

THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 104 | VFL Reads: *Six Ways Christians Can Respond to Our Strange New World*, Part 2

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 podcast, and Hunter is joining me today. Hunter, thanks for joining me on the podcast.

Hunter: Autumn, it's great to be back with you.

Autumn: We are picking up a conversation that is taking place in two parts about an article entitled *6 Ways Christians Can Respond to Our Strange New World* by Carl Trueman. And this article that we're referencing was run on the Gospel Coalition's site. And in our first conversation, we covered the first three points. Today we're picking up with points four, five, and six. But before we jump into point four, could you give us some context for our conversation?

Hunter: Yeah, the first context that will probably interest our listeners is to know sometimes, when we do these two-part podcast series, we'll actually record the episodes back-to-back at the same time on the same day. For example, the Jordan Raynor book, we just sat here in the room for three hours and recorded those two episodes back-to-back.

Autumn: That's not the case today.

Hunter: And today is different than that. Today we actually took a week between recordings, which means if you found last week's conversation intellectually stimulating and you found us to really be great conversationalist, you might not experience the same thing today because you have a cold and I just ate two handfuls of Skittles and have had a sugar crash that I'm trying to recover from.

Autumn: Last week we also recorded in the morning. Today we're recording in the afternoon.

Hunter: So, who knows how this is going to go.

Autumn: Well, hopefully well. And if all else fails, we have Jesse still with us who's listening along and always manages to make us sound a little bit better than we actually are. Now, I don't think that's what you meant when you asked me for context.

Autumn: That's not what I had in mind.

Hunter: Let me try to answer the question. I think you meant Carl Trueman has written a great article. When you and I read this article, we said we want to do some podcast episodes on this, and yet we kind of just wish people would read the article. That's the main thing we wanted.

Autumn: I'm not sure that our conversation will improve upon this article.

Hunter: Our conversation is not going to improve upon it, but hopefully it will whet your appetite and to go and read the main thing for yourself. He calls this article *6 Ways Christians Can Respond to Our Strange New World*. And by strange new world, he is referring to the world where new notions of selfhood, like how we figure out who we are, we name our identity, new notions of selfhood have really taken root, particularly this hyper-individual modern age where modern

THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 104 | VFL Reads: *Six Ways Christians Can Respond to Our Strange New World*, Part 2

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



people get to define so, much about who they are simply for themselves, with reference to themselves. Carl Trueman, in his writing, both in his books and in this article, cites the sexual revolution as the preeminent example of this strange new world. And yet the insight is, he believes the sexual revolution is just a symptom of something much, much deeper. And maybe it's the most visible or the most noticeable—the most poignant—symptom, but it's a symptom of something much, much deeper. And so, he begins one of his books by saying, I wonder how we even have arrived at the point in our cultural history where someone could say something like, 'I'm a man trapped in a woman's body,' and the people listening to them say that would make sense to them. They would even have categories for what the person is talking about. And he just notes whether you think that's good or bad, that's just a fact of modern life that was not a fact of life in previous generations. And it's new, it's different, and to many people it's strange. And so, how do we as Christians live in this world? And what I like about the book is it's about how we live faithfully in this world. So, he has six points. Last week we summarized the first three, and we'll just point our listeners to that episode to get the first half of the article, and we're going to pick it up with his fourth thing that we should do in this strange new world.

Autumn: Yes. So, if you have already listened to part one of this conversation, the first three points—just to bring them back to being fresh in your mind—are, recognize our/the churches or Christian's complicity; number two was, learn from the ancient church; number three was, teach the whole council of God. And that's what we covered in part one of this conversation. And today we're picking up with point four of the article, which is, 'shape intuitions through biblical worship.' So, what does he mean by intuitions?

Hunter: By intuitions he means how we are inclined to feel and to think about the modern life as we experience it. And by biblical worship, he's primarily referring to singing. So, his insight here is that singing and worship is how we give expression to what we're feeling. It's how we give expression to what we are experiencing. It's how we give expression to what's going on inside of us. And yet, he notes that the pattern of the Bible, and he cites the Psalms as a preeminent example the pattern of the Bible, is to be really, really honest and open with God about what's going on inside of you, what you're feeling right now. And yet, it doesn't end there. Those feelings then get integrated into some larger truths about who God is, how He made the world to work, where history is headed, what God's doing in the world, such that those things begin to shape your feelings and your feelings get brought into line with that.

Autumn: Yeah, he's making a differentiation in this section of the article about the place that feelings occupy. Whether feelings are foundational, whether feelings should be a guide, or whether feelings are something else, an intuition or an indicator of something that's happening in our inner state that should be paid attention to and can be expressed. And yet, within our cultural reality. Often feelings are given this place of being a guide or being our sense of what is morally right, versus what Trueman is saying is that if we align our feelings, these intuitions, with a biblical perspective, then they're still incredibly important to our experience as humans, to how we understand we're made in the image of God. And yet, they fail us if we rely on them to guide us or to help us determine what is right or wrong. And he gives us a couple of examples of that.

You mentioned the Psalms a moment ago. Trueman uses the Psalms and the state of the Psalmist's inner being as expressed through that writing through the Psalms, as an example. Do you have a particular example to help us understand this kind of differentiation that he's drawing out in the article?

THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 104 | VFL Reads: *Six Ways Christians Can Respond to Our Strange New World*, Part 2

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



Hunter: Yeah, I love the Psalms for this very reason. He's pointing out- the Psalms have helped me; I'm a deep feeler; I'm a very emotional person; I can be pretty up and down emotionally, even if what I present is steady, I'm, below the surface, I'm a duck paddling my little feet off. So, I'm very up and down. And the Psalms have trained me how to bring that into God's presence. So, in some ways, they helped me avoid two mistakes or two ditches. One ditch might just be, I'm going to suppress my feelings, I'm not going to be really honest about what I'm feeling. And usually that's a place of fear. It's like, if I give full event to that or full expression of that, it's going to lead me astray or it's going to be more explosive or more powerful than I can handle, or it's going to be awkward in a way that I don't know how to even face all that's going on within me. And it might make me look funny or weird. So, there's that ditch, the suppression ditch. And then there's another ditch which he calls 'making these feelings an end in and of themselves,' meaning I just express them. And I think once I've expressed them, once I've gotten them out there, I've done the work of real spirituality. So many people, and I would probably put myself in this camp, many people were exposed to a form of spirituality that said, you just focus on what's true and you ignore your feelings. And we found over time, we can't ignore our feelings, they're really strong. I think today we could easily swing the pendulum to the other end of the spectrum and say, now I just need to express my feelings—my feelings are a guide to what is true and right and good. So, I've got to get it out there and, if I feel something, I've got to do something about it, right? And what the Psalms lead us into is something much wiser, and it's good; it's from God and it's good. And what the Psalms model for us is to be perfectly open, as open and honest as we can be—are we ever perfectly open?— But as open and honest as we can be with what we're feeling. And then to meditate on what is true that we know—even if we don't feel it right now—what we know is true, and to bring those two things together and to let the truth even shape our feelings. So, that was a long way of answering your question because I haven't answered it yet. You asked me if I could think of a specific psalm.

Autumn: Well, you gave us an example though, from your life, about how this plays out in your life.

Hunter: Well, thanks for giving me credit for that. I thought of one of my favorite psalms. I read this actually, which is Psalm 73. Psalm 73 might be the first psalm I learned in a way that I was like, oh, that's what real spirituality looks like. And I probably learned this before I even learned how to give expression of emotion. So, here's what's happening in Psalm 73. The psalmist is super bothered by the prosperity of the wicked. And the psalmist has lived faithfully or done what is right, and life has not gone good for the psalmist. So, this is the classic problem of, wait a minute, God, I've lived by Your Word and life hasn't gone well for me. And then there're other people who don't live by Your Word and they seem to be having a pretty good life, right? The psalmist is wrestling with this, and the psalmist is a worship leader in Israel; He's a faith leader. And in the first half of the psalm, he's just putting all his complaints on the table and he's doing it in a way that's really honest. And he says, 'When I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task.' Like, I'm just trying to understand, my mind is spinning, I'm worn out by this. He even says at one point in the psalm, and if I had publicly given voice to all this, not just in my private thoughts, being honest about it, but if I had stood up in church and given voice to all of this, I probably would have caused many people to come into unnecessary doubt about God. So, there's even wisdom there. He's even saying, I didn't want to just spill all of this out in a way that might cause other people to doubt, but I'm really, really wrestling with this, right? And then there's a pivot point in the middle of the psalm, and he's kind of writing it in hindsight, and he says, 'Until I went to the sanctuary of God, then I discerned therein.' And by going to the sanctuary of God, he means he went to worship and he went to hear God's Word. And he's saying, as I reflected on who God is and as I reminded myself of the truths through worship and through reading His Word, I started to gain some perspective. Some truth started to come in and to penetrate my feelings, and I began to see

THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 104 | VFL Reads: *Six Ways Christians Can Respond to Our Strange New World*, Part 2

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



some things that I hadn't seen and I didn't even feel were true.

And so, he's just modeling for us how he was both very honest about what was going on inside of him, and yet that honesty didn't just end in and of itself. Rather, he went and reflected on who God is and what God's like. And gradually, over time, it brought him back to a place of insight and equilibrium. I think that's biblical spirituality, right? That's what Carl Trueman is asking us to do in this article. He's saying, let's shape our worship, meaning our singing, let's shape our worship in a way that we can both be honest and we can sing about the real experiences of human life and the real feelings we have while also at the same time coming right in and saying, here's what we know is true and right and good about God according to His Word.

Autumn: That reminds me that the work of so many musicians, artists here at Fellowship, and many others, have provided us with a way to do this, to listen to songs. Some of them are actually songs set to music. Like, one of the albums that I love and listen to regularly is Sandra McCracken's album *Psalms*, based on the Psalms and it's just psalms set to music. But the work of our own musicians here and that of so many others enrich us in this way. Many times, they are repeating Scripture in a way that we can listen to and a way that we can engage that engages our emotions and still is setting it within this context of biblical truth.

Hunter: There's a song I learned at a conference a couple of weeks ago that we sang. And when we sang it, it reminded me of something that was true that I had not been feeling lately, or had not been focused on might be the right way to say, I just hadn't been focused on it. And I hadn't been focused on it because I had been focused a lot on some things I was wrestling through internally. And some of these things are good things like, I'm just thinking about my future and thinking about some direction I wanted to go. But I'd gotten so caught up in kind of what was going on inside of me that I maybe lost a little bit of sight of the bigger story. And this song has really simple lyrics, it's called *Christ Be Magnified*. And one of the reasons I love the song is it's actually not even a song you sing. You just kind of shout it. And I thought, oh, I can sing that one because you don't have to sing, you just shout. And the chorus says, O' Christ, be magnified; let His praise arise. Christ be magnified in me; O' Christ be magnified from the altar of my life; Christ be magnified in me. And it brought me back in touch with this is the purpose for which I was made. I was made for the glory of Jesus Christ. And the song actually begins reflecting on creation. It says, if creation was- if the whole creation was suddenly articulate, if it could speak, and with a thousand tongues it could lift one cry, then from north to south to east to west, we'd hear this message, Christ be magnified. God made the creation, He made the world to magnify Himself and ultimately to magnify His Son, Jesus Christ. And then it leads me into going, and that's the purpose of my life too, right? That song was a reminder of something that I needed to be reminded of in a season when I was kind of inwardly focused and my inward focus wasn't wrong. It just, to Carl Trueman's point, is not an end in and of itself. It shouldn't terminate there. But experientially, I had kind of, for a couple of weeks just been hanging out there. I had terminated there. And so, this is an example of where biblical worship was able to shape and form my feelings and my imagination in a way that is true and good.

Autumn: He offers one other example, one other literary example that's not from a biblical source, but displays the same sort of progression: recognizing one's internal state, actually expressing emotion, and then bringing it into the context of Biblical truth.

THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 104 | VFL Reads: *Six Ways Christians Can Respond to Our Strange New World*, Part 2

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



Hunter: It's one of the great books of all time, Augustine's *Confessions*. And what is great about the *Confessions* is he really models this kind of spirituality we're talking about. He really models the Psalms, He does it in his own life, and he describes what is going on inside of him before he comes to faith in Christ. And he describes his ongoing struggles as a Christian. This is what *Confessions* was about. And when Augustine wrote it, he was a bishop and it was shocking to people because this is the bishop, this is the holy man, this is the spiritual leader, this is the church leader who is confessing to really, really significant sin in his life and is confessing to ongoing struggles with the flesh. So, this is the point in *Confessions*; it was shocking, and yet it doesn't end there. But he does the work of saying, now this is where I am, but here's what is true, here's what is true, here's what is true. So, he brings it back in line with what he knows to be true about God. He's trying to model authentic spirituality for his people. I thought that was a great example and a good one to point our listeners to if they want something really interesting to read. Augustine's *Confessions*, especially on a good modern translation, is really easy to read. And if you kind of know what to look for, if you know to look for- I'm going to look for a man who's giving expression to what we might call radical honesty, and yet he's also integrating the truths of the gospel. It's a great model for that.

Autumn: Right. Let's move on to Trueman's point number five in the article, which is, 'retrieve natural law and the theology of the body.' So, once again in point four we asked, what does he mean by intuitions? And this time I'm going to ask, what does he mean by natural law? 'Retrieve natural law.'

Hunter: So, what is natural law? Put simply, it is the idea that the world in which we live is not simply morally indifferent stuff, but possesses in itself a moral structure.

Autumn: You did a really great job reading that quote.

Hunter: That's a quote from Carl Trueman, but here's what he's getting at: it's very easy to think that the creation, the world, is just raw material that we then take and shape to do with what we want to do. It's even tempting to think of our bodies like that. My body is just physical stuff that I then get to use in any way that I want to use it in order to have pleasure or to have joy or happiness or fulfill the purpose that I want to fulfill. And yet, what Carl Trueman is saying is there's a structure to my body like my body is male, and that structure in and of itself has significance and it has moral significance. Meaning, when I live according to the structure that my body has been given, then I'll flourish, and I'll experience the life that God made for me. And when I violate the structure of my body, when I violate the meaning and significance of my body, I will experience death. And so, he's simply pointing us to the way God made the world to work as we see reflected in the actual structure of it.

Autumn: And is that second part of that statement, the theology of the body, that's what you're also referencing your explanation of, I believe, our bodies as having significance based on the way we are made. So, this points us to a larger truth about the way God has ordered creation and the way He made us to live within it and experience good, connection to each other and to the created world through the structure that He's given both to the world and to us within it.

Hunter: And he cites the example of gravity, which I've cited quite a bit in my teaching, and I did not get it from him. So, I was like, oh, I'm understanding this. But he says we can understand this in a purely physical sense. Like, we know if you go to the top of the Empire State Building and you jump off of it, it's not going to go well for you because there's a physical law that means even if you jump up there and even if you jump off and say, I can fly, there's just a physical law

THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 104 | VFL Reads: *Six Ways Christians Can Respond to Our Strange New World*, Part 2

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



that says, no, you can't fly—you're not a bird, so therefore you can't fly, and so, you're going to die. And he makes the point that natural law is just the extension of that idea into the realm of morals. He says, thus—for example—the dependency of a newborn child upon her mother is natural, as is the obligation of the mother to protect and nurture the child to the best of her ability. It would therefore be immoral for the mother to abandon the child in the woods to be eaten by wild animals. And the point is, we know that if a mother abandons her child, that's wrong. We don't just go, well, that child is probably going to die. Something within us says that's not right. We even have laws in place in our world that protect children from that kind of abandonment and that punish mothers and fathers who would abandon their children, right? And he's saying, we have those laws because we have this moral intuition that that is wrong. And we have this moral intuition that that is wrong because it is wrong, and it's not just wrong because God arbitrarily made a law to say, you know, mothers shall not abandon their children and fathers shall not abandon their children, it's actually wrong because God made life to flourish. He made young, vulnerable lives to grow into healthy, full, adult lives when they were nurtured by the care of a mother and the care of a father. And so, there's a natural order that he wove into the world there. The child is physically dependent on the mother, and that has significance for how we should shape our lives. Now, my question back to you is, why is this such a big deal? It may help us a little bit, okay, I can see that's true, but why is that important for us to embrace as followers of Christ?

Autumn: One reason I think this is important for us to understand as followers of Christ is that we live within this created order, and it's an aspect of our stewardship both of creation and of our bodies, our physical selves, in the modern world. So much of our day-to-day experience, especially in America, is based on adaptations that have been made via the technological revolution. And so, much of the technological revolution has to do with this idea that creation and what we could say the natural world is just malleable and that we can take it and do with it what we like. And so, much of that is overcoming the limitations of nature rather than, I think—so, when we're conditioned by that, our perspective can be, how can I make my world, myself fit my liking? Or how can I use my body, myself, the world around me to express what I believe to be true because of my inner state or things that I think? And that rationale is based on the fact that we believe we can simply overcome these limitations that have been placed on us in the natural world. Then when we run into something like a pandemic in which the natural world breaks into or through those technological boundaries that we've set up, the way that we believe we've pushed back nature to make ourselves more comfortable, or to express ourselves or to create our world to our liking—nature always pushes back, and then we have this confounded sense within it because we've gone about it in a backwards way. Stewardship instead asks, what *is* the nature of the world as it's been ordered and created and seeks to live in participation with that? And when we do that, we flourish.

Hunter: I think you're getting at, when you said we flourished, I think you're really getting at the reason he thinks this is so important. And that is that it helps us see that God's Word—and particularly His commands, or what we might call His law—His law is not arbitrary. Say, for example, the Ten Commandments; the Ten Commandments are not just here's ten things that you need to do because I just said you need to do them or not do them. It's not arbitrary. It's rather God explaining to us how He made us to be healthy and joyful and happy and flourished as people. And so, learning this helps us to not just see that God's Word is true, but that it's also good and truth and goodness go together. So, when we can see that His Word is not only true but it's also good, then it speaks to our desire for beauty and for goodness and to live what we call on this podcast, a life full of meaning and purpose. And that is woven into His natural law.

Autumn: A question that I have that comes to mind though is this question of happiness. What if we pursue a life that is

THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 104 | VFL Reads: *Six Ways Christians Can Respond to Our Strange New World*, Part 2

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



defined by our choices, that is based on our culturally derived intuitions of what is good, and that seems to lead us into a pretty healthy, happy, stable life? And so, if the argument is, 'But if this makes you happy, then it's good,' how does that fit into the explanation that you just offered?

Hunter: I think there is a deeper, more enduring definition of happiness. It also goes in the name of joy that we find in Scripture. And that definition of joy is we begin to experience an enduring, long-term, and ultimately eternal kind of joy when we live the way God made us, even if temporarily. It doesn't feel like what would make us happy. So, earlier in this article, and our listeners can get this in last week's episode, earlier in this article, Carl Trueman talked about how happiness has come to be defined as an inner sense of psychological wellbeing. So, if that's what happiness is, then often what we'll do is we'll say, well, I need to pursue this way of living or I need to do this because this is just me being true to myself, which ultimately feels authentic and makes me happy. And I think what God's law would point out to us is, that might feel good and make you happy in the short term, but in the long term, that's actually not going to lead to your joy and it's not going to lead to your happiness. So, what God's law is pointing us to is a longer-term, more enduring kind of joy.

He gets into a really practical example for a lot of people in our world. He says this: take, for example, a young Christian wrestling with whether homosexuality is right or wrong. A pastor might point him to certain biblical texts that indicate it's wrong because it contradicts God's will for the purpose of sex. And that may be well enough to convince this young Christian. But I suspect he might still wrestle with further questions like, does God forbid homosexuality simply because He's a mean tyrant? Is it just that He doesn't want gay friends to be happy? See, there's your question about happiness. Why has he prohibited such behavior? Now, Carl Trueman goes on to point out, we need not just to see what God says, we also need to understand how it's good and true. And so, he says in this scenario, 'It's helpful not simply to point to what the Bible teaches in a few texts, but also to show that those texts make sense within the larger picture. And this larger picture has both a broad biblical side where sex is a function of what the Bible teaches about human personhood and also the "natural law" side where, for example, the sexual complementarity of male and female bodies is relevant, as is the evidence of damage done to the physical body by certain sexual practices. It's not that nature here offers the decisive argument, yet it does help to show that biblical teaching is not an arbitrary imposition on nature, but instead it correlates with it. It assists us in showing us that God's commands makes sense given the way the world actually is.' And so, we're able to live with the way the world actually is. We get to experience the fullness of the goodness that God intends for us, not just in the narrow sense of this one issue that we're wrestling with, but also in the broader sense of, why did He make human beings? And what's the purpose of me being made in His image as male or female? And I might just finish here by saying that kind of just gets us to the starting line of Christian discipleship. Because what I've experienced myself over the years is when I bring my life into conformity with what God's Word says, even when it doesn't feel good according to the common modern notion of happiness as inner psychological wellbeing, but I simply bring my life into conformity of what God's Word says in the same way that Psalm 73 that I mentioned earlier models, it's at that point that I enter into the struggle of: I feel one way, God's Word says something else, and I'm going to actually lean into what God's Word says. That's where growth actually starts, and then it's usually only over time, but it also *is* over time that I begin to experience the joy that is promised when I lean into that. So, it's not immediate gratification, but it's long-term satisfying, and that is Christian discipleship.

So, when we don't even do the work of starting, we're just denying ourselves an opportunity to experience the fullness

THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 104 | VFL Reads: *Six Ways Christians Can Respond to Our Strange New World*, Part 2

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



of what God says. So, to use the example he just gave there, if you say, I'm just not going to trust what the Bible says about sexuality—I don't think that's going to make me happy, then what you're actually doing is just not even giving yourself an opportunity to experience this richer, deeper kind of joy that God's Word holds out to us. So, if you get 10 years down the road or 20 years down the road and you're not happy, it's because you never started.

Autumn: Let's move on to point number six. His final point in the article is, 'live in realistic hope.'

Hunter: And hope of course is a word that means an imagination of the future that gives us energy today. And he's just acknowledging we have to imagine a better future than we have experienced today. And if we can't imagine the future being better than today, it starts to drain energy from today. That's just the way humans were made to work, and part of the pressure of living in this modern world, especially where this strange new world, he calls it, where these new notions of selfhood are becoming so prevalent, so strong for many Christians who don't buy into that—and I'm one of them; I don't buy into modern notions of personhood and selfhood—for many of us who don't believe those are true and yet we see most of the world buying into them, it can be really easy to start despairing and to say, gosh, the world is just going to get worse and worse and worse and worse and worse and worse because the whole world is going off and chasing this bad idea. And so, we start to lose hope that the future is going to be better than today, right? And what he's acknowledging here is, when he says realistic hope, is we can't tell ourselves lies like, well, it's not going to be that bad. It may be that the world gets swept up or the corner of the world we live in gets swept up in bad ideas and many people get swept up in these bad ideas, but there's a future beyond that where Christ is going to return. He's going to make all things new. We will see in the grand scope of His return and His kingdom that is coming, we will see that the truth of God's Word is going to be vindicated. And so, our hope is not just that the world is going to get better and better and better and better and better; it may or it may not, right? And history even shows cultures up and down and up and down and up and down. There're seasons of great cultural progress and seasons of cultural decline with pretty much most cultures that have ever existed, and sometimes they go through several cycles of that. So, we don't actually know what the future of our culture holds. If it continues on the current trajectory, that's not great. But we don't know what the future holds. And yet, I do know what the eternal future holds, which is one day Christ is going to return, He is going to make all things new, His kingdom is going to come, His will is going to be done on earth as it is in heaven, and those who have lived today according to that are going to have great joy on that day, and their lives will last and will be vindicated. So, that's my hope. It's realistic and that it doesn't expect everything to just get better and better and better and better, but it's not despairing either in that I do know there's a kingdom that's coming.

Autumn: I think there's a temporal aspect, a temporal dimension to that realistic hope as well via the promises of God in our present age. And those are, if we walk in the way of the kingdom now—so if, as you just said, we start that process, we lean into biblical truth and walk in this way of discipleship that follows after Christ—then we do experience richness the joy that you described living alongside brothers and sisters in Christ. So, we experience the family of God as a gift. We experience the ability to see the world within this framework of natural law and to see the beauty of the created order and rejoice in that. So, there are so many aspects of this realistic hope. They're not only a future hope, they are always future-oriented and always have this promise of realization in God's kingdom to come, but we also experience aspects of the kingdom now as we walk in that way.

Hunter: I have a friend who recently lost his 18-year-old son to cancer, and it was a battle of a little over a year where

THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 104 | VFL Reads: *Six Ways Christians Can Respond to Our Strange New World*, Part 2

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



initially there was some hope for recovery and then his son went to remission and died pretty quickly after that. And watching this family walk through just the enormous grief of burying an 18-year-old son and watching them just say, we're just really struggling. And yet my friend has this habit of every day he'll list things that are God's good gifts to him and that he's seeing today. He'll list those, he'll post on his Instagram account, he'll list them. And so, I was texting with him just a couple of days after his son died and we were talking a little bit about how he was doing, and he said, the only real hope that we have is the resurrection of Christ and our resurrection that will come one day. He said, but it's not just like, well, that's all we can hope. And that actually is a hope that sustains us today. And it even allows us to be honest about the grief that we're just in the throes of right now. And also, to name God's good gifts—and it's not just that we're naming these good gifts, and sometimes these good gifts are as simple as a friend brought me coffee, and sometimes they're as substantial as I love my wife; they're both simple and robust—but he said, naming those good gifts, they are good and I get to experience them as God's grace because I know they're not all that I have, but I ultimately have the hope of resurrection to come. And it's a beautiful picture of Christian discipleship. And now the question is, how do we bring that back into all the things we struggle with in the fallen world that we live in, even as the things in God's Word that we may struggle with and we don't think are true and are good and yet we need to lean into them? That's just what it looks like.

Autumn: There's an aspect of that that requires waiting, but waiting in hope. And you said, Hunter, that we're going to actually talk about that in our upcoming Advent series.

Hunter: I've been really struck recently by how much of the life of a Christian is enduring the pain of living in a fallen world where things don't go like you want them to, and how disorienting that can be for us. And for some people, it is one of the reasons they find it hard to believe in Christ. They have essentially bought into, or maybe even been taught, if you'll believe in Jesus, life will just go better for you. And that's a slightly distorted message because what we're saying is there's real joy and there's real meaning and there's real purpose to living for the kingdom of God, but that doesn't mean everything's going to circumstantially go well for you. And so, the reality is, even if they couldn't describe it as such, the reality is they're just living in a fallen world and they're waiting for Christ to return and make all things new, and He hasn't returned yet, and He hasn't made all things new. And so, we're waiting. And that can be really hard. The reality for some people is that they have desires in their body that they're not able to both be true to God's Word and live according to, today. And that creates a lot of frustration. It's emotionally hard to be in that space, and it's such an uneasy place to be, and yet, we'll all be in that place where what we experience physically and what God's Word says are true just don't feel aligned. And that's when we get to decide, am I going to start this process of living according to what He says is true and relying on it and living as if it's true even when it doesn't feel right or good? And that's the process of discipleship. So, we're going to be talking about that this Advent season.

Advent is a season when we anticipate the second coming of Christ, when these tensions will be resolved. And it's a season when we acknowledge we have not experienced the resolution of those yet.

Au: Living in realistic hope means that we don't need to despair. We don't need to have a sort of optimism that isn't grounded in the reality of our fallen world. But it does mean that we can fulfill our calling, and that is, as Carl Trueman points out in this section, the calling of all Christians across all time, and that is to live faithfully in the time and place that we've been set.

THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 104 | VFL Reads: *Six Ways Christians Can Respond to Our Strange New World*, Part 2

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



Hunter: I think that's a good bow on this article. And as you pointed out to me several times, there's far more here than we can even summarize in this article. And so, we again encourage our listeners to go and give it a read. And if you have thoughts from it, we'd love to hear your thoughts, love to hear your questions as well, and you can send those to podcast@fellowshipinver.org.

Autumn: That's right. 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.