence, there's not a lot of sex or nudity, but they do say the F word.
- Bianca:** But it looks like a kitchen. It's very realistic kitchen. Last thing. Last thing. Tennis has been my new obsession.
- Annie:** What?
- Bianca:** I have been playing tennis.
- Annie:** Thank you for not saying pickleball. You're like the real deal in tennis.
- Bianca:** Listen, Pickleballers are people who can't play tennis. Okay. Someone just needs to tell the truth. Okay?
- Annie:** I saw you playing on Instagram with someone recently. You posted about it.
- Bianca:** I did a tournament. Yes, I did. I hosted a tournament. People at church, they were like, Oh, we want to beat you, Pastor B. And I was like okay, "Good luck." And I was like, "There's no way that they could beat their pastor. For the sake of the gospel, that can't happen. Because how could I shepherd them if I can't beat them?" I did lose. So anyway yeah, it's all good. No, but I love it.
- I've played recreationally here and there, but post covid and pastoring, it was a really hard season, really dark season. So I needed joy. And I picked up tennis...
- Annie:** And you love it.
- Bianca:** And I love it. It's my fun hobby.
- Annie:** Great.
- Bianca:** I play at least once a week.
- Annie:** Where are you getting your tennis gear, your clothing? Are you a Lulu girl?
- Bianca:** Girl, I'm on a pastor's budget. I'm like, what's in Nordstrom Rack clearance? I've got some deals. I've got some deals. Now for the tennis tournament, I did check my budget and I said my tennis partner and I, we have to have matching outfits. So I got us Nike Headbands and Nike tops and we looked the part.
- Annie:** You did.

Bianca: I'm showing up like Anja Bear. Like, look at me, look at me. Yes. Yes.

Annie: Okay. So a little television and a little tennis. That's it.

Bianca: Yeah.

Annie: Oh B, I can't wait for people to read this book. I love you so much.

Bianca: I love you, Annie.

Annie: Thanks for being on here.

Bianca: Thanks for being my friend. Thank you.

Annie: Welcome back. Five times. We'll have you again anytime. I love you so much.

Bianca: Love you.

[01:04:52] <Music>

Outro: Oh you guys, don't you love her? She's just the best. Okay, grab a copy of Bianca's new book, *Grit Don't Quit*. This is a great one for a book club. Y'all get a bunch of them, get together, and read it. Be sure you're subscribed to the We're Going There podcast. And follow her on social media, tell her thanks for being on the show.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that is how you can find me. And don't forget you can follow That Sounds Fun Podcast on Instagram. It is That Sounds Fun Podcast with some extra fun things there.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you. I will do the same. We will see you back here on Monday with the amazing Bri McCoy. She is so delightful. Y'all, she is who we need on a Monday. So we'll see you back here Monday.