

[00:00:00] <music>

Annie: Y'all, we have so many incredible guests on That Sounds Fun that it always makes me want to dive deeper into their hobbies and jobs. Like in May, when we had Myquillyn Smith, the nester, on. She's an incredible interior decorator. I want to be good at that too.

I've learned a ton from her, but Masterclasses where you go on a deep dive about topics like interior design and photography and learning to play tennis. Y'all, the Masterclass on tennis is taught by Serena Williams. Serena! You can seriously find classes on everything.

I loved the cooking class I tried with Gordon Ramsay, and to think I'd never get the opportunity to learn from him any other way. With Masterclass, you can learn from the best to become your best.

Masterclass is the only streaming platform where you can learn and grow with over 200 plus of the world's best leaders and teachers. For just \$10 a month, an annual membership gets you unlimited access to every instructor. And you can access Masterclass on your phone, computer, smart TV, or even in audio mode.

Right now, our friends get an additional 15% off any annual membership. You guys, that is amazing. Just go to masterclass.com/soundsfun. That's 15% off at masterclass.com/soundsfun.

[00:01:13] <music>

Annie: Hi friends! Happy Memorial Day to those of you in the U.S. Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host, Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you on a holiday Monday. I hope you are getting to do something fun, something outside. We're also thankful so much today for our friends in the armed services and thinking of the families today who are celebrating Memorial Day in a totally different way, who have lost someone they love, who are spending time reflecting and remembering. We're thinking of you today, too. Thank you for your service. Thank you for your family's service. We are grateful to live in a free nation thanks to so many who serve in our armed forces.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors, AG1. Y'all know I love it. I've been drinking it for years. Here's why. I can trust it. AG1 conducts a ton of testing to set the standard for purity and potency. AG1 is constantly searching for how to do things better.

At 52 iterations of their formula and counting, their team is always trying to find better ways to source, test, and aim to find the best quality ingredients available. Quality, for them, is not just a buzzword. It's a commitment backed by expert-led scientific research, high-quality ingredients, industry-leading manufacturing, and rigorous testing.

At each step of the process, AG1 goes above and beyond industry standards. Taking care of my health shouldn't be complicated, and AG1 simplifies this. I just mix one scoop into really cold water, and AG1 helps cover my nutritional bases and set me up for success for the day.

Y'all know I love to put a little Lemon juice ice cube in there too. I squeezed my lemon juice this morning. I also love that it includes vitamin C and zinc to support my immune system. So if you want to replace your multivitamin and more, start with AG1. What a great thing to do this summer.

Try AG1 and get a free one-year supply of vitamin D3 plus K2 and five free AG1 travel packs with your first subscription at drinkag1.com/soundsfun. That's drinkag1.com/soundsfun. Y'all check it out.

Intro: Today on the show I get to talk again with my friend, Katherine Wolf. I'm so glad she's back on the show. Y'all know I've known Katherine since we were both in college. Thank you, Athens, Georgia. Go Dawgs. And so many of you have gotten to know her over the years as she shared her story after having suffered a massive stroke at 26 years old.

In fact, she and her husband, Jay, were on the podcast back in 2020 as you'll remember. We'll link to that one, and you can go back and listen and hear more of her story.

Katherine's an author, a speaker, a wife, mom, and an incredible example of resilience and unwavering faith. Her new devotional, *Treasures in the Dark*, is out now. And whether you're walking through a hard season or know someone who is, or just want to prepare for the next one to come, this is a book you're going to love and lean on.

So here's my conversation with my friend, Katherine Wolf.

[00:04:09] <music>

Annie: Katherine Wolf, welcome back to That Sounds Fun.

Katherine: Hey, hey, hey, I'm so glad to be here.

Annie: What an honor.

Katherine: Aw.

Annie: Okay, the thing for our friends who haven't heard us talk before, the world should know, we've known each other since we were in college, which is wild. So publicly in front of everyone, update me on how Grace is doing, your little sister who was in the youth group when I was a leader in the youth group.

Katherine: I know, I know. Grace is doing wonderfully. Grace is married, lives here in Atlanta, has an amazing career.

Annie: Oh, I love it.

Katherine: I mean, all surely in part thanks to wonderful discipleship when she was younger by Annie Downs.

Annie: I don't know about that. But your parents are some like... when I think back on college of the people who invited the youth group over and we're always like, Hey, what can we do to, as parents, be a part of student ministry, your mom and dad were always some of those parents. Now y'all have teenagers too, is that?

Katherine: I know.

Annie: Do you think about that, that your parents were the cool parents and now you get to be the cool youth group parents too?

Katherine: Yeah, my parents were definitely the cool parents. Jay and I are definitely not the cool parents. And that's okay. I've always been a bit of a nerd. That's okay. I'll take it. Mom and dad were real cool back in the day and still are if you hear this mom and dad. Still are.

Annie: Yes, I believe it. Okay, Katherine, first let's talk about the coffee shop. You guys just opened a new coffee shop in Atlanta called Mend Coffee & Goods.

Katherine: Yes, oh my goodness, we did. It has been a dream for many years to have a brick-and-mortar space that is just full of all the things that our Hope Hills Camp is about. Like, belonging, belovedness, just real human connection. Just a place where people of all abilities can be together. We call it an interability space. It's quite glorious. I hope you will come, Annie, when you're in town.

Annie: Oh, I'm totally coming. Okay, so for our friends listening that are in Atlanta, it's in Buckhead.

Katherine: Right, it's in the heart of Buckhead. It's on Roswell Road, and it's not to be missed. It's amazing.

Annie: I mean, you're the new pioneer woman. The pioneer woman just opens restaurants all over her town, and you're the new one.

Katherine: Oh, she does? Oh, cool. I guess so. Well, this one is incredibly special because we have this whole wing of the shop that is retail. And that would be kind of cool if we were just selling some junk. However, we have ethically sourced only missionally-minded products. So it's like women coming out of sex trafficking who make goods and men coming out of incarceration trying to provide for their families to make goods. We sell them to create care packages for people to give their neighbors. It's really a beautiful model. I know, come on.

Annie: So when you are building a coffee shop and you're trying to think... will you say the word interability? Is that the word that y'all use?

Katherine: Yes, we use the word interability.

Annie: So when you're trying to think interability for a brick-and-mortar space like that, tell me how you're thinking differently than someone who built a coffee shop a year ago.

Katherine: Yeah, that's a great question. The main big difference in terms of consideration, and we've done probably three years of intense work with 12 consultants to do this, but basically, we wanted to create a space where anyone could come through the door. Meaning, not just ADA, which is not going to work for many people, that's the bare minimum, but actually a universally designed space where there is extreme focus on incredibly, just at the forefront, at the helm of deep universal design.

So, for instance, the tables where guests sit swivel up and down so that a wheelchair user can adjust the table to their height.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Katherine: Then if they're with an able-bodied guest in a normal seat, they would grab cushions that we have to create the exact right seat so they're eye-to-eye. Because we believe dignity is connection that is eye-to-eye, that dignifies and creates a connection that isn't minimizing the person with a disability when they're trying to have a cup of coffee.

Annie: That is so cool!

Katherine: It's really special. We believe that real human connection is what is so desperately needed in the disability space. People are isolated and ignored and minimized and not valued as they should be.

Annie: Oh, I cannot wait to see it. You're making me think of a reel that I saw on Instagram where the pastor said, in the 90s, connection and community were high and content was low.

Katherine: Right.

Annie: Like you heard your pastor. Right. Or you listen to the Christian artists, we would buy at a Christian bookstore. And now, content is high and connection and community is low.

Katherine: I believe it. That's exactly it, I think, for sure. Really sad.

Annie: I'm just making assumptions. Probably how you get in the door is different than a coffee shop that's already been built, how the bathrooms are created is different.

Katherine: Oh, Annie, let me tell you, the bathrooms are glorious. We have adult changing tables so that if a person who is larger than the caregiver many times comes, there's an adult changing table where they can lay down. This is unheard of in coffee shops, but it's such a need in the disability community.

You may have heard about this, we had dear friends who have been campers at our Camp Mead and Mary Elizabeth Stone, and they had a 14-year-old son pass away last October, Precious John, who was nonverbal, nonmobile, and needed changing, and they never had anywhere they could be in public to change their son.

And John's John, which is our restroom in his honor, is a glorious adult changing station. So yeah, it's the pinnacle of universally designed space I believe in the world in terms of a coffee shop, but who knows? I don't pretend to know.

Annie: I can't imagine a world where people aren't going to be calling your phone and being like, how do we get one in Dallas? How do we get one in New York? How do we get one in Mozambique? I don't know. I mean, as people are experiencing this, they are going to wish this was where they live.

Katherine: Yes. Well, that is happening for sure. And what we are wanting to do is be the best in class and have an open invitation for all to take what we've learned and create

something beautiful elsewhere. So many ministries tragically don't share the info or don't really... like, it's the kingdom of God, people. Let's share all our resources, everything we've learned. Let's make it available for free to any and all who want to do this.

Annie: Wow. When I was reading through *Treasures in the Dark*, your new book of reflections, one of the things it talks about is that the disabled community is the world's largest minority group.

Katherine: Isn't that fascinating? No one would know that the largest minority group in the world, right at 20%, identifies as living with a disability. And no one would know that, one, because there's no centralized movement. We're in so many other groups. There is some people who rise to the top leadership-wise. The disability community tragically does not have that.

Also, disabilities vary, so there's all different kinds. And the reality is there's not access to the world for people with disabilities by and large. So, of course, there's no centralized movement to cry out and proclaim these truths. And I should add, as you and I both know from being on a lot of stages, there is not representation from the stage most times. So, people aren't seeing it. You have to see it to be it, and that's not happening. So, we're trying to change that.

Annie: I notice in the book you talk a lot about the what-if cycle and how we stay out of the what-if cycle, so I'd like to ask you a what-if kind of question.

Katherine: Oh my goodness, well I love that you just said that because the what-ifs in my life could be incredibly paralyzing, traumatizing, but instead I have moved from my what-ifs to the what-is, what is here. So, but what's your question? Sorry.

Annie: Well, yeah, I mean, that was it. No, that's exactly it, is when you look at what you're doing with your life now, Hope Heals Camp, Mend Coffee, being a disabled person on stages, that couldn't have been, when you were 25, what you thought your life would be.

Katherine: It's so fascinating, Annie, that you're asking this. So I was just interviewed for a news story moments ago about men for the news in Atlanta tonight on CBS. And the man asked me that exact question. That's so weird. He said, as a 25-year-old, what were your dreams and how have they changed? So that's so weird you just said that.

Annie: It's so weird.

Katherine: But that means smart people think alike, I think. But let me answer your question. The what-ifs of my life could be entirely paralyzing because what if I would have known I had an AVM in my brain? How would I have lived differently? And yeah, you can't camp there, for sure. There's no point.

However, as a 25-year-old, my dreams were 100% different. Never in a million years thought this would be my life or my story. But somewhere along the line something shifted and now I got some new dreams for my life. That is where people get so stuck in their stories. Tragedy hits, and they have no ability to pivot, to become emotionally agile, I call it, and say, you know what? I was going this way, but clearly, the Lord is saying, you're going to go that way.

So instead of fighting for the old life, lean into the new one and get some new dreams. No one says this for some reason in Christian community, but we should sweep it out. You can dream new dreams for your life at any age. Why is no one saying that? It's the gospel. New life, new things come out of new death, and I'm living proof of that.

Annie: You write about in the book... The book is called *Treasures in the Dark*. And this is your life, too. We get a lot of books in the mail from a lot of friends and we only get to do two episodes a week. And so I have to really think through, which of my friends do I get to talk to? And this was such an easy yes for me, Katherine. Because I think *Treasures in the Dark* is the book that I don't know anybody who's living the life they thought they'd live at 25.

Katherine: Isn't that the truth? Yes, no one.

Annie: And so, me, you... and they all look different. But you give such permission in the first section of the book, losing the lives we wanted. You give such permission to go like... like you even said, I had to grieve before I could heal.

Katherine: Absolutely.

Annie: Will you talk a little bit for some of our friends? Because we have people submit questions, Katherine, and one of the questions that I want to ask you in a minute is about a mom whose daughter had a stroke at nine years old. So there are people listening who are right on the front side of losing the life they thought they'd have. How do you grieve before you start dreaming?

Katherine: Absolutely. For me, it took five years, five years to be able to come up for air, to think about this new life. It was survival mode and just a paralyzing deal. I can't live this way. I can't live this life. And something shifted around the five-year mark

of recognizing, Okay, this is the only life I have and I'm not going to continue to spend my life wishing for my own story. I'm going to live a new story.

In that initial time, though, I grieved the life I lost before I could get to the life I envisioned. And that is such a critical part, I think, of so many sweet Christian people think, okay, tragedy strikes, pull myself up by the bootstraps and carry on, and then it doesn't go well.

But instead, I think the call of the Bible and everything we know of Jesus is to lament deeply the loss, to really grieve it, to let your own story break your heart. Let it absolutely bewilder you. Let it shock you that you are living this story.

And honestly, I've done that well. I've been deeply saddened and nearly shocked that this could be my life. Sometimes I still cannot believe this happened. I'll never drive a car again and I'll never walk unassisted. I'll never blah blah blah. I can't believe it. And yet, because I have appropriately grieved that, I can move forward from it. You don't stay there, but you must start there to heal. The healing process is lament, then heal, not the other way.

Annie: Can you do that alone? Or do you need a therapist? Do you need a pastor? Do you need community? Or can you get through the grieving alone?

Katherine: I would think no. I definitely did not. I cannot answer that as a non-expert. I think many wise people would say, No, you do need some sort of community. And you know, Annie, it's so fascinating. I know it's so cool and everybody is finding their people, which is so awesome for people who are really cool and popular and have loads of available people. But for the rest of us, find the people who don't have the people and make them your people. It's a paradigm shift.

Stop seeking out the cool people. They got people. Seek out the ones who don't have anybody. Those people can be your people.

Annie: Right. There's an invitation in this of when you're grieving a loss of some part of your life, either a person or a situation or relationship, whatever, finding other people who understand that grief to some degree. I mean, it's why I love book clubs, because if you all read the same book and then you listen to each other talk about it, you're like, "Oh, she and I think exactly the same about this. I should have coffee with her."

Katherine: Oh, absolutely. That's honestly one of the reasons that camp is so magical, and I pray the coffee shop will be the exact same way, is suffering souls find each other and connect deeply, quickly. For instance, at camp, we've got people with amputations and people living with spina bifida.

And when you've got real intense stuff on the outside, some of just the junk of life you get past real quick. Like nobody cares when your kid goes to school. Nobody cares. Nobody cares about things that don't matter because we're dealing with real life here. And it's so clarifying and so joy-giving. You're not worried about the dumb stuff.

[00:21:03] <music>

Sponsor: Hi friends, just interrupting this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [Shopify](#). We're running a Memorial Day sale over at [shopanniefdowns.com](#), so make sure you head over there, check out the deals. But we get to do things like that so easily because of Shopify.

Shopify is the global commerce platform. They're with you every step of the way. And Shopify grows with you no matter where you are in your business journey. Whether you're selling candles or tote bags, they help you sell everything, everywhere.

Their all-in-one e-commerce platform and in-person POS system have got you covered. So no matter what you're selling or where you're selling it, they're the place to go to.

Once you start selling, Shopify makes getting paid really simple by instantly accepting every type of payment. Shopify grows with your business no matter how far or how big you grow. Thanks to an endless list of integrations and third-party apps, anything you can think of from on-demand printing to accounting to chatbots, everything you need to revolutionize your business, they have got.

Sign up for \$1 per month trial period at [shopify.com/soundsfun](#), all lowercase. Go to [shopify.com/soundsfun](#) to grow your business right now no matter what stage you're in. [Shopify.com/soundsfun](#).

Sponsor: I have another amazing partner to tell you about, [Lumen](#). You guys, you know I am my favorite science experiment, and I have so loved having a Lumen. I cannot tell you how much I love having a Lumen. Y'all know I want to be serious about my physical health as I am about my spiritual and emotional health, and one of the tools that is helping me so much with that is my Lumen.

Our metabolism is our body's engine, and it is how our bodies turn the food we eat into the fuel that keeps us going. Lumen is the world's first handheld metabolic coach. It is this device that measures your metabolism through your breathing. Isn't that so cool?

On their app, it shows me if I'm burning fat or carbs. It gives me tailored guidance to improve my nutrition, my workouts, my sleep, even stress management. All you have to do, this is all I do, when I wake up in the morning, you sit down and you take a deep breath, and then you breathe into your lumen, and then it tells you exactly what is going on with your metabolism.

You can do it when you wake up, before you work out, after you work out, before you eat, after you eat, and it tracks all of it. And then before you go to bed, so you know whether you are gonna burn carbs or burn fat overnight. Oh my gosh. I'm telling you it is mind-blowing.

They also give you a personalized nutrition plan for the day based on the measurements you give them in the morning and you can breathe into it before after workouts. I'm telling y'all it is the coolest. It is so fun.

So, if you want to take your science experimenting on yourself to the next level, improving your health, go to lumen.me and use the code TSF and you're going to get \$100 off your lumen. You guys, that's lumen.me and use the code TSF, like That Sounds Fun, at checkout, you're going to get \$100 off.

Thank you, Lumen, for sponsoring this episode, and thank you for teaching me about my metabolism. I am loving what I am learning.

Sponsor: Shout out to [Claritin](https://claritin.com) for supporting this episode and providing us with some samples. Y'all, there are a lot of seasonal allergy sufferers over here at AFD Inc. and the That Sounds Fun Network, and Claritin D really works for this crew.

I also realized a few years ago that I developed an allergy to dogs, so I'm thankful to have Claritin D on hand when I'm around my friends' dogs. Luckily, for those of us who live with the symptoms of allergies, we can live Claritin-clear with Claritin D. It's designed for serious allergy sufferers.

Claritin D has two powerful ingredients in just one pill. This double-action combination of prescription-strength allergy medicine and the best decongestant available relieves sneezing, a running nose, itchy, watery eyes, and an itchy nose and throat, and sinus congestion and pressure with ease. Amen.

Ready to live life as if you don't have allergies? It is time to live Claritin-clear. Fast and powerful relief is just a quick trip away. Ask for Claritin D at your local pharmacy counter. You don't even need a prescription, y'all. Just go to claritin.com right now for a discount so you can live Claritin-clear. Use as directed.

Okay, now back to our conversation with Katherine.

[00:25:22] <music>

Annie: When the new dreams started coming, like the dreams for Hope Heals Camp, or for writing, or for being on stages, or the Mend Coffee Shop, how do you know which ones to chase? How do you know which dreams are the right ones to run after? What's the next thing that happens in your brain after you have the idea?

Katherine: Oh, that's such a good question. I feel silly answering because I feel like the Lord is so directing that it's hard to know. But I feel like what I do know about that is true is that I have a strong Holy Spirit-inspired gut. I feel it in the gut, and when I know it's the Lord, I go.

So much of when Jay and I wrote Hope Heals, that was probably the entrance into real book writing, ministry, speaking in some ways. And there was just a deep guttural, like, okay, the Lord is calling us to do this. Let's live a life worthy of this calling that we've received, as it says in Ephesians 4:1. That's not some sexy answer, I know, but that's the truth. It's the Holy Spirit just imparting on you something that you must do.

Annie: I had an appointment with my therapist yesterday, and the last thing she said to me is, the thing I need you to remember the most is you can trust your gut. And she was like, as we're walking out of this appointment, I just need you to remember that because of this, this, and this, because of the years of your relationship with God, because you're old, because you have done this thing you're doing again, you can trust your gut.

I think there are so many times where we don't trust our guts, and that really makes us suffer.

Katherine: Absolutely. Years ago, a wonderful, sweet company came to Jay and I and really wanted us to launch this kind of like a CaringBridge app. And, like, Hope Heals would move into the space of caregiving. In some ways, it was really, really cool, but there were a lot of strings attached. And we turned it down. We both felt in our gut that wasn't the right thing. That just wasn't what we were going to spend our lives on. And literally camp was under a year later to come into our story.

Annie: No way.

Katherine: So the Lord gave us that gut cry of "don't do that, but do this". And we just kind of knew. I think your therapist is really on to something. Side note, I saw my therapist yesterday too. I love that.

Annie: Love it. I know. I actually am seeing a therapist in New York because I wanted kind of like a different point of view for this season. So we did a virtual last night. So I was just sitting in my kitchen.

Katherine: Oh nice.

Annie: I know, it was great.

Katherine: Oh, I love it.

Annie: And it's such a help to have someone who loves the Lord and is getting to know me and is really educated on what mental health tools people need.

Katherine: Absolutely. I can't say enough about the value of having someone who is helping you process your life out loud and make sense and connections of all that's inside of us bubbling up, of just helping us just listen to ourselves differently and hear what's going on. I'm a big fan.

Annie: In the book, you do move us from losing the lives you wanted to befriending the life you have. I loved that language because what you don't say in the middle section... Also for our friends listening, it's 90 reflections. But it's not like devotionals really. It's just like 90 little stories. It's a beautiful layout.

Katherine: Thank you. You absolutely could read it straight through, or you could go day by day, or you could choose your own adventure and choose from each section. There are three sections, 30 entries each, for different places where you are on your journey.

For instance, the first is for the hurting, the second's for the healing, the third is for the hoping so that the reader isn't boxed in. Because we know grief is not lateral. You don't just get this and this and this. It's changing constantly, and you need to be able to move throughout it. It's like I know too much to just write a sweet little devotional book that sends you on this journey. It's like, I got to go backwards and forwards.

And just know when you're dealing with really deep pain, and I'm very aware people reading this are people who buried their children recently. It's legit, like the darkest pains of life. And to neatly try to tie it up with a bow would be ludicrous. It'd just be ridiculous to do that and more painful.

Annie: And you used the word "befriending".

Katherine: Yes.

Annie: I liked that because something I say a lot is fall in love with your life. And I thought maybe that's asking too much at times. I'm not always in love with my life. But befriending the life you have is kind of like... The words around befriending to me are feelings like step toward it, give it a chance, like take it to coffee.

Will you talk a little bit about like what is that journey of befriending versus like me asking people to cannonball into the love of their life.

Katherine: Absolutely, I agree. That's a very beautiful point, that something about a friendship perhaps it's more casual. You don't have to be in love. You can just be a friend. Many of the best relationships, I believe, for instance, Jay and Katherine Wolf, our friendship, they get taken to the next level, that eventually maybe you can love your life. But starting with friendship gives you permission to not yet be all in. And maybe that's a great place to start for a new normal.

Annie: As I was reading, I thought, yeah, that's exactly when I... If I have a shift in my life that involves tragedy, pain... and you also say like, if you're breathing, you have pain. It's just the human condition.

Katherine: Absolutely.

Annie: A pastor friend and I were texting yesterday and he said, When am I going to quit being surprised that things don't work out?

Katherine: Isn't that the truth?

Annie: Like, we're having to befriend that. Is that going to happen? There are some people in our lives... and my life has not been hard. I've had hard parts of my life, but my life has not been hard. When we think about befriending our lives, is it okay if our pain looks smaller than someone else's, even if it feels big to us?

Katherine: Absolutely. I talk so much about invisible wheelchairs. That whether you have a wheelchair on the outside or not, we've all got stuff going on inside of us that is not okay. Pain, shame, suffering of all kinds, we've all got it.

The reality is, when you've got something really, really happening in your story, it's horrific, no matter what it is. So pain is pain, for sure. But perspective is perspective. And that's so key, that all pain is bad when it's happening to you because it hurts.

Annie: Yeah. That is a phrase I say a lot to myself and to other people is when something tragic is going on is overall my life is not hard, but this is a really hard version of my life.

Katherine: Yes, that's it.

Annie: And so for me, this is a really hard... whatever the season is. So let's talk about this question from our friend Carrie. She said, "My nine-year-old daughter just had a major stroke on December 26th with a major brain bypass surgery six weeks later. What do I need to know that I don't know from the point of view of a stroke survivor? How do I serve her well?" So for someone outside of the pain that you understand and this little sweet nine-year-old understands, what does this mom need to know that she doesn't know?

Katherine: Well, it's interesting because I have an almost nine-year-old, so I'm trying to think what would be the most beneficial for him if he had a stroke. But I should probably speak more directly to me as well. So let me answer two ways. For Katherine Wolf, who was 26 when she had the stroke, I needed very much for it to be acknowledged.

Some well-meaning friends and family just pretended it didn't happen because they thought I wouldn't want to talk about it. And it's my whole world, so we need to talk about it, because it's all I can think about. So for a 26-year-old, that's what I needed.

For a 9-year-old, I think she's going to need to see where they are. But a lot of processing and narration, I think, would be key for a child, for sure, is how is this little girl going to navigate a post-stroke life, no matter her deficits? And I think her mother very much is going to need to narrate how to do it. I think that's a charge as parents in all our kids' issues, is to speak into them with clarity and not be afraid to have the conversations.

And yes, Sweet girl, whatever her name was... Did you say? I don't know.

Annie: The mom's name is Carrie. She didn't tell us her daughter's name.

Katherine: Okay, so for Carrie to your daughter, definitely starting with, how do you feel about what has happened? And start from there. What does she feel? Don't anticipate the emotions that may or not be there, but lean into them and then narrate, I believe, from a Christ perspective, how we're going to move forward. Because you never move on.

Carrie, I would tell your daughter, you're never going to move on, but you're going to move forward. You are definitely moving forward from this. This is a part of your story. And side note, your story is a good story that God is writing.

And here's the thing. This is a hard thing. And there are hard things even in good stories. But guess what? Little girl, you can do hard things because Jesus is inside of you, enabling you to do really hard things. He has given you everything you need. He has supplied every need that you have to do hard things and ultimately the good story that has been written for you.

[00:36:51] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation one more time to tell you about one of our incredible partners, [KiwiCo](#). Okay, do you remember some of your favorite summer activities as a kid? Maybe it was catching fireflies in a jar with like two pieces of grass. I know. Or making scrapbooks or building forts.

Whether you want to relive your childhood adventures or make new ones with your own kids this summer, I've got something really fun to share with you. It is KiwiCo's first-ever summer adventure series. And let me tell you, you are going to love this.

Whether you've got littles or teenagers, KiwiCo's got something for everyone. Picture this. It is six weeks of hands-on science and art projects delivered right to your doorstep. The best part, each kit comes with enriching content and activities to make the learning experience even more fun. I cannot wait to do the bottle rocket kit with my nephew Sammy this summer, y'all. It looks so fun and I know he's gonna love it.

As a parent or an aunt or a nanny, it can be hard to find creative ways to keep kids busy and challenged. But KiwiCo does the legwork for us so we can spend quality time tackling the projects together. There's something for kids of all ages.

It is so easy and convenient. You can either receive all your summer adventure crates at once or weekly for six weeks, plus the materials. Top-notch quality, y'all. These aren't your average arts and crafts supplies. We're talking real engineering marvels here.

Build the best summer ever with KiwiCo so you can get 20% off on your summer adventure series at kiwico.com/funsummer. That's 20% off your summer adventure at kiwico.com/funsummer.

Sponsor: Y'all, we all love something that is customized to us: getting our favorite outfit tailored to fit just right, getting a custom piece of art for your house, listening to a playlist that's customized for us based on what we like to listen to. So why not use custom hair care?

We all have different hair textures and types, and switching to a custom hair care routine has been so helpful for me. My hair looks healthier and shinier. Plus, Prose also has custom skincare, which is so great because we definitely all have different needs for our skin too.

With [Prose](#), it is all about personalization. You do their in-depth consultation, and they come up with your made-to-order products. There are millions of possible formulas, but only one is uniquely yours or mine. Prose isn't just better for you, it's better for the planet. They're a certified B Corp, they're cruelty-free, and they're the first and only carbon-neutral custom beauty brand.

Prose is so confident that they will bring out your best hair and skin that they're offering an exclusive trial of 50% off your first subscription order, you guys. Just go to prose.com/thatsoundsfun. So you get your free consultation, then 50% off at prose.com/thatsoundsfun. That's prose.com/thatsoundsfun.

And now back to finish up our conversation with Katherine.

[00:39:46] <music>

Annie: In *Treasures in the Dark*, you talk about when you weren't able to communicate. In those moments, what is the narrative in your head of, I can do hard things? Do you just keep saying that kind of thing over and over to yourself to help you survive seasons like not being able to communicate?

Katherine: Oh, gosh, that's such a good question. Before I could communicate, my brain was so foggy, and I have no memory for two and a half months of it, so it's hard to know exactly what I was thinking very early on. But I can very much remember in the early days of brain rehab when I was relearning to walk, and I could speak again, but it was really hard to understand. I would tell myself, like, I was made to do hard things. I was made to do hard things. I was made to do hard things. And it became kind of an internal... a bit of a game.

Like, my sweet family, the Wolf side has kind of a mantra, if you will, that they don't make things a wolf can't do. So I would say that. I would say that. They don't make things this wolf can't do over and over. As you referenced by my wonderful parents, I've got some good stock in there on both sides. And I think that really helped my brain be in a place to know, like, I can do hard things. And the faith that

says He will supply every need as I have them. His divine power has given me everything that I need to do the hard thing. And that's 1 Peter 5:10. So I think all that was marinating in my head and my heart. post-stroke.

In those early days of not being able to speak, I wrote about this in the book you may have read, that they gave me a communication device. They gave me a letter board to use to communicate. And I would write obsessively, I would type the letters, I'm the same on the inside. I'm the same on the inside.

I understand, totally, why I would say that. I wanted my family and friends to know my faith, my personality, my memories are all 100% intact. But I can decidedly tell you, I would never say that today because I'm not the same on the inside. I'm not. And that's a good thing.

Suffering has birthed me anew. My suffering has changed me in a very beautiful and profound way. So I would never use that language, even though I 100% understand what I did and why I did it. But that communication device would scream out today, I am totally different because Jesus has given me a second chance life and I get to live it.

Annie: The mantra of they don't make a thing a wolf can't do is so good. I mean, that is so good.

Katherine: Thank you. I love it.

Annie: I do too. And just the concept of... because I'm thinking about the last time I ran into something that felt too hard for me to do, the holding the grief of "life isn't supposed to be like this" and matching it with "I was made to do hard things", it kind of feels like I'm trying to make oil and water work in the same like jar.

Katherine: Absolutely. Annie, Jay and I both have desperately wanted to instill in our two little boys the reality that they can do hard things and really thought a lot about what is the exact language we really want to put around that to deeply get into their psyches.

I'll say this without telling you the whole story. Basically, starting with my kids wanting to, you know, pray for a good night, a good day tomorrow, I started desperately imploring them to pray this prayer. "God, whether tomorrow is a great day, a bad day, the last day, let us live it well for you, because Jesus, we know we can do hard things in the good story that you are writing in our lives." And they can now quote that, and it's deep in there.

I'm a big fan of “we can do hard things in the good story that God is writing in our lives”. When I speak in a corporate setting or secular setting of any kind and can't use faith language, I always end that “you were made to do the hard thing and the good story being written in your life”.

So even though I'm not talking directly God made you, I'm saying, you were made to do the hard thing and the good story being written in your life. And I think that's it.

Annie: Yeah. And then they sit there and go, if I was made, who made me? And you've got them on the sneaky Jesus track. And now they're asking the question.

Katherine: That's good.

Annie: That's the way to do it.

Katherine: I say, yeah, it's camouflage. Our stories are camouflage.

Annie: Oh, that's beautiful. Let's talk a little bit about IF:Gathering in March. Because I hadn't read *Treasures in the Dark* yet before I heard you at IF. One of the benefits of my life is I've gotten to hear you speak a lot. People fly us to the same place pretty frequently. As much as I'm traveling, you and I get to be in the same conferences a decent amount.

Katherine: Totally.

Annie: Why was that one so different? It felt like the Holy Spirit was doing something different with you that day.

Katherine: Yes, yes, he was. Being asked to speak on a specific passage as powerful and poignant as John 9 really read to me pretty deeply. And I think that came across as I shared. That the notion of the blind man being born blind so that the works of God could be displayed in him, it unlocked something in me to communicate so deeply to our disabled friends and to every broken heart, so that the works of God could be displayed.

And then to really unpack the notion of physical curing and spiritual healing, and the Pharisees not getting it, but Jesus making the blind man into a new creation, not because of the curing of his eyesight, but because he meets Jesus and believes in Jesus. Then he is actually healed and not merely cured. I think unpacking all of that just was, I don't really have words, so powerful.

Also because the medium is the message. I'm preaching this from a wheelchair. Did I get the healing? Did I get the curing? Did I get the miracle? Fascinating questions when you're in this situation. I agree, it was something very special.

Annie: It's an interesting thing to watch a friend of yours, like I got to watch you, when I see you teach so powerfully often, and then that one just had this tinge of you don't know how deep I've gone with this story. That's what it felt like. So you explaining it tells me what the feeling I had around it, which is the gift of the Gospels, right? The gift of the Gospels is you can find yourself in them and deep dive.

Katherine: Annie, I would say you are an incredibly brilliant person to recognize that that was happening. I don't think anyone else in my life has articulated it that way. I'm not kidding. But you are exactly right. And that is very astute. So yes, 100%.

Annie: Thank you. I love hearing you teach and it was a beautiful version of what you do. I wanted to text you about that, I was like, Ah, I'm seeing her on the podcast. I'm just going to ask her in front of God and everybody.

Katherine: Yes, absolutely. Well, absolutely. To make one more point about John 9, Jesus is asked 183 questions during His lifetime. He chooses to answer three, only three of them. One of those three was the question of why was the man born blind? I think there's a lot to His answer, gotta say.

Annie: I'm sorry to Bible quiz you in front of everyone, but what are the other two that he answered?

Katherine: I have no idea.

Annie: Okay, great, great. We'll look it up. We'll look it up. This is what we get to do.

Katherine: We'll look it up. I feel total freedom in saying that. I have no idea. I don't claim to be a Bible teacher. That just hits hard. John 9-

Annie: Listen, I've read the Gospels out loud for our Let's Read the Gospels podcast 14 times. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John 14 times. I don't know the answer. We don't have to know all the answers.

Katherine: I love that.

Annie: Okay, the last thing I want to ask you about is at the end of every one of the reflections, you say, if it's true for me, could it be true for you too?

Katherine: Yes, yes. Oh, don't you love that? Don't you love the thought?

Annie: That's a great question.

Katherine: Isn't it the question of all time? What is the point of telling your story if you're not asking that? You know? I long so deeply to make this story a universal story, because the specifics are so unique to me. I mean, most people haven't nearly died of a brainstem stroke and become severely disabled afterwards. But people know what it feels like to look in the mirror and not like what they see, even if their face isn't paralyzed on one side. This story is decidedly universal, if you have eyes to see it that way. So I really wanted to link it up, that if it is true for me, in my story, could it possibly be true for you too? And the answer is no, maybe not yet, but maybe one day it will be. And maybe one day it's coming and you need some hope.

Annie: It's beautiful. I cannot wait for people... if they haven't gotten *Treasures in the Dark*, it is such a great... I just enjoyed reading it. I loved this format. I can't wait for people to get to read it.

Katherine: Aw. I love that you're saying that, Annie. Thank you. You are an incredibly gifted, prolific, just scholar, writer, thinker, so that means a lot coming from you.

Annie: Thank you. Okay, I meant to ask you this at the beginning, I forgot, so we'll finish with it. Because the show is called That Sounds Fun, Katherine Wolf, tell me what y'all are doing for fun.

Katherine: Oh my goodness, well, I mean, so many of the things in my life are decidedly fun and fabulous right now, right down at the coffee shop. However, I should tell you, one of the most fun things I get to do is, I call it my annual splash fest, where I go down a water slide. Because I have no balance, it's really quite special. I have a lot of reasons that's not necessarily on the top of the list, but it's so fun to go down the water slide these days with my kids. I make it an annual treat to drop down the slide.

Annie: Oh, I love it. I can't wait. Well, happy almost anniversary of getting to go down the slide. Here comes summer again.

Katherine: Oh, I thank you.

Annie: Hope Heals Camp. If people want to know more, where do they go to look up more about the camp?

Katherine: Everything is on our website, Hope Heals, or you can go directly to the camp website, which is hopehealscamp.org. So everything has separate websites, but everything can be found through our website, Hope Heals, as well, hopeheals.com.

But the camp, oh my word, Annie, right there in Nashville, the number of people coming down to camp this year is very high. Maybe you need to make a trip on down.

Annie: Oh my gosh, I need to come visit at some point. Maybe July will be... Is it all summer?

Katherine: Yeah, it's all four weeks in July. They're one-week session each happening throughout July. 2,200 participants.

Annie: That's incredible.

Katherine: It's gonna be awesome.

Annie: What a gift y'all are. I love you, Katherine Wolf. Thanks for making time for this.

Katherine: Aw. I love you, Annie. This was a special blessing to me. Thank you so much for having me.

Annie: Anytime, my friend. Anytime.

[00:53:04] <music>

Outro: Oh, you guys, don't you love her? She's just the best. Oh my gosh, she is the best. I love getting to chat with her. I love learning from her, her growth, her depth. I mean, it's incredible.

Hey, make sure you grab your copy of *Treasures in the Dark*. This is a great one to have two or three sitting on your shelf, at a time when someone needs it, you've got it right there.

And make sure you're following Katherine on social media, tell her thank you for being on the show. And if you get to stop by the coffee shop in Atlanta, take a picture and tag Katherine and I in it. I would love to see it and share it.

If you like this episode, I think you're also going to love Episode 487 with Alicia Britt Chole. You guys, she is unbelievable. And Episode 329 with Kate Bowler. Both women also talking about how do you go through the harder things in life when that is our normal life. So I think you'll really enjoy those episodes.

If you have any questions from this episode, you can drop them in the Q&A box on your Spotify app, if you're a Spotify listener like me, or send them to us on Instagram @ThatSoundsFunPodcast. We'll try to answer them there.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. Anywhere you need me, that is where you can find me.

And I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you, and I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me is laying by the pool. So catch me reading a book, laying by the pool. Y'all have a great week.

We'll see you back here on Thursday as we recap 2018 and mainly just keep talking with our friend, Eddie Kaufholz. We'll see y'all then.