

## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 99 | Engaging Spiritual Disciplines As A Family

Featuring: Autumn Gardner, Jenna Hallock, and Frank Trimble



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**Autumn:** Welcome to the Vision for Life Podcast, an ongoing conversation between the pastors of Fellowship Denver and the church at large. Each week we talk about life, faith, the Bible, and how to follow Jesus as we go about our daily lives. I'm Autumn, host of the Vision for Life podcast, and today I have some special guests joining me, Frank Trimble and Jenna Hallock from Family Time Ministries are joining me on the podcast today. Welcome, Frank, Jenna, I'm so glad to have you here.

**Frank:** We're excited to be here.

**Jenna:** Yeah, thanks for having us.

**Autumn:** Could you tell our listeners just a little bit about each of you, whether that's your family, where you're from; what would you like us to know about you?

**Jenna:** Oh, well, that is just a fun question. I am Jenna Hallock from, well, I currently reside in Littleton, Colorado.

**Autumn:** Just down the street.

**Jenna:** Just down the street. I grew up in the Philadelphia area, though. Shout out to my Philly folks. And my husband Mark and I have two wonderful kids. Our daughter Zoe is currently a second-year student at Colorado Christian University. Our son Eli is a junior at Heritage High School. We are part of Calvary Church in Englewood. And yeah, I've been with the ministry of Family Time for well over a decade and just loved the mission and vision that impacted our family a great deal. I guess my other sort of side hustle, if you will, is a lot of volunteering with the kids' schools and sporting endeavors and such. So, I like to be involved with what they're doing. So, I think that's really valuable as both a parent of them, but also as someone who just wants to be a voice in the public school. So that's part of our story.

**Frank:** So, my name is Frank Trimble, and I live in Littleton as well. I'm from Texas originally, and we've been in Colorado since January of 2021. And so, I was a youth minister before coming up here and to work with Family Time. And so, I've got my wife Kristin and my daughters Olivia and Ava, four and seven. So, they're in school right now. My wife is a teacher, and so our lives kind of revolve around their calendar a little bit, and that's great. They're so busy, and we're going to dance class, and my daughter is singing the national anthem with her friends at the football game tomorrow night. And so, we're full-on mom and dad mode, Kristin and I are, and it's just fun. It's a fun season.

**Autumn:** Jenna, you mentioned that you've been with Family Time Ministries for over a decade. You started doing that shortly before I took position here at Fellowship as the Director of Children and Family Ministry, and we have kind of tracked along together for many years, and I have loved watching Family Time grow under your leadership, and we've appreciated using the resources and engaging with all that. Family Time is doing as I've thought about how to encourage and equip our parents at Fellowship and I'm wondering if you would also just let us know a little bit about what you do at Family Time, what the ministry is, and what your work is.

**Jenna:** Well, our founder, Kirk Weaver, started the ministry of Family Time right here in Denver. He caught the vision for the importance of discipling our children at home, and he and I met through an interesting series of events connected to

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Denver Seminary way back when. And our mission is to train and equip parents and grandparents to pass the Christian faith at home. And we want to see that done through the teaching of the Bible. So, we want to produce hands on Bible activities that are fun for kids and fun for parents and grandparents to do. So, we say parents and grandparents because we know that there are so many grandparents out there that have a voice in their grandchildren's lives. And so, we are very active in including grandparents and how we talk about discipleship at the home. But we know that parents just have such an important role, it's a God-given role, it's a biblical role, to disciple their children, and we want that to happen in the context of the local church but with the understanding that the church is there to support and encourage, and yet, the children's pastor, the youth pastor, they're not there in the key moments in the life of a child. It is the parent that's doing truly life-on-life discipleship with their children. So, we want to see this paradigm shift away from, I'm going to send my children to Sunday school, or, we're going to show up to a program in the church building, to, no, actually the most important discipleship work is going to happen in our homes on a day-to-day basis as we're doing life together. So, that's really the heart of Family Time. We love the local church, and so I'm very careful to say we are not saying anything that would oppose going to church. You should be a part of a local church and hopefully you're part of a local church that is doing exactly what Fellowship is doing, that is supporting and equipping and encouraging families to have this time using the spiritual disciplines that we are very familiar with if you've grown up in the church, and thinking about how we teach our children in a way that is winsome and appealing and really, truly shows off how great Jesus is.

**Autumn:** Yeah, the church really exists in a supplemental and supportive partnership role to the work that parents are doing at home and to the parenting and love that they're pouring into their kids as they walk through each day. And as you said so well, all of those moments, major ones and little ones, day after day. What are your roles at Family Time? So, Frank, what is it that you do at Family Time?

**Frank:** My role is the Director of Training and Consulting. And so, historically, our organization has gone into churches and church groups and MOPs groups, and you name it, to go give families, to give parents and grandparents, practical ideas of where they can start, what they can do in the home. So, we love to do that. We've done that historically. We're going to continue to do that. We want to encourage and equip families to actually see it take root in their homes. But also, since Jenna was talking about our love for the local church, we are a parachurch organization. So, we love to come alongside churches and help them think through how can home discipleship really take root beyond their four walls and in their four walls. So, we love meeting churches like Fellowship that already have a committed vision to family ministry, and we love hearing the heart for that. But there are so many churches that we found that want to do it, but, just like a lot of families, they don't know where to start as a church. How do we acknowledge equipment and hold accountable parents in their role? And so, the consultation arm of our ministry really seeks to be a help for church staff, for elder boards, for individual staff members, whatever it is, to be an extra pair of eyes to look at their family ministry philosophy as a whole and then look down into, what could this practically look like? How does this affect programming? So, on and on. So that's my primary role.

**Jenna:** Yeah, and about five years ago, I took on the role of Executive Director, which is really just a fancy way of saying I'll just do whatever needs to be done to keep the wheels on the machine. And so, I get to do our fundraising and I get to do training events. I work with a lot of our supporters and I even get to do fun things like figure out how to set up our new content management system back office of the website.

**Frank:** It's a blast. That's so much fun from what I can tell.

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**Jenna:** The air quotes with the fun over there, Autumn, very nice.

**Frank:** Yes, Jenna is just the epitome of, we don't know how to do that, so now I'm going to figure out how to do that, and she does and it blows my mind.

**Autumn:** And you are based here, too. You both mentioned you live in Colorado now and Family Time is based here.

**Jenna:** We have had churches who have been very generous to us over the years to give us space for officeing, and so we're very blessed to be in the Denver area. Can't imagine being anywhere else. But we do get to do ministry around the globe. We have a global presence, but we will travel all over the United States, even this year, thanks to being out of the pandemic more or less. We've been able to be in Texas and Florida and Iowa and a couple of other places. So, yeah, Family Time, we love to be able to minister right here in Colorado, but the Lord has also called us to some other places as well.

**Autumn:** And that reach is growing, which is really exciting to see. Our topic today that we're going to shift into talking about more directly here, more specifically, is engaging spiritual disciplines as a family. So how to weave spiritual disciplines into your life together at home. And that topic really fits well into one way that we say we want family ministry to be expressed or to take shape here at Fellowship. We talk about these three categories as our primary expressions of family ministry at Fellowship Denver. One of those is "age-appropriate teaching." That's what takes place in our student fellowship and our kids classes and our children's programs. And the other is "church as family." That's what we're all engaged in as a big family of God, whether you serve specifically in a kids class or with teenagers or not, we all are the intergenerational family of God, and all are called to recognize the value that our kids and teens add to our church and how it is that we are to invest in them and celebrate them and support families and parents as they endeavor to raise their kids to know and love God. And the third of the categories that we talk about is "gospel renewal at home." That's an acknowledgment of what you mentioned, Jenna, already, that parents are called directly to be the primary disciplers of their kids. And we as a church want to equip and encourage our parents to do that, to see themselves in that role, and to take it on. So, today's conversation really supports the expression of family ministry and the way that we talk about it here. That gospel renewal at home. But I'm curious about what your own experience has been with this. You both have kids. Frank, you said you're in the thick of the little kids parenting with the dance classes and all, which is so fun remembering those days. My youngest is still sort of that, but my oldest is definitely past it. And then you have older children.

**Jenna:** Yeah, and we were blessed too. Mark and I found Family Time; it kind of fell in our lap when our kids were about Frank's kids ages, like preschool age, and that was such a sweet season. And we really did utilize the Family Time activities, a lot of the ones that are still used today. I mean, the importance of teaching biblical truth from a young age and making it fun. I know we've said fun quite a few times now. I just want to iterate again that maybe some of us have come from a background where it wasn't fun, like we were forced to go to church or forced to do things, but we wanted our kids, especially because my husband is a pastor, that church is not just this thing that we have to do, but we love Jesus, and this touches every part of our life. So, for Bible activities and teaching to happen at home and to be done in a way that we all enjoyed was just a really powerful tool and powerful time in that season of our parenting. And then what I loved is that it was able to evolve over the years into relationship, what I call a shoulder-to-shoulder teaching and discipling in our home. Because once they're teenagers, they're driving, they're out with friends, they have other

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activities that I don't have control of anymore, to have something to build on. So, you're laying that foundation that, not only are we having this intentional time, but now, guess what, when something happens with a friend at school that we need to talk about, we're going to go to the Word together, we're going to pray together. So, when we think about the opportunity that we have to create a foundation of relationship with our kids, then it builds into the future. It's not odd that we would go to the Word together. It's not strange that we would say, you know, we're going to pray about that and then think about how we need to move forward. Whether it's trouble at school, whether it's trouble with a friend, anything comes to the Lord, and we're going to go see what the Word has to say about it. And those topics, believe me, get more complicated the older that they get. So, to have started out in a way that put us on a trajectory to be able to very comfortably have those kinds of conversations, I just wouldn't trade it for anything. So that's just a little snippet of our household and the way that faith building and spiritual disciplines kind of played out.

**Frank:** Absolutely. And what that communicates to me and what I've been able to see from their family, kind of another chapter of life is the relationships that she's talking about, that heart connection, like one author puts it, between Mark and Jenna and their two kids. They're open, they talk, they hang out. Here's the deal, they like to be with one another.

**Jenna:** Praise the Lord.

**Frank:** And that is really big. I hate to say it, but it can be kind of rare. And so, that, even as teenagers and college students, they still want to spend time with their parents. And so, for my kids, like you said, they're four and seven, they're young, but it is a blessing. I feel like it's a part of God's design that when they are this young and their minds are like sponges. And I feel like that's a part of God's design that we need to take advantage of His families to really be teaching them for rote memory, to be okay, to put God's word in their hearts and in their minds. And so, we're in that phase, we're in a phase right now where for both kids, if we say we're going to have Family Time on Thursday night, both kids know, they know what that is. It's created a culture in my house where if I go to my oldest, Ava, and I say, hey, but we're going to have Family Time on Thursday night or Friday night, she knows that means we're going to do certain things. It's like a set-aside time. And so, they're at the age also where they're super excited about it. They're super excited about it because of the nature of these- they are fun, they're lighthearted, and just with my personality, I was never a kid in youth group that was super excited about the pre-message game, right? Just to be honest with you. I was never that kid that was excited about whatever chubby bunny or whatever the game was. That was just not my thing. When we went to camp, that was just not my thing. So, it's not actually in my DNA to just seek fun just for fun. But the reason I'm so excited about the fun nature about Family Time is that it helps create that environment of warmth in my home and also that Ava and Olivia can come to Kristen, and I know it contributes to that safe environment as well. And like Jenna said, we hear so many stories all the time that break our hearts about kids that are now grown that experience some sort of either needlessly boring or regrettably punitive family worship and/or catechism that makes them as adults with their own kids, go, 'I want nothing to do with that. I'm just going to let them do what they're going to do.' We, as a family, Kristen, we love the fun nature of it. The one that we did last week encourages the family to create a prayer cube, and it takes you through the Lord's Prayer. And each side of the cube has a different element of the Lord's Prayer, and it's just made out of paper and tape and pen and just little prompts like that for intentionality, and we kept it on our counter in the kitchen. And Kristen and I didn't think of this, but now each time before dinner, Ava will see the cube. And even if we've forgotten, which happens all the time, she goes, 'Oh no, we need to get the cube first.' And then you roll it like a die. I don't know, it's fun, it's creative, and it gives me, as a non-creative person frankly, or crafty person, kind of a vehicle

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to do things like that and to have fun. So that's where we're at. We're at the stage where when we say we're going to do Family Time, might as well have thrown a parade.

**Autumn:** As you set into this, so, when you began this years ago, Jenna, what were some of the challenges that you faced stepping into it? So, to integrate that into your regular family rhythms, and then how do you find that that looks now? Do you have particular challenges now that your children are older?

**Jenna:** Yes, there are always challenges. I think just like every family that is listening to this, we had the challenge of just making it an intentional part of our schedule. And really, that is the starting point, the ending point. If you cannot prioritize this, it's not going to happen. And so, my first word of encouragement is just the Holy Spirit has to do the work in us as the adults, as the parent, that convicts us to say, this is so important, this is critical. And once that happens, then we're more compelled to actually put it on the calendar and make it happen. And the other thing I would say is, yes, we would champion the idea of once a week; find a day and time that typically works for your family and put it on your calendar. But be encouraged that none of us do this perfectly. So don't hear us say we do this every Thursday night or that we did this every Thursday night in our home. Just take a deep breath and say, 'Yes, Lord, I want to honor You in our home.' And to do that, we believe that carving out time and prioritizing that with our calendar and in our calendar is a first step. And do that literally. Put it on a wall calendar, put it in your iCal, whatever that needs to be to put it in front of you. And I will say when you have little ones at home, having a wall calendar that they can see and having the accountability, like Frank said, we tell our kids earlier in the week we are going to have Family Time on Thursday night. And call it whatever you want, call it family time, call it family worship, family Bible study. I mean, whatever the terminology is is fine, but that it's something that they can look forward to and they're going to hold you accountable to having that once they realize, first of all, they have your undivided attention, which they love, and that it's going to be something fun, some sort of activity.

We talk a lot about having a special family, no-fuss dinner. So, dinner may look different even on Family Time night than it does other times. And that's for a whole other discussion. But I would say that is a huge barrier. It's just we are all busy, right? But you know what, you have time to do the things that you want to do and that you prioritize and hopefully, again, the Holy Spirit will fill you in such a way that you see this as paramount in your home. I think the other things were simply the age of the kids. We hear a lot about parents who say, my kids are too old or my kids are too young-

**Autumn:** -or my kids have a wide age range

**Jenn:** That's right. That's right. So, we love to talk about older kids helping lead the Family Time and getting them involved, giving them those leadership skills that they will use as they get older. And then again, attention span. This could be any age of child and distraction and things like that, those are all factors that come into play. I'm no expert in child development, but what I tell parents often is, you know your child. So, if you need to remove some distractions, I mean basic things like devices are put away, screens are turned off, what have you, to knowing the modality of learning that best suits your child. Again, those are all things that are important to think through. But just do it. That's my biggest encouragement to parents. Just do it. Just try it. I say put it on your calendar for a month and see if you don't love it and see if your kids aren't asking for it, because I think it is something that kids actually do really love when they see that they get to spend time with you, that they're having fun. And you're going to start to see the fruit. I really believe that because we know God's word is alive and active, it will not return void. And so, if there are specific issues that you're

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dealing with in your home, even consider dealing with them again, I could go off on all the benefits of that too, right? Like if there's something you're dealing with in your home, Family Time family worship is a great time to address some of those when emotions aren't high. There're so many great benefits that happen in the context of having this intentional time set aside. So, that's all I'll say about that.

**Frank:** I love that you've used the word spiritual discipline a couple of times. And when she was talking about that, it made me think of how easy it is for us to miss personal time in the Word, or how easy it is for people to miss a Sunday morning and any of the other spiritual disciplines. And I think a part of why Family Time exists and why we're so passionate about what we do is we're a part of that process of elevating family worship to one of the spiritual disciplines. You know what I mean? I feel like there's been a gap in that for a long time for too many reasons. But just acknowledging, hey, just as important as it is for me as an individual guy to read the Bible and to pray and to share the gospel and to worship with the brothers and sisters of the church, on that same level is the biblical imperative to disciple our kids. And so, I think when Jen and I go to trainings or if I speak in a church or whatever it is, there's always somebody in the congregation or in the group that has never heard maybe that the Bible talks about this. We don't come at it from a guilt perspective at all. And when we come talk about it, we phrase it as more of a 'think of the possibilities.' Like Jenna said, be encouraged to try it and see what God does, see the fruit He produces from it. But a part of that is just acknowledging that it's a thing, that it's a biblical thing, it's a historical thing. And so, we love sharing that in creative ways.

**Autumn:** When you do hold a training with church staff or with a group of parents, Frank, how do you set the basis for this biblically, for engaging this idea? Where can we turn to in Scripture to give us some direction?

**Frank:** Right, that's a great question because we don't want to do anything if it's not based in Scripture, right? We don't want to come up with something, however creative it might be, if we want it to be based in Scripture. So after—when we do a training—after we introduce ourselves and kind of share a little bit about our own stories, we start with Scripture. And here's the deal, our trainings are meant to be accessible in their length, and so we will do whatever the church asks us to do. But normally training hour and a half, two hours, depending on what the church wants. So, you can't dive into all of the passages of Scripture. Just, for instance, one of my former mentors, he spent a whole year looking through Scripture just in his Bible reading plan. And he just committed that every time he saw the connection between parents and kids as being important biblically, he would highlight it. And he ended up coming up with around 100 specific references to that from Genesis to Revelation. So, Richard Baxter is another. He's a reformer that came up with 50 different categories in Scripture. So, there's a lot, but we focus in on three normally. So, we'll go to Deuteronomy 6:4-9. A lot of people know that as of the Shema, or at least 4-5, that, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, you shall love the Lord." So, we've heard that one. It gives very basic instruction to the nation of Israel, to the family of God, on when and how you can talk about Jesus in the home, talk about God in the home. So, when you get up, when you lie down, when you walk along the way, when you sit in your house, even on the door frames, everything about your life needs to scream, who is God? what has He done? what we're supposed to do with it? So, we spent a little bit of time on that and we spend a little bit of time on Psalm 78:1-8 just looking at generational implications for home discipleship. So, yes, we're looking at our generation and going to the next generation in front of us here, like my kids and their kids, but even the passage talks about kids yet to be born, so generations we'll never meet. So, until the Lord comes back. I mean, just this idea that through God's power and our obedience, generations that we'll never know this side of heaven will be impacted with the gospel. So, getting that big picture from Psalm 78:1-8, and then we reference just one of the New

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Testament passages from Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers, don't exasperate your children, but bring them up in the training and admission of the Lord.” And so we spend a little bit of time talking about, hey, there's this specific instruction. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is directed at heads of households. Psalm 78:1-8, Asaph, when he's talking to those people, we're really talking to households. We're talking to the family of God, but we're really going that faith transfer comes primarily through what happens at the home and is supplemented, like you said, by what happens at the church. And then that Ephesians 6:4, just this idea, it's so specific, train up your children, don't exasperate them. That's a whole other conversation. But train your children. So, passages like that. And there are many more, just give us that imperative from the Old Testament and the New Testament that we have a job to do. One of our staff members, Stacy Ludwig, she likes to say that that's part of her story is when she realized that it was something that wasn't an option for her and her husband, we've got to do it. But then a part of our training is, since we know that this is a biblical imperative, we want to make it accessible for parents and not make it as scary as it could be. Because God is not calling experts to this task. He's calling us. He's calling what one author calls, ‘He's calling the amateurs.’ So, I think that's part of addressing some of the fears that parents face. But, yeah, that's a taste of the biblical foundation for it.

**Autumn:** I think when we hear this term spiritual disciplines that there are a couple of common responses. One way that Fellowship, Michael, our student fellowship director, and I always talk about this idea of gospel renewal at home is that ultimately weaving gospel renewal into your home is a matter of you experiencing life with God. So, your own renewal and then sharing that absolutely with your children. But even just thinking about that, whether from an individual perspective as a parent; as an adult who has their own relationship with God; or from this perspective of, we're talking about today; figuring out how to do this with your kids, how to help them actually come to know God and get to know God's Word and to help this idea exist as a regular rhythm within your family life, in both of those ways, I think when we come to this idea of spiritual disciplines developing some sort of regular interaction with God, God's Word, as a family, that often I hear from parents that they desire that but maybe don't know how to go about it. So, what you just said, Frank, God doesn't call professionals, He calls amateurs, each of us, all of us. So, that I hear from parents sort of this, I would like to do this, but I either am worried about answering the questions that might come up, or I just feel ill equipped, I don't know how to go about it. Or, on the other end, people who had experienced it—you referenced this as well, Frank—people who had experienced it in some way growing up, but the bent was much more legalistic or enforced upon them rather than something they got to participate in and partake in. And so, for someone who maybe is listening to the conversation and thinking one of those two things, struggling with the fact that they experienced this in a bad way in the past and don't want to replicate that for their children, or someone who just might not know where to step into this whole thing. Going about it, what would your encouragement be to sort of allay those fears and point back to, as you said, the opportunity, the potential in this?

**Jenna:** Well, I think I would start with asking a really hard question back, which is, ‘What happens if you don't do this?’ I think as Christians in the culture that we live in today in America, we have to be aware that there are voices speaking into our children's lives that may be much louder than we even realize, and even just living, going out into a school environment if you're not in a Christian school, maybe even if you are in a Christian school. I just think we can't make assumptions about what is being taught to our children purposefully or unintentionally. And so, I would just ask us to sit in that reality for a minute. What happens if I don't do this? What will my child think and believe when they're 10, when they're 18, when they're 25, when they're looking for a spouse, when they're looking for a church, when they come up against suffering in their life? If I don't intentionally pass on what God's Word says about how to live, about what is right

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and what is good and what is lifegiving, what will they know? And I would say we want to indoctrinate in the best sense of the word, because the world will indoctrinate them otherwise.

**Frank:** Absolutely. It's not a passive thing.

**Jenna:** It is not a passive thing. So, by doing nothing, we're doing something; we're making a choice. So, I think that would be my first challenge, is let's just be realistic about what their life will really look like if we are not intentionally doing this in partnership with our local church. And I would give that challenge. I love the value of church's family for those who are listening that are not in the trenches parenting their own children right now. Maybe you're not grandparents yet, maybe you don't have children, maybe you're not married. Whatever stage of life you are, the children in your church need you. They need you to be that outside voice speaking the same truth that mom and dad, grandma and grandpa are hoping to instill in the children. So, for you to, whatever role you have in your church, to speak biblical truth to those children, even if you're just one, that is, maybe you're not an intentional volunteer with kids or youth, but you sit in the pew with a family, those are such important people in the life of the next generation. So, I just want to say that as well. So the importance just can't be understated.

So, I'd say, by God's grace and help, put aside your fears, put aside your past experience if it was not positive, and think, what do you want your child to know and experience and how can you make that the best possible experience? Again, none of us are going to do it perfectly. I can't tell you how many times, even outside of that, because this is life on life, as we've talked about before Deuteronomy 6, that's part of what I love about that Scripture. And Autumn, to your point, the first thing it says is, "Love the Lord your God." That's the command to the adult. And then it gives us these really practical ways: when you sit at home, when you lie down, when you get up, when you walk along the road. That's just real life when that's happening. And so, this is an all-of-life command. Think about how that will play out in your child's life if, when they come up against hard things, if you are able to point them to Christ and to his Word, or if you just dismiss it and say, well, what do you think you should do? Not that that shouldn't be part of the conversation, don't mishear me, but if there is not this gauge in our homes, in our lives, of what is right and wrong, what is true and good, what is not, we're really missing an opportunity. So, I know that's kind of a big picture answer to that question, but I do think it's an important one.

**Frank:** Yeah, and I think, to add to it, I think, number one, we as a staff at Family Time, we focus on this topic all the time. And like Jenna said, our families, our respective families, we mess it up all the time. You know what I mean? And so, thank God for grace, but I love the seriousness with which Jenna just painted that. I was given two paradigm shifts by two different authors a few years ago, and one of the authors' name is Timothy Paul Jones, and he's just a great family ministry voice. And I'm going to butcher the quote, but it was something to the effect of he realized at some point with his own kids that his kids are either potential or actually sisters, or brothers and sisters, in Christ primarily before they are. Whether they were his kids, right? So, in other words, either potential or actual siblings in the faith as primary. And that paradigm shift for him helped him to prioritize family worship because he thought someday, he said, I pray that my kids are all worshipping at the throne of God, the new heavens and the new earth one day. That's my prayer, and that's what we're working towards, he said. And in heaven, in the new heavens of the new earth, they will primarily be known as my brother or sister in Christ. And so looking at your kids through that lens is like, they don't belong to me, and I've been given a job as a steward. I've been given a job, and it helps reinforce this idea, although this is so hard for me to not unintentionally worship your kids, and worship what you're trying to, you know, what you hope they don't hold in



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bitterness towards you later, or hope you don't repeat the sins of your fathers, or whatever. It's going, well, my number one priority has got to be out of a loving obedience to the Father.

And the second paradigm shift that I received a few years ago from another author was, it was in relation to a spouse, and he said it dawned on him one day, 'How am I preparing my wife for her eventual meeting with Judge Jesus?' right? At the judgment seat, even for Christians at the Bema Seat, we'll all give an account for what we've done. And his framework was, how am I helping her get ready for that appointment? So, I kind of transferred that also to my wife. And with my kids, it's like, how am I preparing them for that eventual meeting with Jesus? I hope that doesn't convey too much pressure to our audience, but I would just say, whatever pressure you feel, we feel it too. There is that gravity there, but then from our hearts to yours, realize that you're never going to do it perfectly. And I think if you can adjust your expectations with this concept and go, okay, I've got friends, really, that do family worship every single day. They pray, they read, they sing every single day, and they have a rhythm, and that works for them. I can tell you as honestly as possible, that does not work for my family, right? And so, being okay with that is a big step, and then not expecting perfection when it happens. So, we advocate a once-a-week time of family worship. But early on, when I first started trying, when Ava was much younger than she is even now, I had this grandiose vision in my head of what it was going to look like and how much fun she was going to have, and how perfect it was going to be, and we're going to be singing together, and it was going to be this perfect- and I want to say it was either the first or the second time, she was just in a mood. She just was not having it. And I had this big expectation in my mind, and then when it came time to do it, she was just in a mood, man. She was just not feeling it. She had to have been three or four. Imagine a little girl having a mood. I mean, what's that about, right? And I was just so disheartened. I felt like a failure, I remember. And I was like, well, I guess I didn't do it right. Or I guess I didn't- and I followed the steps so faithfully, and I had it all prepared, I had all the stuff, my wife was with me, we're ready to go, and she just was not having it. And I felt so defeated. And I had a mentor of mine. I went to him, in tears, frankly. I was so upset because I thought maybe I don't know what I'm doing, which I don't.

**Autumn:** That becomes clearer and clearer as your children grow. You never know what you're doing.

**Frank:** He said, 'You have got to give yourself some room to fail. You're going to fail.' Same thing with Bible reading or sharing your faith. We don't want to get back into the trap of trying to earn God's approval with our faithful and perfect Family Times. We got to go, 'Were we saved by grace or not? Are we living in the gospel or not?' You can tell that both Jenna and I are passionate about that topic, but we do want to encourage parents, this isn't for just Jenna's family or my family, it's for your family. And there is a specific way in which your family will find that rhythm and you will see the fruit from it.

**Autumn:** We always hold those things in tension as parents or grandparents or guardians who care for kids, that we hope we are preparing them and doing what we can to love them, point them to Jesus, and that they belong to God, and we're preparing them also for a life of making their own decisions. I hope we do it well, and we always hold those things intentionally well.

**Jenna:** And I can say as a parent of teenagers and young adults now, that you do. And I referenced this earlier, you do lose some control. And you should, right? We're preparing our kids to be adults. We talked about this idea of raising great kids. No, I really want to raise a great adult, and that means that they are going to make some mistakes. They are

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going to make choices that I do not agree with, and my joke is, people will say, oh, your kids are so great, and I will say, 'It has nothing to do with me, that's all God's grace.' And just remember, if I take credit for the great things they do, that means I have to take credit when they do something stupid, too. No thank you. Right. But we are raising children who we want them to be able to think on their own. We want them to have that biblical framework, that biblical worldview to think through because they are going to come up against hard things. And it does not mean that they are not going to make mistakes. It does not mean that they're going to lead this perfect life. But what we're called to, and Frank has alluded to this, this is an obedience issue for us as parents and grandparents. We are called biblically to pass the faith. So how do we do that? That can look a lot of different ways. And again, why I love Deuteronomy 6, it is not saying that you have to have a specific time of family worship. We just believe that that's a really good starting point for a lot of families. But when you walk along the road, for example, from Deuteronomy 6, what does that look like in the life of your family? That may mean as you're in the car going from activity to activity, what are you talking about? What are you listening to in those times? I think some of this is just really being thoughtful as parents, that every moment is a teaching opportunity, and when we blow it, we apologize, we get back in the saddle, as it were, and just keep moving forward believing that God's grace covers it and that we're going to continue to try to be obedient to that call.

**Autumn:** When we say spiritual disciplines, what in your mind does that mean? What are those disciplines? If we were to kind of enumerate, what does that even mean?

**Jenna:** It's a great question. I think the ones that come to mind immediately are Bible reading, Bible study, prayer, worship, worshipping together. I think serving together is another part of that, but we think of them as building blocks too, right? We're not going to do all of these all at one time, but having sort of a trajectory of, well, we want to really focus on this maybe for this month or this year, and then we're going to move on to another as our children are able as they're interested. Frank, like the prayer cube idea, I mean, that's a perfect example of, okay, you can use this Family Time activity. Now we're going to be able to build on this in our home where this is something that we use on a regular basis to pray the Lord's Prayer, but also a life of prayer in our home. That's the spiritual discipline. What would you add?

**Frank:** I mean, depending on the list or depending on the author, you can get quite a few. Like Don Whitney has a great book on the spiritual disciplines, and there's things like journaling and then sharing your faith. There can be a large list. But when I was growing up, I didn't even know that there were categories for this. I didn't know. And it sounds so, I don't know, in my flesh it sounds so nonattractive on the face when you're going, oh, spiritual disciplines. Or some people might say, I don't even think about that because it sounds legalistic, or this kind of deal. But the way I like to think about it is like, I like to play music and I like to play guitar, and one of my favorite guitar players is a guy named Derek Trucks. And this guy is probably one of the best guitar players alive. And when he plays—he's a slide guitar player—and when he plays, when his band comes to Red Rocks here in Colorado, he plays. Man, that guy, he's kind of a quiet looking guy, but he is free and he is letting it loose. He's doing things on the guitar that I can confidently say I will never be able to do. Now, what's the point? The point is that that came after countless hours. I mean, collective weeks of months, years, and devotion and discipline. But what has that led to? It's led to freedom. It's led so when he gets up on the stage, they've got, I don't know, a two-hour set, he plays like it's breathing. And so, this discipline for him, and that leads to freedom. You could say the same thing about athletes, and Paul talks about that in the Word training yourself and Godly discipline, but reaping these eternal rewards. I just think in the moment, for me, if I'm honest, it is hard for me to have a daily quiet time, or whatever you want to call it is hard for me. But whenever I do it in the moment, I never walk away from a time in the Word or worshipping with brothers and sisters on Sunday morning or sharing my faith or whatever, I never walk away

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from one of those instances of spiritual discipline and go, 'I shouldn't have done that.' Every single time, it's like, why is this so tough for me? And I think a part of that, obviously, is spiritual warfare. It's clear to me why it's hard for us to do that. It's laziness on my part. The flesh, the world, the devil, you name it. It's going to be tough. But man, even through that difficulty, it's going to reap fruit. And that fruit, hopefully, is a closer relationship with the Lord and you knowing him better. He already knows you fully, and Christian, your identity is totally established in Him. He's not going to love you more or less. And with your family, it's going- I never walk away, especially with Family Time, family worship, I never walk away going, this was a waste of time. I always walk away, no matter what my kids do, I always walk away going, this is good and right, but it's never once been easy for us to do. Never once. It always requires sacrifice. There is always something, if I'm honest, that I would rather do in my flesh. It's easier—it's easier. It would be so easy. And it is easy for me to go, well, let's do this next week. They're young. They won't remember. We'll do this next week. I'm on it, right? But when we actually do it, I was really convicted by this a few weeks ago because it had been a few weeks since I had done it. And I said, I showed up that day and I was just determined tonight we are going to do Family Time. As soon as I got home, I said, 'Alright, here's what we're going to do'—I asked my wife first to make sure we're all going to be there—and I said, 'We're going to have dinner and we're going to have Family Time, and then maybe we can watch the movie and then get ready for bed a little later.' And Ava goes, 'Oh, that's great!' She's like, 'We haven't done that in forever.' I was like, yeah, I mean, that built in beautiful accountability from children. But she wasn't saying it in some sarcastic way—she's not that age yet. But she was saying she was genuinely excited. She was like, cool, I can't wait.

**Jenna:** That's so sweet. And here's just another thought as we kind of wrap things up, is we want better for our kids than we had or that we did in every area, right? It's like we don't want them to have to struggle as much with school, or maybe we want them to not have to drive a junker car that we had to drive when we first started driving, or just as it were, in relationships. And again, I'm in that teenage high school era thinking I want them to not make those same mistakes maybe that I made. Don't we want the same in their spiritual life and spiritual growth? If they know Jesus intimately, if they really know what the Word says, we have to believe that that is going to impact those decisions that they make, the way they think about the world, and hopefully, in a sense, be, "easier" for them than it was for us. And so, I would just put that in front of us, too. This is something that we can help our kids to have a more robust faith than we did and hopefully then miss some of those pitfalls of growing up not having that personal relationship.

**Frank:** I would say, to that point, it's one of the reasons we like to do Psalm 78:1-8, because it ends with a result, basically the past. It says, 'We will not keep the good news of who God is, what He's done, what we're supposed to do with it from the next generation.' They say, we received it, so we're not going to keep it from them, we're not going to keep this vital message from them. But to what end? The end is so that they would set their hope in God and remember his commandments and so that they would not repeat the sins of their fathers. That stubborn generation, it says, and it's looking back at those wandering Israelites, but I even think for, like Jenna said, my own life. I go, if my kids by God's grace can avoid the mistakes that I made—they're going to make mistakes; they're going to make mistakes; no guarantees—but through learning through God's Word and through the careful care of their parents and the warm relationship with their parents to go, if they can avoid what I went through, what I put myself through, praise the Lord. I hope they don't repeat my sins or the sins of the wandering Israelites, the doubting of God and forgetting who He is. And so, there's a hope here. If I can drop off my kid at college like Jenna was able to do last year. If I can drop my kid off at college knowing that they have set their confidence in God, set their hope in God, that they have a relationship with the Lord, and that they're going to remember what He said, that drop off is going to be so different than what it could have

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been. And it's going to be not because of my power, but because I know she has a relationship with the Lord and she knows what He said.

**Jenna:** Amen.

**Autumn:** For anyone who's listening who maybe is starting to process this, parents, grandparents, those of you caring for kids in your home and thinking through this idea of developing regular rhythms when you together with your kids, turn your attention to, your focus to, as a family, to God, who He is, and what He has done. I think there are some easy comparisons that we all know yield fruit. Frank gave this example of the guitar player, what's his name, Derek Trucks? We know in our own lives experientially that this is true. Anytime you with regularity engage in something, you experience more reward from it. Whether it's a physical undertaking, a sort of mental discipline that you've given yourself to. So physical disciplines, mental disciplines, we all know that those yield fruit over time with consistency. And it's the same when we talk about spiritual disciplines. It's the same over time with consistency. Then those also yield fruit in our own lives and in the lives of our kids. So, would you guys send us out with a few just encouragements as far as if someone is thinking, okay, we should get back to this, or, that sounds so attractive, I want to do this. What are just a few simple ways to think through this and then start to take some steps into it?

**Frank:** Well, I would be remiss and not say go to famtime.com. That's where all of our resources live at famtime.com roadmap. If you're interested in a twelve-month spiritual journey for your family with disciplines like this, we would love to send you a free copy of that. We also will send you a free Bible activity to your inbox every month if you sign up for our mailing list. So, that's an easy, free place to start.

**Autumn:** And Fellowship also partners with Family Time, so if anyone was interested in accessing all of the resources, they can just email me, [autumn@fellowshipdenver.org](mailto:autumn@fellowshipdenver.org), and I can give you that information.

**Frank:** And I would say, obviously we believe in our resources and we hope you use them. We hope it blesses you like it's blessed our actual families. But also lean into your church community, the church as a family. There are simple ways and this church staff, I know, is ready to equip the members of how can you talk about what Pastor Hunter preached on this last Sunday? How can you use what the kids learned in their age-appropriate teaching time at the dinner table? I mean, there's connecting it to what happens at the church or with the church family I think is a big win. And it's something you can do almost right away.

**Jenna:** And if you can link arms with other families within your church body that share this passion that are trying to do it, yes, do it in community when you can.

**Frank:** Absolutely. It can be a lonely thing, just like any of the spiritual disciplines, if you're trying and you're feeling like a failure and you're not hearing from other believers and other brothers and sisters, so get that encouragement. But yeah, that working in something from Family Time or from your church family is something you could put into practice really quick because, I just want to say this really quickly, sometimes people picture family worship or family time as having to say things that they don't know. Okay, I'm going to have to teach a big huge sermon or I'm going to have to teach this huge theological lesson to my kids. And we want people to resist that urge. Open it up for conversation, but be willing to tell your kids that you don't know the answer right away if they ask. It's okay. But what we're advocating for is not some big complicated thing. We're advocating for a sectioned-off time, opening God's Word, praying together, singing together

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if you're so inclined, or if you're not. I mean, you don't have to be a good singer to do. But all that to say, we don't want to make it more complicated than it is.

**Autumn:** A few of the things that I think you mentioned, just that I have taken away from this conversation were that in order to do this, you have to give it some thought. So, be intentional, be realistic. There will be barriers, it won't be easy. There will probably be more—this is for my own experience—but, when you decide to do this, there will be barriers that you never even thought would happen. Just like realistically, in real time, you're like, we're going to do this night. We put it on the calendar, and then-

**Frank:** -something weird happened.

**Autumn:** Yes, things will happen that were unexpected, persevere anyway. So, give it some thought. Be intentional. Be realistic. Make it a priority. You said that, Jenna, and then find a way to do it that is fun and accessible for your family. So, Family Time provides some fun, hands-on activities as your kids get older, Jenna, you mentioned there are different ways to go about it. Select a book to read together, but find just some practical ways to enable you to go about it. And then when you have those hard questions, you can email Mr. Frank or email Pastor Hunter.

**Frank:** Talk to Jenna. She knows the answers.

**Autumn:** Talk to Jenna. But in summary, Jenna said this earlier, too. Just do it. Just start to do it. And then ask God always, every day to sustain you and your kids and to really enliven your time together as a family when you do it. But Frank, Jenna, thanks so much for the work you do and for spending time talking with me today. I appreciate you, and I'm really glad to share this with our church family.

**Frank:** Thank you for having us. Thank you for doing what you do week in and week out at your church.

**Jenna:** Yeah, grateful for you and families. Go do it. Go have fun. Go in the Lord.

**Autumn:** If you have questions or suggestions, whether about today's podcast episode or something you'd like to hear us discuss on the Vision for Life podcast in the future, you can send all of that any time 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.