

## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 156 | Family Of God, Part 3: Worship

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's joining me today. Hunter, thanks for being here.

**Hunter:** Autumn, great to be back on the Vision for Life podcast.

**Autumn:** Hey, it sounded like maybe you were going to go skiing yesterday. Did that actually work out?

**Hunter:** It materialized.

**Autumn:** Yeah?

**Hunter:** Yeah, had a fun first day of the season out in late January, which is a late time to get started, but it's good to get started anyway.

**Autumn:** Yeah, it always looks like the snowpack is finally starting to develop come January, so I don't know that you missed it.

**Hunter:** The snowpack is there now. The snow is pretty decent. I discovered that my ankle injury from June does not like skiing, but by the end of the day I was like, I don't want to turn right anymore. When I would get on something that wasn't well groomed and gently sloping, I wouldn't want to do the work that you have to do to actually ski that properly. And so, I don't know what that means for the rest of my season, but I've been kind of hobbling around this.

**Autumn:** You know what that mentioned makes me want to do? It makes me want to ask you to describe how you got that ankle injury, but we'll leave that for another day. We'll say, story for another day so we can actually get to our content.

**Hunter:** We'll say, story for another day. Story for another day. Well, let's just give people a preview. It involves me plummeting down a 10-foot embankment and landing in a scree pile. And we'll finish the story later.

**Autumn:** Yeah, and when you initially told me this story, I was sitting in your office and I was laughing so hard that I had tears coming down my face. So, maybe we can share that with our listeners someday, but I'm glad you got to go skiing. Sorry about your ankle. Glad that you have a great story, that we can just pin that. This is the best teaser we've ever had on the podcast.

**Hunter:** That's exactly right. People are going to want to listen now, and you don't know when it's going to be told. So, it's just like an Easter egg that you've got to dig for.

**Autumn:** Well, today we're continuing a conversation about the family of God. This is a part of our current sermon series, or aligned with our current sermon series, which is Heaven and Earth. And we're talking about the family of God, a new family of New Covenant people who are brought together because they are connected to Jesus. By their connection to Jesus, they become His body and He calls them His family. So, we've been talking about what is distinct about this new family. And in the podcast episodes, we're asking what does this new family, this unique family do that is distinct? And so, we've said, well, this family is generous, and this family cultivates a unique kind of community. And today we're

## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 156 | Family Of God, Part 3: Worship

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



saying this family worships together. So, before we get any further into specific considerations of that worship, I wonder if you would help us understand, Hunter, what is worship in the way that we're discussing it in today's episode?

**Hunter:** Well, just to back up one tick, our hope in these conversations is to be practically helpful to people in working this out in our life. As I was putting the sermon series together, I realized the sermons are a bit more theological and, hopefully, inspirational. I don't just want to be heady. Hopefully they're inspiring us and helping us imagine the fullness of the family of God. And yet, as I started to write the sermons out and work on preparing them, I realized I just don't have enough time to give lots of practical kind of advice in the Sunday morning sermon time. So, we hope to augment that with the podcast, which we aim to be more practically helpful. So, we're going to talk about gathering with the Church to worship, which we do on Sunday mornings here in the life of our church. And we're going to talk about some practical considerations and questions people have to work through. But I do think to your point, it's helpful first that we define what worship is and why it's important. And so, maybe we back up and we start there.

Worship is something we do unto God. That's the most important thing to say. It is giving God what God is due. And we don't need to think of it just in terms of like, well, we owe Him this. But rather, He is worthy to receive all of our lives. He is worthy to be the only thing that receives ultimate loyalty. He is worthy to be the only thing, the only person, who gets supreme allegiance in our life. He is worthy of being first in our hearts and in our minds and our considerations and everything we think about doing, everything we do, we do it unto Him first. So, we need to think of worship not just in a therapeutic sense—a therapeutic sense asks, is this good for me? and, what benefit does this have for me?—we don't need to first ask about worship in that sense, but rather we need to ask about it in a theological sense, which is, is God worthy of worship? And He is. Now, and I'm going to get to preach this message on this in a few weeks, the theology of the Bible goes like this: God created the world and He created you for His glory. And when you worship him, you are giving him what He is due and you benefit from that. I think it was John Piper, a well-known Christian author, who famously said, "God is most glorified in me when I am most satisfied in Him." Now, our listeners don't know this, but I had to stop and do a second take on that because I've bungled the quote.

**Autumn:** You got it this time.

**Hunter:** -But I nailed it on the second go around. But the point he makes is we get satisfaction, we get joy out of this when we worship God, and those two things are one. And so, the therapeutic would only ask, is it good for me? But the Christian perspective would say, is God worthy of it? And then if we ask that first, we do get joy, and we do get good out of this. And so, worship is what's done unto God.

**Autumn:** For the last couple of years, I have had the chance in a class for our middle schoolers, our sixth graders, that we call Base Camp, to talk to the sixth graders about this idea of worship. And when I'm discussing it with them, I tell our middle schoolers that worship always involves two things, and you just mentioned them, Hunter. I say worship involves remembering who God is. So, we talk about who God is, and you said He's worthy, He's creator. I tell them He's sovereign. And it means He has ultimate authority over creation and ultimate authority in our lives. And so, we remember who God is. And then the second part of worship is remembering who we are, and we are creatures. We're created and we respond to Him in gratitude out of recognition that He's given us life, that we need Him even to experience the fullness of life that you're talking about, that this therapeutic question asks, but we find that in Him. And then in the quote that you got right the second time, that when we are satisfied in God, that's when we experience it. So, worship involves remembering who God is, remembering who we are, and rightly relating to Him in that way. And then

## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 156 | Family Of God, Part 3: Worship

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



we can respond by participating in corporate worship, but we can return all of our life then our words, our actions, the way our wills are shaped, our thoughts in worship to Him. There's another aspect of this that we are covering in our conversation today. And that is the part of it that's particular to corporate gathering. So, you just talked about what worship is in the way that we're discussing it on today's episode. But why is it important and how does this affect our perspective, even in our discussion of why we should create this habit of gathering together with the body of Christ?

**Hunter:** I like that you're asking that question because many people would say, okay, okay, I can understand worship, but why do I need to go to church? Or, why do I need to do that on a Sunday with a church? And I think there's one answer that says this, the gospel actually expands and makes our worship even more dynamic because now when I ask the who is God question, God is not only my creator, He's also my redeemer. And He gave His Son, His only Son, to redeem me, and He's filled me with His Spirit. So, there's a fuller answer to who is God when we look at it through the lens of the gospel. There's also a fuller answer to *who am I?* I am not just created by God. I'm also a simple man who has been redeemed by God's incredible grace and has been saved and is being cleansed from sin through God's incredible grace, and I have a future in His kingdom. So, now I have even more "who I am" reasons why I need to worship this God. That does still beg the question though, why does that require a church and gathering with a church? And I think the biblical answer to this is because Jesus doesn't just save individuals, but he connects them to a body.

This coming Sunday, it will probably be last Sunday by the time this podcast publishes. I get to preach a sermon on the reality of the body of Christ, and Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12, the most impressive thing he says, which we tend to not even see, is he's telling these Corinthians who were tending to disengage from the life of the Church, some of them because they thought they had attained a level of spirituality that didn't require the Church anymore. Paul is saying, no, no, no, no, there's a reality called the "body of Christ," and he's describing it like we would describe gravity. He's just saying, this is just how it works; this is how God has made it to work. And if a hand says, well, because I'm not an eye, I'm not part of the body, that doesn't mean it's not part of the body. It actually still is part of the body. And that's actually how you know a reality exists is when you deny it, it just keeps on being reality. We sometimes call it stubborn reality. And so, that's reality. When we gather with the body of Christ, we are living in line with the reality God has created through the gospel. And there are dimensions of life in Christ because we are a body and because that is reality, that we only experience as part of the body. Paul makes the point in 1 Corinthians 12, if the whole body were a hand, where would be the sense of hearing? And the point is, hands can't hear. Hands have to be attached to a body that has ears in order to hear. So, if a hand lives by itself and if a hand even worships by itself, a hand can do some worship by itself. It can make hand puppets. It can do hand motions. It can write things with its hand. It can throw balls.

But what it can't do is hear anything. And so, its experience of worship and its ability to worship is limited by its handness. And we are all the same way. And so, worship in the body of Christ should be more dynamic and fuller and richer than just worship on my own.

**Autumn:** Is there an aspect, Hunter, of the pattern that we keep the gathering weekly that is reflective of, well, not the same as, but that's reflective of the patterns in the Old Testament that God asked Israel to observe? He taught them how to worship Him in a particular way. And so, what part of that is reflected in the way or not reflected in the way that we gather?

**Hunter:** Definitely. There're echoes when, if you go all the way back to the Garden of Eden, after the Fall, we see that God is coming to meet with Adam and Eve and the walking in the Garden in the cool of the day. This indicates that there

## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 156 | Family Of God, Part 3: Worship

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



may have been a set time. Maybe it was every week. Maybe it was every day. We don't know for sure, but there may have been a set time when God came and communed with them in the Garden. He gave them that Garden to work and to keep. And there was a set time He came and communed with them. Then you get glimpses when He begins to call Abraham, for example, and Abraham's descendants. He calls Abraham out from just among the people of the nations. That's one of the main points Genesis makes is there're just these nations of people, and out of all these nations, God calls this man Abraham. And God gives him little ways to symbolize his worship. So, Abraham offers sacrifice. Abraham builds altar to God, and he marks the ways God has appeared to him. So, I do think you start to see this pattern established in the Old Testament.

And then, of course, when you get to Israel, you get the fullness of the tabernacle and then later the temple. And so, there are these ways these established patterns of worship. And I and I think what these patterns are doing is they're not saying worship only happens when you go to the temple or to the tabernacle or when you build the altar. Rather, all of life is worship because we owe God everything. But these rhythms and these habits He gives us are meant to keep us oriented to that. And it's like anything else that's important when you set aside a special time just for that or a special place just for that. It keeps its significance in front of you. So, think about a marriage. If you, every year, if a couple does something special to celebrate their anniversary, that doesn't mean I don't love you and we're not married the other 364 days of the year. Rather, the anniversary celebration renews the covenant and celebrates the reality and helps them be grounded in this reality of their of their marriage. So, I see corporate worship function in the same way. And it's not therefore weird to me that the early Church picked up the habit of gathering weekly together. Incidentally, they converted it from Saturday to Sunday because of the resurrection. And so, they said the resurrection resets the calendar, so to speak, and resets time in history. And so, they started gathering as a church on Sundays in order to honor and remember the Lord and to share in fellowship together as the body of Christ. And it probably was started in a Jewish context. So, Sunday would have been how we would experience Monday. So, if you just think about what Monday night is like for us, that's probably how the Church gathered, right? They probably gathered in the evening or early in the morning, one of those two. And then when it when it extends into Gentile territory, there was no special day set aside in Gentile territory. So, they are weaving the worship into the normal habits and patterns of life on Sunday, which they came to call the Lord's day. It was only hundreds of years later when Christianity became the widely accepted, you know, or official religion of the Roman Empire that you start to see Sunday set aside as a different kind of day society wide. Which I find really fascinating because we're kind of returning to a place where Sunday is not a sacred day for society, which actually leads some of the practical questions that we're going to talk about today, which is how do we keep this very important habit of gathering alive as we're living in a time and space where the Christianization of society seems to be kind of wearing off, so to speak. And in some ways, our society is reverting to pre-Christian habits and patterns of life where Sunday is not a sacred day for many people.

**Autumn:** I had that exact thought, Hunter, as you were explaining kind of continuation in the shift from the patterns of the Old Testament in Israel into the time of the early church after Jesus's resurrection. When Israel worshipped at the Tabernacle and then at the temple, God had instructed them to organize all of their lives even around that physical structure. And then the laws supported the practices and the ways in which they were intended to worship God, what He had taught them, shown them and given them in the law. But the early Church, as you explained, really began to keep these gatherings in a cultural setting that otherwise didn't encourage it. The rest of society was not oriented around that time that was set aside for a particular purpose. And you had explained, as you and I were discussing this for the podcast today, that where you lived in the South growing up, Sunday still held a particular kind of cultural significance. And now, at this moment in time, and where we live in Denver, really that comparison isn't the same. And so, I think developing

## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 156 | Family Of God, Part 3: Worship

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



this pattern can be difficult because we experience a lot of different pressures and really just different rhythms culturally. So, in modern life, developing the habit of setting aside time to come together with the body of Christ can be challenging. And that's actually what we want to spend the rest of our time talking about is why it's challenging, and then how to take on and think about those particular challenges, how to respond to those challenges.

**Hunter:** Yeah, as we were playing out this episode, we identified five reasons or five mindsets that make gathering with the church on Sundays regularly challenging for modern people. And I think every one of these we've identified is largely can be attributed to the shift in modern life to where Sunday is just not for our society as a whole. It's not a sacred or a set apart time. And so, you mentioned as I was growing up, on Sunday, many things were closed. And if they did open, they opened at noon. Or if it was a restaurant, it opened at maybe 11:30. But the point was-

**Autumn:** Get the crowd after church.

**Hunter:** That's right. You got to get the after-church crowd. And sports leagues didn't play. Kids' sports leagues didn't play on Sunday. And the ski slopes weren't open on Sunday. And the-

**Autumn:** There weren't any.

**Hunter:** The listeners should know there weren't any. But as I think back of how Christmas morning feels right now, we almost had a weekly morning that felt like that thing. You could pretty much get gas and maybe some groceries, and that was about it in terms of stuff that would be open on Sunday morning. Otherwise, it was just a slow, quiet time where when you left your house to go to church, you kind of drove through a city that felt like it was asleep. And life didn't kind of pick back up until after all the churches had gathered to worship.

**Autumn:** So, we're identifying that within that kind of context, you wouldn't have had to put quite as much effort into just participating in a church on Sunday morning because so many other people around you were doing the same. And so, there was a level to which it was assumed. And now I think we're saying it kind of goes against the grain of modern culture and the rhythms of our greater society. And so, it requires of us a more conscientious decision to participate, which isn't entirely bad, but it can present different challenges. And so, we want to talk about those few challenges that we've identified. I think you said we're going to discuss five challenges, five mindsets kind of that we see present in our context. So, what's the first of those?

**Hunter:** The first one we called, "I have a vague sense that it's good." And the challenge here is actually that you have some sensibility that worship is a good thing to do. But if someone were to press you, why is it good? You don't actually have a lot of specific answers. And this happens to a lot of things that are true and good for us in the Christian life in the modern world. We have like a vague sense like, well, yeah, that's right. Or I have a vague sense that is what the Bible says. But if you press me on, why does the Bible say that? Or where does the Bible say that? Or how does the logic of the Bible fit this? I can't really answer that question. I talked to some people who they, like, yeah, I know that's the biblical sex ethic. They actually don't know how the logic of the passages that teach the biblical sex ethic works. They don't know what the words mean. They don't know how there's a worldview that's built from Genesis to Revelation. They don't know a theology of the Christian body. They don't know what the passages mean. They just have a vague sense that that is what they say. And so, discipleship in that area is often starts with or the best discipleship needs to start with, I need to learn specifically what it says and look at it. And I think worship sits in this space. I have a vague sense that it's good to go to church, but I don't know why. And so, that's I think the first challenge.

## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 156 | Family Of God, Part 3: Worship

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



**Autumn:** Yeah, I've heard this in some ways. I see this present among parents too who want their children to be in a healthy community and think that that can be found in the church. And these are good reasons to come, but really beyond that don't have any specific vision for why that is the case. So, I completely agree that I see this too, that there's a general sentiment sometimes, that this is a good place for me to be. This is a good place for my kids. So, it falls right in line with this. I have a vague sense that this is good, but don't really know exactly why or definitely don't know why should really prioritize it beyond that. So, if we were to say, okay, this could be a common mindset or a common challenge that's present in our context, then what's the way through that?

**Hunter:** Well, the way through that is to simply start to identify specific reasons and to know those specific reasons. We've been discussing some of those specific reasons as we've just talked here. So, maybe we just flag some of the things we've already said. One reason it's good is because it honors God who has given me everything. A second reason why it's good is that it's a space that's set aside in my rhythms to honor God. And if I don't set aside space for something that is good and important regularly, then I'm probably gonna lose a sense of it over time. And so, it fuels worship in the rest of my life. A third sense that it's good is that I get to receive gifts through the body of Christ that I don't get to receive by myself. You might even start to name some of those things. You mentioned my children get to form friendships with other children and they get to be disciplined in classroom environments that are great for them. And then you guys do a really good job in children's ministry of partnering with the family. So, it's not just drop your kids off, we'll disciple them, it only takes about an hour, and then take them home. Rather, it's a partnership with the families. I get this partnership with the body of Christ and disciplining my child. Another reason hopefully is I get to enjoy the singing of the body of Christ that I just don't get to enjoy by myself. And that reminds me of what I have in Christ. Another reason is I think and meditate and learn something in the Scriptures that I wouldn't just think and meditate of on my own with the help of a pastor who's taking us through that. Another reason is that I have many small conversations that over time build up to be significant touch points with people. Another reason is we get to pray together, and there's more that happens when we pray together than when I just pray by myself. Another reason is we receive the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is by definition communal. I actually believe the Lord's Supper is a way that Jesus feeds us with His grace, and we don't get to do that—I don't get to do that—in private. Okay, these are all just- I'm getting the specific reasons and I'm actually encouraging people to do this exercise themselves and to come up with the specific reasons that in their own words they can name.

**Autumn:** One word you mentioned a few times as you were listing out those reasons, Hunter, was "receive." And in many different ways when we come together we do receive. We receive from God's Word, the teaching. We receive so many things from each other that you mentioned, and in all of these ways we receive grace. And so, we need grace. We need grace specifically for forgiveness of sins, but we need grace for sustenance in life and specifically sustenance in life continuing to walk with God. And so, so many of these things we receive from the body of Christ, as we've referenced already in this conversation, and in others, and we do that when we are in each other's presence and when we can speak with each other and actually share in life that way. So, that's one reason and I think that many of those were sort of attached to that reason.

**Hunter:** Theologians sometimes call the preaching of the Word, and the receiving of the Lord's Supper, and the worship of the Church and prayer, they sometimes call these ordinary means of grace. And I love that term "ordinary" because it actually means this is the way God normally works, and it is ordinary. It's by definition not out of the ordinary or unusual, and sometimes they use this term to juxtapose it against the special times when it seems like God is breaking through in revival, or the special times when I feel like the Lord is speaking directly to me in a very powerful and significant way, or it



## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 156 | Family Of God, Part 3: Worship

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



refers to that one message I heard that really just changed my life. And I actually feel this pressure as a preacher. There can be pressure to make everything extraordinary, and because I want people to want to come back. So, the whole thing's got to be extraordinary. I went to a U2 concert in Las Vegas back in the fall. It was extraordinary. It was so extraordinary. I was like, I would go to another one of those sometime. And so, I'm going to go to another one in February. And it's, by definition, it's an experience that I will not have every week. It's just an occasional, extraordinary thing. And yet, we need to own that one of the ways God nourishes us and gives us grace and changes us and transforms us is by the regular use of ordinary means.

As I was thinking about this, I thought a good illustration would go like this. In some ways, this is very similar to saving for retirement. But if you invest \$100 a month, if you save and invest \$100 a month, and you get the average return of the stock market, which is about 10%, over the course of 40 years, and for 40 years you save \$100 a month, and you get the average rate of return, you're going to have \$531,000 in 40 years. That is an enormous benefit that comes from doing something small and ordinary on an incremental basis. And I think worship, gathering with the Church for worship, sits in the same kind of space. There may be occasional times when it is really dynamic because the Spirit of God is working in an extraordinary way. But the ordinary experience of gathering weekly to worship should be like that compounding effect of putting aside \$100 a month. And it may not feel significant at the time, and it's actually really easy at the time to go, I've got something I can do with \$100. So, it may not feel significant at the time, but the cumulative effect over many years is extraordinary.

**Autumn:** That's a great illustration, Hunter. And I think it really aptly describes what we're getting at, that if you take some time, if you feel this, if this resonates, that you too maybe have currently or in the past had this sentiment, like, I think church is a good place for me to be, this is a good habit to have, but haven't quite been sure. And I think that illustration really helps us understand that description of the fact that the regular gathering of God's people provides this, that this is an ordinary means of grace in these various avenues through hearing the preaching of God's Word, through worshipping together, praying together, and sharing that space in life together.

Let's move on to the second, and that is- we captured it in this statement, "I'll go if I can." So, the second challenge or mindset is "I'll go if I can." What does that mean? What do we mean by that?

**Hunter:** "I'll go if I can" speaks especially to the fact that in the modern world we live in, unlike the pre-modern world that I grew up in and described a few minutes ago, where everything was kind of shut down on Sundays, there's a lot competing for our time and attention on Sundays. And the more we have friendships with people who aren't part of the church and who aren't worshipers of Jesus, which I encourage everyone to be friends with people who aren't followers of Christ for the sake of mission—we need that to happen for the sake of our witness—but to the extent we have those relationships, we'll probably even feel more of this pressure to the extent our lives are built alongside non-Christians and in some of this other overlapping social space. Maybe it's schools, maybe it's kids' sports, maybe it's groups that go skiing or mountain biking on the weekend. We'll feel this tension of the Church gathers on Sunday. And in some way, that's important to me. I hope after you get past having a vague sense that it's good and you name specific reasons, it's even more important to you.

And yet everything else doesn't pull in that direction. And so, where that can leave us kind of by default, if we don't stop and be more intentional, where that will leave us is, "if I can," meaning if I'm around on Sunday morning and nothing else is happening, then I'll go to church. I'll go if I can. Whereas your friends may, if they're around Sunday morning and

## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 156 | Family Of God, Part 3: Worship

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



nothing else is happening, they'll sleep in if they can or they'll go to brunch if they can. This is just kind of like- church just sits in that "I'll go if I can" space.

**Autumn:** I think that depending on someone's life season, that this may look a little different. You listed some different activities there, like groups who go skiing on the weekend. Well, that could apply to a family or someone who's single, most definitely kids' sports, that's, if you have children, then there's a distinct time in your life when they may be involved in their own activities that requires some Sunday time. So, if we were to kind of group these people stereotypically, I'm going to do it just in a broad swath, but we could say that younger people who are single or young married people who their social lives are still really integrated into just their normal day-to-day lives, they probably experience this in a certain way, whereas people who have children would experience it in a different way.

And there're kind of two categories in there too. One is families who have young children and then families who have older children. So, let's consider this, "I'll go if I can," kind of from those two perspectives. What's the unique challenge for someone who's in that first category single and social?

**Hunter:** I think the unique challenge is you just have opportunities to go do a lot of things. And when most people have off to go do those things is on the weekends. And so, there will be a lot of weekend invitations. That's probably the challenge in that season of life.

**Autumn:** I would say for families who have younger children, that this is a unique season of life transition, and babies sleep a lot. They need sleep during the day. There's a distinct kind of challenge when you add a baby into your life and everything in your life is shifting to accommodate them. You hear people describe themselves also as desiring for nothing in their lives to change. And then the people who describe themselves as really everything in their lives has changed. But it doesn't really matter which category you fall into, adding a baby in is going to cause some disruption. And if you haven't already determined in your mind that you're going to prioritize regular gathering with the body of Christ, then Sunday mornings just can kind of fall into that category of like, wow, our lives have changed, this baby requires a lot of us, we're home on Sundays, let's let them have their nap time and not make it more difficult for us than it already is. And so, I think people with young children experience this because their kids require a certain schedule and raising young kids takes a lot of physical effort. You're putting a lot of effort into maintaining certain rhythms that allow them to thrive and grow and flourish.

**Hunter:** And make your life sustainable too.

**Autumn:** And make your life sustainable. And it can feel like you're making a choice to make your life more difficult if you preserve that Sunday morning space. Because it doesn't matter what time the Sunday morning service is, it will never quite align with your baby's nap time. So, I think that's the unique challenge for families who are having babies or have very young children.

**Hunter:** I often see people who, I just want to commend them, I call them the "baby as a briefcase" people because the baby's little bassinet becomes like a briefcase. It's just a bag they take with them everywhere. And occasionally the briefcase coos or cries and needs to be comforted, but they almost have adjusted life to where it's like, yep, we're going to go, and we're going to take this briefcase with us. And I really think that's the spirit. Those people have the spirit. They have decided, I mean, often they're in church with baby as briefcase. And they have decided that this is a priority to be in in worship. And we're going to carry the baby with us. And if the baby cries, we're going to deal with that. And I love it.



## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 156 | Family Of God, Part 3: Worship

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



---

And when I hear babies cry in worship, I love it because I'm just thinking there is a family that has decided that corporate worship is important. And therefore, this got a little bit harder now because they're carrying this living briefcase with them.

**Autumn:** And all the other- the briefcase and the other bag.

**Hunter:** But man, they are doing it. So, kudos to them.

**Autumn:** For families with older kids, we already alluded to this, but it's simply that they start to have their own activities. And so, then you're adding in another person's schedule to maintain and meet, and kids sports, we mentioned that birthday parties; it really can be any number of things that could fall on a Sunday when there's really a decision to be made in there as to which you're going to participate in or do or to what extent. So, for identifying this, Hunter, as "I'll go if I can," what is the way through this challenge?

**Hunter:** Well, I'm actually speaking as someone who can identify with this challenge. I obviously have to be at church a lot of Sunday mornings because I preach or, if I don't preach, I want to be there to pastor people. And so, I maybe have more motivation or more necessity to be there the most, but I also have desire to do things with my friends on Sundays. I have desire to travel, to spend time with my family. And so, I think the most helpful way to step back and look at this is to say, for what reasons would I not be there on Sunday? What are the things that I wouldn't be there on Sunday for? And I also think for many of us, a good exercise is to ask about how many Sundays a year would that entail. I've done this exercise. For what Sundays would I not be there with my local church? And the reasons might be family vacation. It might be personal vacation. It might be I'm sick. If you're training for the Boston Marathon, you got to go run a qualifying marathon on Sunday morning. There're some of these things, these special things we do that I think that's understandable. So, the point is not never miss a Sunday morning at church, but rather to ask, what would be the reasons I would not be there? and to identify them. And then I think especially if you have a lot going on and you have a lot of opportunities to go do something else on Sunday, the exercise of about how many times a year would I be willing to not be in worship on Sundays could be a helpful exercise. I don't say that as a law like everyone has to do that. But as a principle of wisdom, I think that could be a good exercise.

**Autumn:** So, let's summarize this by saying, decide in advance. Think about it and make some decisions ahead of time, and that will help you. It will help give you a rubric then as you go week to week for deciding what how many Sundays and what is worth missing that regular rhythm of gathering with the body of Christ for. Alright, let's move on to the third. What is the third reason we identified or the third challenge we identified?

**Hunter:** We're putting all of these in "I" statements because it's how it might sound to us. The third one would be "I have concerns about the Church." And usually this means the church in a general sense, not the local church that I'm gathering with, but more Church in a big sense. And this is, I think for a lot of people, a reality where they would say, I've experienced hurt in the church. Or they see what's happening with the Church in a broad sense, they read about it on the news, the church seems to have a lot of bad leaders. It seems to have corruption in it. It seems to be plagued by political tribalism. These are all stories that we can read about the Church. And so, we start to doubt the value of church in general. And so, that diminishes our enthusiasm for gathering with a local church.

**Autumn:** I think it's important to state those things. You mentioned a few examples when concern is such a broad category. So, the fact that some people might be concerned because they have been hurt by the church or have friends

## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 156 | Family Of God, Part 3: Worship

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



who have been hurt by the Church, I want to acknowledge that unfortunately does happen. Bad leaders in the Church—unfortunately, we see far too many of those things highlighted in the media. And it makes us sad also. And you said another example could be the Church seems to be torn by political tribalism. And all of these things can happen within the broader Church. So, it's not that they aren't present, but again, there is this sense that within the greater, especially within the greater Evangelical Church in America, that some of these things are a problem. So, we're not saying those aren't a problem, but what is the way kind of through this mindset or challenge?

**Hunter:** Well, let's keep in mind what we're talking about. We're talking about gathering with a local church. We're not talking about what is your attitude toward the Church in America, but we're talking about gathering with a local church. And I think the anecdote to this is to make sure you're thinking about your local church. And there's kind of this infinity loop of the more aware of and connected you are to your local church, the better buffer that provides to maybe some of the sickness that could be happening in the church, right? And I have to remind myself of this as a pastor. Not everything that I read about the Church on social media or in books that are being published is applicable to the church that I pastor. And it is very easy, very, very easy to get that confused.

For example, I can remember back in, you know, the 2016 through 2020 years, there was a lot of concern about the Evangelical Church being taken captive to MAGA identity and Donald Trump. And there were a lot of people, prominent Christians, who were debating this and talking about this and arguing about this. And when I stepped back and I said, okay, if I look at Fellowship Denver, the church I pastor, is this a problem in Fellowship Denver? And I thought, not at all. And I talked to church members, and some of them would tell me how they voted, you know, they'd be very open like, well, I'm voting this way, and here's why. And I didn't hear a lot of craziness. I heard just people making the best decision they could make. I didn't hear a lot of people taken captive to ideology.

And so, there was a lot of pressure on pastors during that phase to make sure you're speaking against this ideological captivity of the church or the political captivity of the church. And I thought, if I take a look at my church, that's not a problem in my church. So, if I start railing on that problem having a prophetic warning voice—I mean, railing is not a good term—but biblically, the voice of a prophet who's kind of warning the Church, I'm actually warning about a problem that I don't see the people in our church expressing. And I thought through the letters to the churches at the beginning of the book of Revelation, how careful Jesus is to address each church and his address to each one is different. So, even though there're some macro themes of what's happening in Asia Minor where all of those churches were located, there're some macro-cultural themes that are happening. And certainly, these churches are all aware of those. Jesus addresses each particular church in a way that is needed for them. He's not just speaking to the church in general. And I thought the care with which Jesus crafts a message for each particular local church should be the same care with which I lead the local church that He's given me pastoral responsibility for. And therefore, I want to be really careful that I'm not speaking about problems in the church that aren't terribly prevalent in my church.

This applies to tons and tons and tons of issues. And a lot of people are letting their understanding of even their local church be shaped by what they're reading about online or in books or in media. And then they're reading that story onto their church when the story of their church is actually a little different than the macro trend that's being talked about.

**Autumn:** So, we would want to portray- we don't think Fellowship Denver as a local church body is free of any problem or immune to these things, but the antidote to this particular challenge and to this concern is to be thoroughly part of a local church where you are, and then not to fall prey to what you just described, Hunter, which is to read media

## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 156 | Family Of God, Part 3: Worship

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



---

narratives, and then to read those into your local church, but instead to be attuned to the actual state of the body that you are a part of and to be connected to leaders there.

Alright, let's talk about this fourth challenge. And we summed that up in this statement: "It's not important to someone I love." So, what does this challenge or mindset entail?

**Hunter:** It could be, I'm dating someone, and that relationship is growing more serious, and we're spending more time together, and worshipping is not important to that person like it is to me. It could be, I'm married to someone, and we're not quite on the same page in terms of the importance of gathering with the church. And it could be, we're not quite on the same page. Or it could be, we're not at all on the same page. So, one of you might be in the "we'll go when we can" category. It's generally a good thing. And the other one has some very specific reasons why it's a good thing, and they don't want to just default into "we'll go when we can." You're not quite on the same page there, and or it could just be, we're of two completely different mindsets. One of us doesn't think the church is important at all or is not a believer. And the other one, we are a believer and we do think this is significant. And I think this is one of the most painful ones to have to wrestle through as there's actually someone that I'm pretty closely locking arms with in life, and yet we're just not on the same page here.

**Autumn:** You mentioned dating, but this is true of marriages too that in some marriages one spouse might be committed to attendance and the other might not. Or one spouse might be a believer desiring to follow Jesus and the other might not. So, what would you say is the way through this or how do you address this challenge?

**Hunter:** I do think if you're dating someone, or you're married to someone, those you address a little bit differently. If you're dating, you have not yet made a covenant to enter into marriage. And so, I think there's a lot of wisdom in evaluating if this is a long-term sustainable relationship if you're not on somewhat of the same page in terms of the ultimate thing in life which is the worship of the Lord. If you're married to someone you have made a covenant with them and that covenant is, barring circumstances like abuse or betrayal, that covenant is to be married, and so you have to think about this in different ways, but I kind of go back to first principles. I think the first principle is, I don't want my worship of the Lord to be negatively shaped by anyone who I'm in relationship with. I mean this is even- this could just be a friend. I don't want my worship of the Lord to be negatively shaped by anyone I'm in relationship with. Now, it can be positively shaped by many; I want to be positively shaped by people, but I don't want to I don't want to be negatively shaped. And that means I have to have some personal sense of what I'm called to as a Christian, that I'm just not going to let- I'm just going to hold that very closely. And then I think that also means I may have to have some practices that are just different from someone I love. And so, I know people who go to church regularly even though their spouse doesn't go, and I think that's okay. Maybe not ideal, but I really respect the fact that that person is honoring the Lord first and they're not letting their spouse's lack of interest in honoring the Lord first shape the fact that they're going to do that. And you know, the internal dynamics of every marriages is a little bit of a mystery to those on the outside, as I think it should be. And yet, I just I want to hold that up as an example of I think something that's very honoring to the Lord.

**Autumn:** I can think of some people who I know who have that situation, are in that sort of a marriage relationship, and they do exactly what you're describing. They choose personally to participate out of a desire to honor the Lord, and the way they go about it is also really beautiful to see in such a good example. They don't participate to prove a point or to arm twist or to convince, and not they never do it in a way that's condescending but truly out of a desire to honor the Lord and that's such a beautiful testament also to their relationship with God and to the potential then in that

## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 156 | Family Of God, Part 3: Worship

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



relationship which is even described for us in the New Testament that on occasion then those relationships can sometimes lead to a spouse also coming to either know Christ or to begin to participate in the life of the body in a similar way. And while that's not a given conclusion, it is something that can be the outcome when someone goes about it in a way- when someone participates in a way that is desiring to honor the Lord. Alright, let's go on to our last challenge or last mindset. And what's that the fifth challenge that we identified?

**Hunter:** We call this one "I might encounter God there." And we wanted to put this one last because not all of the reasons for avoiding corporate worship regularly are simply pragmatic reasons or a matter of time management or priorities. There is sometimes a spiritual reason, and sometimes this spiritual reason can collude with the others, but the spiritual reason would be there is some sense in which I'm trying to just avoid God as HE really is and what He really says. And we see it all the way back in the Garden of Eden when God came to walk with them in the cool of the day, and they hid themselves. After the Fall, they didn't want to deal with their sin. And there could be something going on in your life that's difficult and you don't want to have to face it.

I know people who have gone through really hard things, and during the season when they don't feel happy, it's hard for them to go to church. And one of those is, yes, they'll encounter people there who aren't in the same space emotionally that they're in, and that can be its own level of difficulty. And they have to maybe deal with the questions of, how are you doing? and how that can all be difficult. But I think there can also be a difficulty in just honoring the Lord when life is not going well for us, and that could be something we're avoiding. There could be something that you know is in the Bible that you don't like, and you're afraid you're going to hear it or you're going to encounter it. It could be sin. Sin can keep us it can keep us from encountering God because we are tempted to just hide in shame. And in desire to do our own thing, and often I said this can collude with other reasons, so if you are a little bit nervous about encountering God because of sin or because of something in His Word, or because of where you are in life, or because of maybe a hurt that you don't want to have to deal with, and think about or something in His Word, then it can be very easy to slide into, "yeah, I know it's good in general, and I'll go if I can," right? It could be good to slide in those. It can also be easy to go, and let's be honest, there're some real problems with the Church, so some of these others-

**Autumn:** -let's externalize this issue.

**Hunter:** Yeah, some of these others can prop up the fact that, man, at the root, we just we just don't want to deal with the Lord right now. What is the way through this or how do we respond to this challenge, "I might meet God there"?

**Hunter:** I think the way to respond is to change your expectations. So many people expect that if they come face to face to God with God in the midst of their sin, or if they come face to face with God in the midst of a really hard season of life, or if they come face to face with God by facing something in His Word that they don't like, what they expect is they're going to die. And what you see happening over and over again in Scripture is God uses that encounter to change their heart and to give them grace. And so, if we actually read in the Bible, the people who have encountered God but they didn't want to—think of Jacob who had to encounter God when he was running from his brother Esau, and he did not want to face God, what he encountered was he wrestled with God, and what he encountered though was grace, what he what he got was grace. What Adam and Eve got in the Garden was grace. God covered their sin, and He was honest with them about the difficulty that life was going to now carry in a fallen world and the difficulty they were going to encounter including the fact that they were going to die. But He also covered their sin and promised one day to crush the serpent's head, and then He blessed them again and got them back to their work. So what we should expect to

## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 156 | Family Of God, Part 3: Worship

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont

---



encounter, which is very counterintuitive, but what we should expect to encounter is grace, God's grace. And we have assurance of that held out to us in Christ. And so, all the more reason in Christ to not run from God.

**Autumn:** Well, I think that's a great place to land this. When we encounter God, we can expect to receive grace. And we experience that grace through the participation with the body of Christ in these regular rhythms of gathering together and of worshiping together. Hunter, thanks for joining me on the podcast today. For those of you listening, thank you for joining us today. We love hearing from you, and it keeps increasing. I'm hearing from more and more of you, and it makes me so happy.

**Hunter:** Autumn and I love your emails.

**Autumn:** We do, we love your email.

**Hunter:** Sometimes she shares them with me; she reads them and sometimes she sends them to me.

**Autumn:** It's true. Someone sent us book suggestions the other week. It was lovely. So, please respond to us, let us know what you're thinking about, what questions you have, what suggestions you have for the podcast. Send us your book suggestions and article suggestions. If you have any of those things, questions, suggestions, book recommendations, send them to [podcast@fellowshipdenver.org](mailto: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.