

THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 97 | VFL Reads: Redeeming Your Time, Part 1

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



Autumn: Welcome to the Vision for Life podcast, an ongoing conversation between the pastors of Fellowship Denver and the church at large. Each week we talk about life, faith, the Bible, and how to follow Jesus as we go about our daily lives. I'm Autumn, host of the Vision for Life podcast, and Hunter is joining me on the podcast today. Hunter, welcome, glad to have you.

Hunter: Autumn, it's great to be here. And we are recording this podcast episode at the beginning of fall, and to commemorate the occasion, you have worn your most spring-like outfit, true to form.

Autumn: Well, maybe. You know, yeah, it is bright.

Hunter: It's pink and it says Easter.

Autumn: Oh, it actually says the Broadmoor. It's a vintage shirt that I found at a thrift store, and it looks like it was maybe, you know, like if you're going to play tennis at the Broadmoor or something.

Hunter: On Easter Sunday afternoon.

Autumn: You know that you reserve your coral-colored clothing, or 'pops of color,' as you like to call it, for Easter, but I wear colorful things year round. So I don't think you should impose your ideas about clothing colors and what days are appropriate for said clothing colors on me. You can abide by that if you would like to.

Hunter: Well, I appreciate your pops of color. And you bring pops of color in the dead of winter, which I'm always inspired. I'm like, I need more color in winter. I get into the grays and the browns and the blues. I'm just simply pointing out today that pink and September don't exactly line up.

Autumn: All right, well, you know, then someday I'm going to point out that your black polo and June may not either, so it can go both ways. But today, friends, Hunter is wearing a black polo shirt. Anyone who knows him will be unsurprised by that. I am wearing a pink pullover with long sleeves, and anyone who knows me will be unsurprised by that as well. So, we are not here to talk about my shirt choice, though, nor yours. We're going to be talking today about a book that you suggested we discuss on the podcast. So, would you go ahead and introduce it for us?

Hunter: This book is called *Redeeming Your Time*, and then the subtitle is *Seven Biblical Principles for Being Purposeful, Present, and Wildly Productive*, by Jordan Raynor. And this is a book that was recommended to me by a friend a couple of months ago. I ordered it from Amazon. I stuck it in my briefcase as I was leaving on vacation last month, and I read it on vacation. It didn't take very long to read. It's not a long read. In fact, it's one of those books that really doesn't even qualify as reading. It's more like studying a paper. But I read it on vacation, and I read it when I had some time to reflect on how to integrate some of the ideas. And it has been really helpful to me, and so I wanted to share it with our listeners.

Autumn: Well, I'm glad it was helpful for you. You suggested that I read it, and we agreed it is a little bit like reading a manual, even though the author attempts to make it interesting. But what particularly about it compelled you to want to share it? So, you found some of that helpful, but why this conversation on the podcast? What about it made you think this would be helpful to share with our church family or our listeners.

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Hunter: If you had to boil it down, it's a time management book, or it's a book about how to set goals and work on them. And the reason I found it so helpful for me was it forced me to think about just how I spend my days and how I spend my days versus what's most important and purposeful for me to be giving myself too. And I think that's a tension that a lot of us have to grapple with in this world we live in. Things are coming at us fast, messages are coming at us fast, demands are coming out as fast. It's very easy over time to, if you were just to stop and reflect, you would say, actually spend a ton of energy doing things that aren't that important. And that's not a big deal, but the bigger thing is I don't spend energy doing the things that really are important and really do move the ball forward for what God's called me to do. So, if we think about the purpose of this show—we call it the Vision for Life podcast—we want to have conversations about what it means to live a life for the kingdom of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit. That's what we're talking about on this podcast over and over again from all kinds of different angles and how we live that out in our vocations and all the different callings that God has given us. This book came along for me at a time when my work was kind of shifting a little bit. There's some new demands that I need to think about and consider. There's old demands to keep up with. And as I read it, I thought, I need a tune up, I need a reflection right now on this question: am I giving myself intentionally to the things that God has called me to give myself to, as opposed to just doing all the things I could be doing and responding to all the things I could be responding to? And I said, I read this on vacation because it was actually really helpful to read it in a space of a week where I could reflect. And so, I wasn't trying just to cram it into the cracks, but I could just read a little bit of it. It's not a hard read; I could read it, but this is the key: I had time to actually think about what I was reading and ask what changes would I make in my daily weekly rhythms if I was to implement some of this.

Autumn: So, observations that we all can easily make and resonate with and understand regardless of what our work is. Whether you're a mom who stays home with kids. Whether you're just starting out in your sort of career path. Whether you, like you just mentioned, Hunter, going through some sort of shift where you have to reallocate time or assess how your time is spent. We all can observe that competition for our time and attention is intense. That it can come from a lot of different places. And we all know and intuit that we need to give ourselves to things that are important and prioritize our time and have a way of doing that. So, within the Vision for Life framework, we want to ask the question this way, as you were just explaining, how can we practically give ourselves to the things that are most important and most aligned with God's calling on our lives? And you're saying this book is such a helpful tool for you to think through how to do that.

Hunter: And I like- did you just use the word practically? Because that really is what this book did for me. It helped me actually think about what does it look like in the course of a day and over the course of a week. Those are the two time frames that this book really helped me think the most about. He'll talk about quarters and months and quarters and longer term, but this really think practically, how do I organize a day? How do I set up a week in a way that I can make sure that, over the course of the week, I'm probably going to get done and give myself to the most important things God has called me to give myself to.

Autumn: You said this really is a time management book. I wonder why this book was helpful because there's a whole slew of books on time management and different schools of thought about how to do exactly what we're asking, although they may not be asking it in the same way we are. That is true, not all of them are organized to ask how do we align ourselves with God's call on our lives, but as far as just time management itself, what made this one different? Because I think you've also read some other time management books and authors.

Hunter: Yeah, I would probably amend that to time management may be too narrow of a focus. It's also about how to be productive, which is a little bit different than managing your time. And then he talks about being present, and I think it's also about how to be present with the people who you care about and who God has called you to love and put in your life. So, with all that said, I think the value of this book is that he integrates several of the best thinkers in the realm of time management, productivity, presence. And they're not all Christian authors. In fact, many of them are not. I've studied a lot of these authors' work. I've read some of their work. I've used some of their ideas in my own life. The main thing I loved about this book was he was summarizing and bringing together a lot of these different approaches and showing how they might be put together in one kind of cohesive approach to life. And I really appreciate that. So, the work he's done here of synthesizing and summarizing and integrating many different things is really, really valuable work.

Autumn: I have a question for you just based on my own reading of this book. I am curious what you think of his approach to structuring the content for the book. So, you mentioned he does integrate several different really good thinkers on this topic, time management and productivity. Some of those are Christian authors, some of them are not, but he sets up the book in a way that is appealing to a theological underpinning for the ideas that he then integrates into the book, bases each chapter on, and he has a big idea for each chapter that appeals to this theological basis. And then he breaks it down into practical steps. But as far as the bigger structure, so not the practical steps, but the bigger structure—he calls them principles—that he examines in each chapter, he appeals to our sensibilities in this as an examination of how Jesus spent his time when He was on earth. So, in the gospels years, we have recorded Jesus life when he was going about working and ministering to people and teaching, leading up to His crucifixion. He utilizes that period of Jesus's life as a way to dissect how Jesus spent his time and then to say, we can learn from that. And so, he distills those observations then into these principles and breaks those principles down into practices. The practices I found very helpful. The principles were also good as far as principles, but the theological appeal to, like, this is the best sort of productivity book because we can look at how Jesus spent His time, I found to be less compelling or helpful than the other parts of it. So, I'm curious about your take on that part of it.

Hunter: Well, you said a lot right there. The first thing you mentioned was he breaks it down into principles and practices. And the principles are kind of the big idea and the practices he presents as examples of ways that he has worked this out practically in his own life. And he kind of presents the practices as take it or leave it. Here're some ideas, but the principles as more timeless. I found that way of structuring it really helpful and really good. So, I like that part of it. The second part you mentioned was it's an explicitly Christian book and he works hard to translate some of these productivity and presence principles into kind of Christian language. And I like you found that to be eh, okay. I don't like this book because it's a Christian book. In fact, this is a little bit counterintuitive. Part of me wishes it wasn't a Christian book because it would have a broader audience if it wasn't a Christian book. And I think the work he's done of integrating these many different authors is the main value add. I think what he's least integrated is the theological part. And I don't think it has to be integrated for it to be really helpful because I can do what I just did. I can say, look, I know as a follower of Jesus who says, 'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,' I am to discern what is God's call on my life. What does it mean to give myself to the kingdom of God. What does it mean to steward well the life and the resources He's given me? I have to work that out in prayer. I have to work that out in community. But even if I've worked that out, I still haven't finished the job because now I actually have to do it right. And that takes day-in, day-out, day-in, day-out work. Well, I could bring that starting point and then just take the principles he's given me here without any kind of spiritual veneer and I would know that I'm going to live a purposeful life for Jesus Christ as a result of this. So, the fact that he kind of adds that, I don't really need him to add that, and I actually don't think he delivers on the promise that

he's going to tease out how Jesus spent His time. I think we get that in the first chapter. I don't think that theme really gets carried through the rest of the book. So, as a Christian book, I don't think it needs to be a Christian book, and I don't think that's the main value add. The main value add to me is he has done a great job synthesizing David Allen, who has written a book called *Getting Things Done*, which is one of the best books on how do you manage projects and tasks and collect them and all. He's done a great job of integrating David Allen, and he's done a great job of summarizing Cal Newport who is about- his book is called *Deep Work*, how do you give yourself to focused, important work. And he's done a good job integrating a Christian author like a John Mark Comer, who talks about the ruthless elimination of hurry. And he's taken all these perspectives and he's put them together. That's the real value in the book. And I could do without translating it into spiritual terms.

Autumn: Yeah, thanks for that explanation. That's really helpful. So, our recommendation, even for our listeners, if you were to pick up the book is to be aware of that, that there is this component that we don't disagree with as far as the appeal to being wise about how you use your time to see your time as a gift that you can use on behalf of God's kingdom and that your life, you are actually called to productivity, which we can see in Ephesians, in that we are called to good works that God has ordained for us to do. And we can see in many different areas of Scripture that God has given us this work to do. And yet, the book itself is more beneficial, I think we both found, in its practical application and suggestions than in the appeal to those ideas.

Hunter: And all that to say, if you're reading the book and you think the Christian categories feel a little forced, and that bothers you, I would just say keep pressing on because it's really in the practical outworking that the payoff is there.

Autumn: So, in this we are asking, and I think the author also is asking, how can we use our time on behalf of God's kingdom? Let's look at the first four principles that Jordan Raynor gives us in his book, what he identifies as how we can be productive. And he says, how can we be productive with God or in participation with God for the sake of His kingdom work?

Hunter: He gives these seven principles and we're going to break our conversation to two parts. So, in part one, we're going to look at his first four principles. And we didn't just kind of randomly draw the line there. We actually said, as we surveyed and summarized the book, we said there's actually a theme that you and I in our conversation thought united these first four principles. And if I had to summarize that theme in one word, it would just be to be purposeful—to be purposeful. And that's part of his subtitle. If I had to summarize the second half of the book, I would say it's about being present and productive, right? So, the first four chapters are really about being purposeful. To be a little bit more verbose, it's about assessing your priorities and then having a system set up where you can begin to use your time and your energy in a way that gives your best work and your best presence to your priorities. So, that's really what it's about; setting up a system where you can be constantly filtering and collecting and filtering all the stuff that's coming your way, and then prioritizing all that stuff in a way that's consistent with what God has called you to give yourself to.

Autumn: So, what is the first principle that Raynor explores that fits within this section, being purposeful?

Hunter: He calls the first principle, “to start with the Word.” And this is probably the most biblically grounded portion of the book. And he's just observing that Jesus would spend time in prayer and with His Father. And it is from that relationship with his Father and from prayer that He maintained this constant sense of what He was called to and what

He was supposed to give himself to. We've covered that similar idea in previous podcast episodes like when we did our Daily Life with God series. It's a lot of those same ideas.

Autumn: You mentioned, H, just a moment ago, that this section is largely about assessing your priorities and allowing those to occupy proper space within your system, whatever that is. And this, for Raynor and for us, is one of the highest priorities. That's why he starts with it. That's why we've talked about it before. So, start with the Word. Develop a regular rhythm of spending time with God. If this is something you desire, our encouragement is to list that as one of your top priorities. And when you begin to make a system to structure your time, give that—give spending time with God, this regular rhythm of time with God in prayer and in His Word—give that space a priority.

Hunter: And I would say, even though I already agreed with this and do this, it was inspiring for me to read that and to start the book reading that. One of my takeaways as I reflected on this was, I want more time with the Lord. I want more time. I actually began to set up my days so that I could maybe have even more time at the beginning of the day to spend with the Lord in His Word and reflecting on His Word. As far as the practical part of that section, I found it helpful, too, that he does offer what his own process is. Similarly, in our Daily Life with God Conversations, you had offered insight into the process that you use and explained that, and Raynor explains how he breaks down his time, his regular daily time, with God. And even seeing that can give you some ideas and encouragement and excitement about your own ability to do that. So, I appreciated that as well. Okay, principle number one, start with the Word. What was the second principle?

Hunter: He calls the second principle “let your yes be yes,” which it's not obvious what that means, but here's what that means when you get into it. He uses a system developed by David Allen called “Getting Things Done,” which is a system of collecting all the stuff that you have to do or that is being requested of you to do, and then periodically reviewing it so that you can decide what to say yes to or what to do. And I have used this system for 15 years, this getting things done system by David Allen. I thought his summary was excellent. If it's your first time to think about that, or if you're not familiar with that system, this part of the book might feel a little bit tedious because he's getting into some of the concepts. But from a summary standpoint, he does a great job of summarizing it. And the book *Getting Things Done* is excellent as well. And one of the central insights of the Getting Things Done system is that stress happens when we are carrying a lot of things we have to do, or open loops, he calls them, in our head. So, if you text me and it's something that I can't respond to right away, but I've got to come back to it or think about it and I don't get that out of my head, then what's going to happen is all day long and be carrying around in my head like, oh yeah, Autumn texted me—I've got a text her back. I literally thought of this this morning. Someone had texted me last week to ask about getting a meeting—and I'm terrible at scheduling meetings via text—and someone had texted last week, and then he's like, it's not important, we can schedule several weeks out. And so, then I just put it down. I didn't get it into a system outside of my head. And I literally remember this morning, oh shoot, I'm supposed to respond to him for some times that we can meet up. So, the inside of Getting Things Done is all these things that come to you, whether and how are different ways they come to you, you need one place that you collect them that's not in your head. And when *Getting Things Done* was originally authored, that would have been like a piece of paper that you wrote it all down on. Now there's a lot of electronic devices and stuff where you can capture stuff.

Autumn: Even electronic devices that are made to look and feel like paper.

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Hunter: That's right, like the one I'm using right now. But you collect them outside your head. That allows you to get back to whatever you need to focus on, and then periodically you go and review your bucket, basically, and look at what's in your bucket, get it sorted out, and figure out what you should and shouldn't give yourself to.

Autumn: Another key insight that he explores, and it's also in the Getting Things Done method, is that this requires maintenance. So, you mentioned you need one place and then there's this process to continue looking back at it. So, whatever system it is that you utilize, electronic or paper, requires maintenance. So, this again speaks to the developing a rhythm, but putting it all in one place allows us to, as we're talking about in this whole section in conversation, assess our priorities.

Hunter: And I took maintain your commitment tracking system—that's one of his practices, maintain your commitment tracking system—that was one of my big takeaways from this section. And I personally recommitted to the daily maintenance and the weekly maintenance, and he talks about how to do that of my system, and that's made a big difference.

Autumn: Okay, so Start with a Word, Let your yes be yes—those are principles one and two. What's principle three?

Hunter: Dissent—that's D-I-S-S-E-N-T, like disagree with or go against—dissent from the kingdom of noise.

Autumn: So, I know what he means by kingdom of noise, but can you elucidate that for everyone listening? What is dissenting from the kingdom of noise? If you have children, small children, you need to get away from them?

Hunter: Yes, you need to sprinkle some cheerios on the floor.

Autumn: It means if you work with some of our coworkers, you need to take time away from our open office.

Hunter: That's exactly what it means. Yeah, sprinkle some cheerios on the floor and lock the door and let your kids run loose for a while and try to get an office with the door if Michael Goldstein sits within 30 yards of you. That's the principle I took away.

Autumn: Your personal application.

Hunter: Personal application. He's talking about all the things that bombard us, all the messages that bombard us. Sometimes they bombard us from text messages, all the things that come through our phone, emails. If you have social media, they could be messages coming to you from social media and advertising. All of this is the noisy world that we live in. And he is observing that you need some practices to get some distance from the noise of our world. And if you don't, you'll be inevitably pulled along by whatever is kind of demanding your attention. It's going to be harder and harder and harder to give yourself to the things that are important. So, these are his noise management strategies. And I think this was, in terms of the practices, he might have had more on this than he did than any other of the principles in the book. He suggested nine practices for quieting down the noise in your life. Are there any of those nine that you found particularly insightful?

Autumn: The two that you and I both talked about and mentioned that were really helpful for us were renounce or attain independence from social media. And so, we can talk more about that. The second that I took away was get

comfortable with the crevices of your day. As far as the first, renounce or attain independence from social media, he talks about it in a way of really giving that a space to occupy and only that space. So, not allowing it to overtake your time or to fritter away time in your day unexpectedly.

Hunter: And as I read that, I thought, how much does Twitter and Instagram kind of creep into my day every day. So, I took Twitter off my phone as a result of reading this. I don't even have the app on my phone. And I time boxed Twitter and Instagram so I can give them a little bit of time at the beginning of the day in the morning. Not the first thing in the day, but kind of after I've had my quiet time and get ready to go to work. But I just want to check that. Can do that. And then, at the end of the day, in the evening, after I've kind of eaten dinner, those are the two times I've time boxed those things for, and I've been experimenting with that for the last month and a half. Just time boxing Twitter and Instagram. I found it to be really helpful. Now, there have been days when I haven't successfully done that. And there was a couple of days last week where I actually needed to check Twitter regularly for something I was working on. And that was one of the worst days ever because I was just getting infiltrated with all these other messages that I'm picking up as a result of being on Twitter. So, something that I've experienced over the last month and a half. What are my days like when I really do keep that as a discipline? And what happens when I do live my old way? And I'll tell you, the new way is tons better. And I'm actually surprised at how little I miss. So, for example, if I will check Instagram at the end of the day after dinner, I will actually see everything my friends have posted that day, and I could keep up with the kids' birthday parties and the travels and all the stuff. It's fun to keep up with your friends that way. I actually don't miss anything, and I get a lot less of the suggested algorithmic content that Instagram wants to send me. So, I'm doing a lot less shopping as a result of having to sell me stuff, but I'm keeping up just as well with my friends. I'm just maybe a couple of hours behind.

Autumn: Yeah, in that, and in this whole section, the big idea is interacting with technology and with all this information that is readily accessible to us at all times in predetermined ways rather than reactive ways or rather than addictive ways. So, the second of his practices that I mentioned that was particularly insightful for me, get comfortable with the crevices of your day, is more about that we fall into these patterns of behavior when we think we have a few minutes of time, five, eight minutes, that don't seem to be otherwise able to be utilized for something productive or meaningful. And so, we often turn to our phone or if you're browsing already on your computer or working on something on your computer, and you're prone to opening more tabs like myself, I might pull up something that I would read or check on the other tab. And his suggestion is allow those moments instead to actually be quiet. Quiet time, he says on page 73 of the book, "If you follow some of the first practices in this chapter, you're going to find yourself with slivers of silence you didn't have before. The first thing I recommend doing with your newfound solitude is nothing, absolutely nothing." And this seems like such a small insight, it's even a small section of the book, but it's profound because it actually goes against the way that so many of us operate.

Hunter: I'm waiting at Snarf's for five minutes for my sandwich to be done, and I'm just sitting there waiting for them to call my name. I have a choice in that moment. I can sit there and look around at what's going on in Snarf's, which actually can be pretty interesting. I can quietly think about something I need to think about, pray a little bit about my day, or I can pull out my phone and start checking Twitter. If I don't pull out the phone and check Twitter, that space is going to go a lot better and it's highly likely I'm going to be less distracted the rest of the day if I don't do that. So, it's not just about those five minutes I'm sitting there waiting. It's really about how that bleeds into the rest of my day. And if I pull out Twitter, it's highly likely that I'm going to see something that's going to start my brain off down a rabbit hole. That's going

to, when I get back to my office with my sandwich, it's going to actually keep me from doing what I had planned to do that afternoon.

Autumn: It's interesting to think in the scenario that you just described, what you're connected to. If you're sitting at Snarf's and you look around and you're observing the people who are there, you're present in the city in that physical space with the people who are there, even though many of those people may be doing the same, checking things on their phone. But you're present there and mindful of your surroundings, what's around you. And so, your connectedness both in your mind and your body is to that place and to those people in that moment. If you, in that moment, choose to talk to God about something, then you're connected not only to your physical space, but also to God. And I think, to that second observation there, previously, I'm not a digital native—smartphones came about since I've been an adult. It was not my natural habit, but I have fallen into the habit of utilizing my phone in the same way—and I used to, I can think back years ago before I had that habit, I would use those spaces of time to actually invite God into my day. And when I was reading this book, I had a moment that made me think, oh, I need to actually start practicing that again. I would much rather be connected to God in those five minutes, mindfully and thoughtfully, then connected to whatever's going on on Twitter.

Hunter: That's really well said. And he had a parallel insight in one of his principles, he called it, or one of his practices, he called it “stop swimming in infinity pools.” And he just makes the point that a lot of the media we consume through social media or through apps is meant to just constantly refresh, refresh, refresh, refresh, refresh, refresh, so you never exhaust it. It's infinity. And this is exactly how Twitter functions. This is exactly how Instagram now functions. Instagram will just keep sending you, through its algorithm, more stuff to look at even if you've looked at everything your friends who you follow on Instagram have posted. And this is unfortunately how some news sites are now functioning. This is one of my big beefs with The New York Times. I have quite a few beefs with The New York Times, but this is one of my beefs with The New York Times. If I read it on my tablet, which is how I read it, I can't just read an issue of the paper. It's just a billboard of news that just keeps updating, keeps updating, keeps updating. So, I never feel like I finished an issue of The New York Times as opposed to the main thing I read every day is a local paper, the Denver Gazette. And the Denver Gazette will let me download today's issue of the Denver Gazette. It's an online newspaper, but it's kind of formatted like you would see in newspaper, and I can literally swipe through it, read the things I want to read, come to the end, and go, ‘I'm done for today,’ and then I'll pick it up again tomorrow. So, it's not an infinity loop. And I find that a much more sustainable way to keep up with the news than just something that keeps refreshing and sending me more and more and more.

Autumn: So, principle one, start with the Word. Principle two, let your yes be yes. Principle three, dissent from the kingdom of noise. What is principle four that Raynor encourages us to contemplate?

Hunter: Principle four is “prioritize your yeses.” And I like that this comes after he said you want to spend time with God, and you want to have a system of tracking everything that's coming your way and collecting it outside of your head and then periodically reviewing it, and you want to quiet down the noise in your life. If you think about it, if you do all three of those things, then you are going to have a lot more capacity to step back and ask, okay, of all this stuff, what is it most important that I say yes to, that I give myself to. And that's what he means by prioritize your yeses. Now, practically, he gets into goal setting in this section, and he talks about accepting your mission and choosing your calling, setting long term goals, and setting quarterly goals. So, he gets into practically how does he set goals for what to do. But in setting

goals, he's really saying, I'm identifying the things that are most important, not the things that are just the most urgent, but I'm identifying things that are most important, and I'm figuring out what it will take to make meaningful progress on those things. And I found that a really powerful thought.

Autumn: Is there any particular practice within that section that you found helpful or newly insightful or encouraging?

Hunter: One of his practices is draft quarterly goals. And I hadn't really ever thought about that. Like, oh, I should think about the next three months and identify several goals. So, I tried this with a project at work. It was really a collection of projects I had in my work. And I said, you know what, those projects all kind of move in the same direction. They accomplish the same thing together. They accomplish the same thing. And that they bring some clarity for our staff team and for our elder teams about who we are and where we're going and how we're going to get there and how we're going to work together. Our team has grown and changed a lot in the last two years. There's been a lot of change, and when a team gets bigger, you have to figure out new ways of working. And so, I had several projects that kind of sat in the realm of bringing clarity to all of that, right? And what reflecting on this book helped me do is to say, okay, what would it look like to actually make meaningful progress on those things? And I stepped back and said, you know, I could probably finish all those projects by the end of the year, which effectively is a quarter. It's a little bit longer than a quarter, but I could finish all those by the end of the year, and if I finished all of them by Christmas of this year, that would be really meaningful. And then I could come back at the first of the year and I could start the new year fresh with all of this clarified and present it to our team and lead our team through it, and it will be clarifying for our team. So, I set a goal: finish these six projects by the end of the year and organize them into one document so I can present them to our teams. And that was a very clear quarterly goal that I didn't have in my head before reading this. And a quarter, three months, four months, was the amount of time that I could say, okay, that's an amount of time that's not like tomorrow, but I can think about what I can reasonably accomplish in that amount of time. I can set this goal. There's some accountability in that, some focus. It's really brought some focus even to me saying, what am I going to do next week? Well, I'm going to carve out some time to work on those projects so I can keep moving them toward their finish line.

Autumn: I think sometimes goal setting, just broadly, can feel difficult for a number of reasons. Sometimes it feels like an exercise in futility because goals, maybe things you would like to do or that even are really good, simply seem so far out of reach that it feels almost discouraging to list it as a goal. Sometimes goal setting seems unnecessary because things you might list as actual goals are things that very likely will happen anyway. Or sometimes I think we can get into these modes where what we can handle, where life is overwhelming for whatever reason and what we can handle is like that day or that week. Or does Raynor offer any wisdom or do you have any insight into entering a space that allows you contemplation—you mentioned this kind of hierarchy of what he examined in his principles one, two, three, that allow you to work on number four—but how can we consider a goal? What wisdom is there, A) in setting goals? And B) what practical tips do you have? As you've explained, this practice is necessary for your work, and you do it also in your personal life. So, what makes for a goal that is helpful, or how can we approach this process?

Hunter: One of his practices, his last one was lock posteriorities in the basement. Which he meant things that aren't important, just lock them in the basement and forget about them. So, the freedom there is to say you don't have to set a goal for everything that is coming your way. So, I think practically the first step is to ask, what do I actually need to set a goal for? Or another way to say it is to kind of ask the what if question, if I did that, if I got that done, I can say with confidence—and usually that's just because my heart kind of leaps with joy—I could say with confidence, that would be

significant, that would really move something forward, or that would really bring clarity where there needs to be clarity. So, that'd be significant. That's kind of how I start. Those are things I need to set goals on. And I'm going to come back and say this is where I found his quarterly practice to be helpful, because I can actually think about the time of three months or so at a time. We set annual goals as a staff team; everyone has to set annual goals for their ministry. We talk about smart goals. That is, they are specific, they're measurable, they're achievable, they're time-bound. We talk about that as a team. I set smart goals every year. The one drawback to that is a year is such a long-time horizon that they never feel urgent. It always feels like, well, I've got more time to accomplish my smart goals because they're a year long. I've got a whole year to do it, and I find the quarter to be I can actually think about, what can I do between now and the end of the year and what would be meaningful to accomplish in three months? And that capacity of time is just one that I find really empowering to think about. So that's my biggest practical takeaway is instead of just setting goals, why don't you set goals every quarter for what you're going to do that quarter, which means about four times a year I'm going to set some goals for the next three months. And that's the add that has really given me a lot of energy. I also identified a couple of personal life projects like things around my house or things in my financial planning that I wanted to take care of as well. And I've just kind of always been chipping away at them. Like I'll just work on a little bit here, working a little bit there, and they seem just never be finished. And so, I thought it'd be meaningful to have those done in the next quarter too. And then I started looking at my calendar, going, when can I do it? And I had about six or seven days of vacation left in the year that I needed to use, and I picked four days out of a week, four consecutive days, and said, I'm just going to take four days off as personal days and I'm going to get those two projects done in those four days, and I can do that. And it felt really good. Now, without thinking about these are things I really need to get done, I don't just want to chip away at them. I probably can't just get them done, chipping away at them in a couple of weeks or a month even. But if I think about, I want to get done by the end of the year, I can do that. What would it take? If I had these four days, I could really make progress.

Autumn: So, in this process of goal setting, you're identifying those things and how to accomplish those things in this sort of prioritization and setting of goals. And that helps frame out what you will take on the length of time, how to accomplish it, and where it can fit. So, running through the principles one final time for our episode here: start with the Word, let your yes be yes, dissent from the Kingdom of noise, and prioritize your yeses.

Hunter: And our observation as we kind of plan the summary of this book is, if you do those four things, you will have a lot more clarity on what the most important things to give yourself to are. And you'll have a system, a rhythm, of being able to step back and look at all that's coming your way and ask what's most important. And so, this is really about being what he calls purposeful. What we might say to prioritize. Now, as you and I were talking about this, you had one kind of observation that I thought was really pertinent and helpful. So why don't we close with that.

Autumn: As I was reading the book and thinking about the big ideas in it—so, these principles and his overall approach—I think this book is meant to help us develop a disciplined use of time. So, these practical steps and offerings, these practical things that Raynor offers as far as how he structured his time that we can implement, or he says, 'develop your own systems and structures.' But the big idea of being purposeful and present and productive is driving to this idea of developing a disciplined use of our time that allows us to be effective representatives of God's work in the world. And we can be productive because He's given us, God has given us, bodies and energy and time and wherewithal to participate with Him in His work. So, as I was thinking about that, it reminded me of the necessity when we're walking with God in desiring to be productive for His kingdom, we're called into this life that requires of us a sort of discipline in

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many things, not just in our time, but in our minds and in our hearts. And so, then that reminded me of this passage in Proverbs. So, I will just read this passage from Proverbs 4, it's verses 20 to 27, and we'll close with that. What drew my attention to this passage in Proverbs, or made me think of it, was that in this the wise son is being admonished to listen again to the words here, but the words themselves are telling the wise son that if he is going to be wise, then he needs to conduct himself in a certain manner. And so, this idea of being disciplined, wise followers who participate with God in his kingdom work is encapsulated in this passage. It says, "My son, pay attention to what I say. Turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight. Keep them within your heart, for they are life to those who find them and health to one's whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Keep your mouth free of perversity. Keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead. Fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or the left. Keep your foot from evil." So, in each of those things and the different examinations of the way he was to conduct himself, it was, as we like to say, integrated. It was heart-mouth steps, the way he conducts his whole self and his life. And that, I think, is one component of what we're talking about here. This disciplined use of our time allows us to participate with God in effective work for His kingdom.

Hunter thanks for joining me today. We're going to pick up this conversation in our next episode and examine the next three principles that Jordan Reynor suggests in this effort to assess and prioritize our time and then use it in productive ways. If you have questions, comments, suggestions, whether about today's episode or an idea that you'd like to hear us discuss on the podcast in the future, you can send all of that any time to podcast@fellowshipdenver.org. Thanks for joining us on the Vision for Life podcast. Special thanks to Adam Anglin for our theme music, to Jesse Cowan, our producer, and to Judd Connell, who provides transcription for these episodes.