

THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 95 | Behind The Music: Rebuild, Renew, Part 2

Featuring: Autumn Gardner, Adam Anglin, Jordan Lucas, and Daniel Perez



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 day new lives. I'm Autumn, the host of the Vision for Life podcast, and Adam, Jordan and Daniel are joining me again today. We're discussing an album that our bands and musicians Fellowship Denver created called *Rebuild, Renew* that will be released on September 16. So, if you're listening to this episode before September 16th, you can look forward to that release. If you're listening to this after September 16th, then you can go find the album right now and listen to it simultaneously with this episode.

Adam: At the same time.

Autumn: You can play them at the same time.

Adam: Right now, yeah.

Autumn: I don't know if that's good advice, but-

Jordan: It's great advice.

Autumn: Thank you all for joining me again today. And I'll recap quickly our conversation last week, or at least give it my best attempt, and then we're going to talk about some of the specific songs on the album—three—each of you were the primary songwriters on these three songs that we'll discuss today. So, we're going to talk about both the process of creating music, so writing music for these songs, and then also how you go about writing lyrics and what that looks like, both for you as individual songwriters and then when you collaborate in an album such as this. So, on our first week—I mean, anyone listening, you can just also go back and listen to that episode which precedes this one.

Adam: That's right.

Autumn: But if you're jumping in here, last week we discussed our worship and arts ministry here at Fellowship, namely our worship bands, how those are structured, and why they're structured that way. And then we talked about the album, generally. Today, we're talking about it specifically. So, in some general terms we talked about the process to create an album and what it looks like to participate in a process, in a creative process of that sort, in which you're working with many different elements, many different people, and how an album then comes to be. It sounds like it's a lot of work. That was my takeaway. It sounds like it's a lot of effort and a few existential crises along the way. That's what we determined.

Jordan: More than a few.

Autumn: Oh, more than a few?

Autumn: Wow. You guys need to listen to our other episodes where right before this called 'A Non-anxious Presence.' I have a book for you to read.

Jordan: We're always working on ourselves, but doesn't mean we don't have existential crises.

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Adam: I think on the surface, maybe not all of us, but I think some of us can communicate a real non-anxious presence. But then it's sort of the waters down below.

Autumn: Turmoil underneath.

Adam: There's a lot going on under the surface, you know?

Autumn: So, the existential crises aren't always apparent.

Adam: No, they're not.

Jordan: I seem like a laid-back guy. I'm having an existential crisis over how to say crises or crisis.

Autumn: Well, crises is plural. Crisis—this is grammatically correct—crisis is singular. Crises is multiple crisis.

Jordan: Right, I know.

Autumn: Yeah, that's it. That's the difference.

Jordan: I just want to have one existential crisis so I don't have to say the word crises.

Adam: I feel better that we've got that nailed down.

Daniel: Crisis averted, really.

Jordan: *Crises* averted, if we're talking about all of us.

Autumn: All four of us. Maybe we're having a collaborative crisis right now.

Jordan: Then it would be single. Yeah, for sure.

Adam: This is kind of the process, though. It really is fun and silly and also at times you're like, 'Why am I doing any of this? It's hard and I hate it, and no one's going to listen to it.' Genuinely, one of the biggest fears I have about doing this is that no one cares. And I know that's not necessarily true, but it takes so much work and so much effort from so many people, and this is how all art is. And then you're just like, no one's going to listen; no one cares. But I think one of the things that we can hold on to as musicians and as artists is like, God has called us into- and not to just cover over this with something from Scripture or spiritualize it in some way, but I do think genuinely God has called us to- these songs are an aspect of ministry. We're putting real prayers to song, and if the Lord works through one person in our music, it's so worth it. Just to know that we're able to minister to people in this way, even if it's just a few people, it's actually really powerful and lifegiving and it makes the thing that we're doing worth doing.

Autumn: We briefly mentioned this last week, but it's worth a remention here so that we can have it fresh in our minds as we listen to our discussion today as we go through this discussion today. Who, collectively—so, of all of the people who participated, which was many of our musicians—Adam, did you mention around 40 people?

Adam: There's like 30 to 40 musicians kind of involved in making the whole record recording, and that involves production people and songwriters. So, it's somewhere around there.

Autumn: And there are a couple of things that unify the album itself, the work collectively, all of these different contributions from different musicians and songwriters, and then the technical work as well that goes into producing it. There are a couple of things that unify all of that, and one with what we discussed last week, and that the central theme, if we were to state it simply—I learned in my lesson last week and asking you guys to state something simply—so I'm going to state it simply. The central theme, if we were to state it simply, is: hope and joy, reminding ourselves of hope and joy, found in God, in the gospel, in biblical truth, in times of uncertainty. And so, Adam, you shared that in reflection upon the album, you realized that writing during a pandemic had actually deeply affected the result of the album. And so, it does contain these really foundational truths. That's what you set out to do. But maybe you didn't set out to write, as you said, a pandemic record. And yet that's what the result was, perhaps. Another thing that unifies all of these different elements is that you're writing this for a particular audience and with particular purpose. So, what is that? When our musicians at Fellowship set out to write something of this sort to create music like this on a worship album, who is it for?

Adam: Yeah, I'd love to hear what Dan- Dan is such a prolific songwriter, you write all the time and I don't know, you have our people in mind really well. But yeah, I'd love to hear.

Daniel: Yeah, I think as we put together these songs it really was thinking about sort of the two fold of, one, there's Sunday services—these are songs that we could actually sing corporately together, which was kind of weird because at the time we weren't doing church in person. So, that was a little bit of a- it was like kind of a disconnect. But it was just sort of part of the reality of the time is that we're writing congregational songs for a church that does not meet as a congregation. So, we just kind of had like- that was just the reality of the times. But then also, not just for Sunday, but to know that these would be recorded and to know that these would be something that would live on Spotify and Apple Music and in people's, if they have older cars, a CD player in their car like mine. These would just be songs that people could listen to during the week and feel connected to God and feel connected to their church community. So, I think those would be the two places to me that I would think these songs would end up. So, as we're writing them, we kind of had both of those in mind.

Autumn: In a book, Adam, that you actually introduced me to, it's called *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church's Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel*. Mike Cospers, the author, says, 'Participating in God's glory, sharing life, then, happens in two contexts, scattered and gathered. Worship scattered is the spirit-filled life of the Christian in the world, and worship gathered is the meeting of God's people to remember, encourage and bless one another.' And as I was listening to your explanation, Daniel, it sounds like what you're hoping is that these songs can be a gift to our church and utilized in both. Both for us to sing together as the family of God gathered, and to listen to and sing as the Family of God scattered during the week.

Adam: And one of the challenging pieces of that for us is we really have a strong desire within our ministry to write stuff that hasn't been written before. And it's so hard to do in kind of the context of worship music because so much has been said about who God is and who we are, but I think that's one of the things that really drives us is. We are really trying to search for how do we put song to these prayers that we have that we're not just regurgitating some of our favorite

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worship songs. We really are trying to write something that feels specific and needed and just put that in the mouths of our people. And so, I think that's an interesting aspect of this as well. So, we're not trying to write kind of just, I don't know what you would say, generic, kind of broad-themed songs. We're trying to speak to particular places that people live, and so everything that Dan said is true, and that's just kind of an extra thing that informs that process.

Autumn: When our band leaders and song leaders go about selecting songs for our church to sing in our gathered spaces, primarily on Sundays, but also in other special services—when all of you go about selecting those songs—I've heard you say that you're mindful of many things, one of which is who the attention of the song is capturing and where that attention is directed to. So, for instance, to clarify, I know one of these categories is songs that are really about God and talk about God's character or truths about God and direct our attention to God's deity and this aspect of grandeur and supremacy. And then certain songs also that we sing give us a really rich theology of our humanity, and those songs might direct our attention towards our need, our fallen or sinful state, our receptivity to God's grace, our being His children—so maybe they talk about our position in relationship to God. Do you think both of those are present in this album as well?

Adam: Yeah, I think so. It's like, hm, let me remember all the songs. I think we were trying to really speak to some really particular kind of themes, and so there's a lot of reflection in this record. There's a lot of kind of, 'Who am I?' As it pertains to sort of who God is and where does God have me right now in this season. I think that's that aspect of riding out of a pandemic. You can't help but naturally kind of see everything. Even if you're just trying to speak to these big, objective, beautiful truths of who God is, it's hard not to kind of put ourselves into it and kind of be writing it from that place. So, I think both are present there, but there is probably, if I had to guess, there's probably a lot more songs on the record that lean a little bit more towards a place of real response and kind of this examining humanity piece that you'd mentioned. Kind of, 'What is my need? Where am I right now? Who is God when I'm experiencing doubt?' All these kinds of things. So, I don't know if I'm answering the question, but I think that's where most of the songs live.

Autumn: Yeah. Let's look at a few of the specific songs on the album together. We'll listen to portion of each of these songs and then discuss them. And the first one that we've selected is *Set My Feet Upon a Rock*. And, Daniel, I think you were the primary writer on this song, so let's listen to a part of *Set My Feet Upon a Rock*, and then just set you free to talk about it.

Daniel: Okay.

song excerpt plays

Autumn: Daniel, for this song, *Set My Feet Upon a Rock*, what encouraged you towards this concept, this idea? Was it something you were personally processing or, like we mentioned before, something you need to be reminded of? I'm just conjecturing here, so actually I should just let you answer.

Daniel: Sure. So, with this song, as we've kind of mentioned, we have these monthly songwriting cohorts, and we usually did them on a Thursday, which is also when the bands do rehearsal. And there was one Thursday where I think Adam was subbing in on Jordan's band or something like that; long story short, no one else was able to make it. And so, I got into the church office and kind of unpacked my guitar, got my notebook out, and I had nothing. I had nothing going into it, no good ideas, and I was the only one there in that big room. And Adam had done a couple of prompts just like, hey, these

are things that you could look at to kind of get some ideas going. And Psalm 40 was one of the prompts, and just like, hey, look at this psalm—take the words to it and try to craft a song from one or more of the themes. And this was a weird song in that it was like 20-30 minutes and 90% of the song was done. It happened really, really fast, and that's not typical for me. Usually, I have a million little snippets of melodies and little lyric ideas and stuff, and most of them are not good and they just die on their own. But every once in a while, one of them is good. And I'll build something on that, and it usually takes weeks, and it's collaborative, and work with others, and eventually you have a song that was built off some tiny little snippet. But this was just kind of a one-and-done sort of deal which was really neat in that way.

But the two themes that kind of stood out as I was working on this one is, Psalm 40 is a psalm about deliverance and God being a rescuer, and part of it is being rescued from external brokenness. So, things in the world, things around you, David singing about enemies around him, there's kind of that external brokenness. And then there's also the stuff that's kind of caused by our own sin, and so he sings too of his own iniquities and just the problems that those have caused for him. And so, there's kind of that big theme of God is a rescuer and God is a redeemer and He restores. So, you'll see that present in the song and in the lyrics, and we mentioned before that kind of, is this a song about God's deity or is this a song about humanity and this psalm? And then the song that I wrote inspired by it is really a back and forth. There's kind of both of those elements in there. But I think the thing that really stood out to me, and the thing that's repeated in the chorus which is kind of just an extension of this theme of God's deliverance, is that He's not just a redeemer that is break-even or stingy, or He doesn't just pull you up from the pit and leave you on the side of the road. I think of anytime you see video from a natural disaster or an accident or something, the people are like huddling on the side of the road, they've got an emergency blanket around them, they're cold, they're wet, they're scared, but they've been rescued. And God is so much more than that. He is a generous redeemer. He actually redeems us into something more beautiful and more good than we could have contrived or come up with on our own.

Adam: That's good.

Daniel: And so, that idea of having a new song in your mouth, there's a real missional, kind of purposeful aspect of the psalm that stood out to me. That's what I kept going back to. He didn't just rescue and then just leave me there. He put a new song in my mouth. I have a purpose and a mission that just goes beyond what I would have done on my own. And that to me was kind of the thing I wanted to capture. And after I had written the song, I liked it, but I sort of put it to the side. I had kind of said, 'Well, it probably wouldn't work in a congregational setting, and I don't really hear it sung in my voice,' and had kind of put it to the side. But it kept coming back. I would just get it stuck in my head, and I would think of another little thing I wanted to add to it or whatever, and finally worked up the courage to drop it in the group chat and say, 'Hey, here's a song. I don't think I'm going to be the one to sing it. I don't even know if it's any good, but just kind of wanted to toss it out as a possible thing for a late addition for the record.' And it was a pretty quick response of like, 'Hey, this is good and you should sing it.'

Adam: Yeah, we all ganged up on Dan and told him he had to sing it. We said we weren't going to do it unless he sang it. Dan was interested in making it clear that he definitely wanted somebody else to sing it.

Daniel: I tried so hard.

Adam: Yeah, we didn't let him do it.

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Daniel: But it was cool. I felt really supported, and I didn't have totally the vision of how the song would come together, but I knew the core of it was pretty good. So, Adam laid down the rhythm guitar stuff, and then I went to Adams boiler room basement studio and did the vocal stuff, and then Jordan afterwards just added his ambient guitar magic, and it just really filled it out in a way that was beyond what I could have done on my own. And I love the way it turned out, and yeah, it was a fun song to write, and the themes are ones that continue to draw me to the gospel and continue to draw me deeper into serving and loving others. Is that just that idea of like, God is a generous redeemer? He gives us a new song, He gives us something better.

Adam: Yeah, I love it. It was really sweet. This song was cool, like Dan mentioned, he wrote it. I think Jordan pitched in also on some kind of arranging.

Daniel: Yes. The repetition of the chorus. I kind of had it a different way at first, and that was Jordan who said, we should repeat this a few times.

Adam: But it's really cool. I got to record it and then have these guys it was like a really small song in that way. It was just the three of us, which was really kind of cool and unlike really all the other songs on the record because of that. But it was really sweet, and we got to just kind of keep it small and just have it be a couple of instruments and yeah, it's really sweet. But we love this song. As soon as Dan sent it to the thread, we all said, yes, we have to do it. And then I forget who said we should make Dan do it, but I like that part the most. It's really fun. I love Dan's voice. It's like one of my favorite. I know you don't- we were just talking, if this isn't going to be on the podcast, but we're talking off-mic about do you like to hear yourself sing in recordings and stuff? And I said yes about myself, which is very, I guess, narcissistic. I like the thing that I'm doing, you know? But Dan was an enthusiastic no on his own voice. But I love Dan's voice, and I love hearing when you send song snippets that you recorded on your phone, and it's so fun, and I love the quality and the character of your voice. So anyway, I'm glad we made you do it.

Autumn: I really love what you said, Daniel, about this element of like, it's kind of back-and-forth, and the speaker is human. If your inspiration was based on Psalm 40, or you're envisioning yourself in this space, the person in this exchange is contemplating their position initially in this dire situation and then, as you said, we have a generous Savior, Redeemer, or Rescuer. And the recognition of that that develops in the song is really sweet and poignant. And then ending with that, 'Tune my heart, restore my way,' acknowledging that the person, the character in this song, on their own had gotten themselves into or was in this stage of needing to be rescued. And then the Rescuer not only took them out of the situation, but did in fact redeem and restore in this exchange. And so, the acknowledgement of Your way is better and leads to a different place than where I was stuck in this situation or this actual place of need, and so I really love that that line, tune my heart to the recognition of setting aside of oneself and your own way, and then asking that your will and your heart be aligned with the generous Redeemer who restores. That's really beautiful.

Let's move on to the second song that we've selected to discuss, and this one is called *I Trust in You*. And Jordan, is that right, you were the primary songwriter on this and you sing it on the album as well?

Jordan: I do, yeah.

Autumn: So, let's go ahead and listen to a portion of this song and then do the same. Would love to hear from you on your process writing it and what that looked like for you to create this song.

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song excerpt plays

Autumn: Jordan, lead us through this. What was the process of writing this song like for you?

Jordan: Man, that's a heavy question. But I think it started much in same way that Dan said and with the intentionality behind songwriting cohorts. I think we arrived on one of the cohorts where I actually led it and there were some surprises there. There was probably like three or four people there and folks that were genuinely interested and curious by what songwriting even is. And it was really interesting because we gauged everybody's level of songwriting, and it ranged from, I've written a bunch of songs, to I've written maybe one song, to I've never written a song in my entire life and I'm really interested in the process. And with those kind of jumping-off points of writing, we definitely landed in the Psalms. And specifically, I really gravitated towards Psalm 56 where just the focus on the primary lyric that shows up in the first chorus, which is, 'When I'm afraid, I put my trust in You,' and that is something that just really jumped off the page for me. But he also says later on in the chapter that, basically, despite me being afraid, I will still trust in You. And it harkened back to a memory from a sermon that I heard when I was a teenager, that your primary reasons for sin or not growing as close to God as you would maybe like or some shame that you feel in life, whatever it is, the kind of center point, the root of that is your lack of trust in God. And that really just hit home for me. And reading that chapter in Psalm 56 was a huge reminder of that sentiment of it's probably my lack of trust in God and how He's going to deliver me and set me free. It's because of my lack of trust in God. So, it really kind of blossomed from there and a lot of the lyrics in the song, like the very first verse, are pulled right out of that. And I just love the kind of the theme of using it sort of as a prayer. It's just, be gracious to me, O God, because I'm just worn down. I am beaten; I am downtrodden. And then just the repetitiveness of, be gracious to me, I'm worn down by fear, but please hold me near in that, and then it kind of goes on from that.

But then also one of the challenges that I put forth with songwriting in the context of a church and congregationally is to write kind of part two, part one, part two—sort of telling a story and then wrapping it. So, when we have verse one, it's be gracious to me, and this is the experience and the pain that I have, but then by the verse three, verse two in the second half, it's an opportunity to exalt Him—exalt Your holy name above all the names, and then all my worldly gains are nothing in comparison to You. So, that was kind of the hope in writing that I also wanted to definitely throw in. When we experience hardship and pain in life, as Christians, we tend to draw close to God in those times for answers, for comfort. But then when things are going well, we have that tendency to forget or not draw as close because things are going well. And so, I wanted to be intentional about writing the chorus in a way that we could interchange words. So, with the outro of the chorus when we start it with, 'When I'm afraid, I trust in You,' but then we also say, 'When I have doubt,' but then also, 'The chains are thrown away,' but when things are going well, I still trust in You, that sort of thing. And that harkens to that as well in verse two, would give refuge to my soul in the midst of my pain, but also when I walk again because it's important to for me as a songwriter, but also me as a Christian to be reminded that it's easy to lose sight of God's grace when things are going well. Especially when things are going well. So, what was interesting about this song, too, is it was not an easy process as most of the time songs are to write, and I tend to overwrite. But when those barriers that we've kind of talked about earlier with songwriting for your church and your community and songs that you want to sing congregationally, sometimes you really have to strip it down so that it can be singable. And this one was a really special song because I overwrote it heavily and I had to strip it back, and it was painful at times, but it was really encouraging to go, 'I don't need to say everything I need to say in this one verse.' And so that was a really cool experience. On top of that, my favorite part of the entire song is honestly the bridge at the end, and it's super fun and it's

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great to sing it out and get big and loud, but personally it was the most fun because I literally wrote it in like five minutes and I was like, that was cool. I like that. I like the way that kind of came together, but I love what's being said there.

Autumn: Yeah, let's read it.

Jordan: Yeah. 'For you, oh God, you delivered me from death to life so that I might live in you and find my righteousness through you.' That it just gives God the glory of saying that You delivered me from this death, and that it's not my will, it's Your will that got me through it, and it's through Your righteousness that I'm able to even breathe. And it's simple, it's catchy, and all that kind of stuff, but it really flowed out and it's probably the only lyrics that didn't come directly from the Psalm 56 that most of the song is actually coming from. So, yeah, I was super thrilled to be able to add that in there, and it worked out pretty seamlessly for how to fit it in there, too.

Autumn: The song sounds to me, as we listen to it—the instrumentation—sounds pretty contemplative, especially at the beginning of the song. How do you as musicians determine that? How does this idea of how to make a song sound occur to you?

Jordan: Man, this one specifically was interesting because, I think I mentioned it before, but it actually had a completely different, big, kind of driving intro to the song. And as I spent more and more time with it, I realized that it wasn't serving the song well to do that and to kind of jump right in to the song. To me, was really important and to have that reflection, really simple kind of beat, whatever. Honestly, it starts with the guitar just having the chords and making sure that the chords are right. And then sometimes it can be something as simple as, I want a minor chord to be there instead of a major chord because—I can't say the word that you said—

Autumn: Contemplative.

Jordan: Contemplative, there you go. Minor chords are better for that, to be honest, in many ways. But then also, how do we spring out of that? And major chords and changing that too. So, that can be helpful. And that really honestly starts at the guitar or piano, wherever you start. And then it kind of goes from there. And how can you expand upon it and make it more atmospheric or kind of swims in different sounds and stuff like that? That's how it started for me for that song specifically. And then creating sort of almost like a story. You're telling a story, and then you can actually do that musically. Where it starts simple, kind of has a big part, middle part, and it doesn't happen that way every time. And I also thought it was incredibly important to have an outro where we just have this moment of reflection where we're swimming in reverb and we're singing the song saying, intentionally singing, 'I trust in You' kind of over and over again too as we exit out of that space.

Autumn: I like that you decided to end it that way because it seems, as I was listening to you reflect on the process of writing the song and your thoughts as they're engaging with the lyrics and the way they came to be, were that you very clearly addressed both of these states feeling weary or worn down by fear, and then also acknowledging that sometimes when we're experiencing maybe comfort more or a time that's easy we're kind of lulled into this state of I don't know if we believe we don't need God but our day-to-day experience doesn't remind us of it as directly. But the crux of both of those the area of need in both of those that you pressed into is that both of those either living in fear and being worn down by fear or living in this sort of state of comfort. The need in both of those is to be reminded that we need to trust in God. So, I think that's a really suitable way to end this song, with that repetition and that statement. It reminds us that

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in either state, in any state, that's what our need is and where our need lies. Let's move on to the third song that we're going to discuss, and this one is called *Thorn in My Flesh*. And Adam, you were the songwriter for the song, is that right?

Adam: Yes, that's right.

Autumn: So, let's do the same. Let's listen to a portion of this song, and then take us through your thoughts as you were writing this and how that process looked for you.

Adam: Cool.

song excerpt plays

Autumn: We discussed before in our last conversation that each of our bands sort of has its own style, its own feel, and that's really evident in these three songs too that we're discussing and listening to today. But, similarly to what Daniel and Jordan have shared, Adam, how did this song come to be? What was that process like for you?

Adam: Yeah, this song kind of just started for me processing some hardship from people that I know kind of personally within the body. But then also, again, I think in the season of the pandemic, just processing all the different stories and different things that I was hearing and experiencing within our community, and I was reflecting on what does it look like to suffer, especially physically. We have physical ailments, or we have things that plague us, not just for a season, but for these extended seasons and maybe parts of our whole life. What does it look like? How do we see our suffering in light of the gospel? And I was reminded of a couple verses as I was kind of thinking through these themes. One is Hebrews 4:15; so it says, 'For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with us, with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.' And then 2nd Corinthians is really kind of where the song comes from. It's chapter 12 where Paul says, 'Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me, but He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my powers made perfect and weakness," therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.' And so, it's kind of speaking to this thing that he can't resolve, this physical kind of ailment can't seem to resolve. And it's sort of unclear in Scripture what that is. But this idea is that where it leads Paul is to the cross and leads Paul to the gospel. And so, one of the things I was trying to share and kind of communicate when I was telling the group about this song was that, really, in the cross we get the smallest little taste of what it's like to suffer and sort of this disconnect where God and Jesus are no longer like—where Christ has died—God's experiencing the loss of His son. And when we suffer, we get the smallest little glimmer and taste of what that feels like and sort of how hard and how difficult it is to experience fracture in our own bodies. And so, my hope is that what that does is it leads us into the cross. It leads us into the love of God more fully. When we see a picture of the sacrifice of Christ, that we don't see it disconnected from our own lives and our own hurts and our own struggling. But in our struggling and in our suffering, we actually are more connected to Christ. We're more connected to our King. So, that's where this song really comes from. And then wanting to do it in a way that was like, that's kind of a really weird, kind of maybe hard concept, maybe I'm overstating that. But there's a lot in this song. There's a lot that sort of informs it, shapes it. And yet, the song itself is really simple. It's verse, verse, chorus, instrumental, verse, chorus. And I wanted the course to be celebratory. So, the chorus is, 'Let this thorn in my flesh lead me to the cross; let Your love sink down deep that I might taste the cost, for Your Son took my sin in His death and loss, so let this thorn in my flesh lead me to the cross.' So, I wanted this song to have this sort of all-country, really gang-vocal, singable, celebratory that even in the midst of suffering we could still sing and celebrate and cling to the gospel. So, that

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was what I was trying to kind of shoot for. This is for sure the most different kind of sounding song I think we have on the record stylistically. And even for our band, it's not our most natural kind of style as a band, although we lean in this sort of all-country direction. That's not where we live every time we serve on a Sunday, but it was a place that we could go to comfortably, and all the musicians could step into it comfortably, which was really fun.

Autumn: I liked that central aspect that you picked up on in the song and then in your explanation in the life of Jesus. We see really clearly this example in the life of Paul, as you mentioned, the reference to the thorn in his flesh that is central to this song. In the title of the song, and even really in the overarching narrative of the Bible, this pattern of suffering and sacrifice preceding glory is constant. It's there through all of the stories of the Bible, and I think in our developed world we put so much effort into mitigating against bad feelings and against suffering. So much of our effort societally goes towards that. And in the story of Scripture, this—our earthly state—really assumes that we will go through hard things and that life includes suffering, and that following Jesus includes sacrifice. And so, this idea of sacrifice and suffering that's inherent to the gospel, the cause of the life of Jesus is true for us, too. I think we would do well as modern listeners. I think this is such a poignant reminder for us who live in an era in which we really worship comfort—we were just noting that a minute ago—that life, actually, and life with Jesus, should include this as sort of an expectation for us. And not in a morbid sense, but in a sense of we walk this alongside our Savior. So, I love that central aspect of this song. Were there other voices in there with you or is that all you at the end when the instruments drop out?

Adam: Yeah, so Jenna Connell and Landon Tucker sang with me on this song. So, they were in my band at the time. Landon's now in Dan's band. This is the nature of worship leading and having bands, but they were in my band at the time, and it was really sweet. We got to kind of gather in the middle of the sanctuary, just put a mic between the three of us, and sing the song together. And such a fun way to record and a lot more efficient than tracking everybody individually. But this was kind of the spirit of the song. I really wanted to capture this sort of more live, kind of vibrant, loose kind of quality. I feel like that's part of what the song was asking for. I only do that if I feel like that's the direction—artistic direction—of a particular piece of music or whatever. But, yeah, that was how we did that. It was really fun. And then Parker, we didn't name all the musicians on every song, but Parker Neyland plays lead guitar, and this is sort of right up his alley and the kind of thing that he does so well. It's really fun to have those folks on this track.

Autumn: You're right, we didn't name all the musicians, but this is such a sweet gift from all of the people who collaborated on this album to our church family and even beyond to the family of God that is so much bigger than our Fellowship family.

Adam: One last thing that I would love to just add to our conversation and to everything that we've talked about today is that our heart's desire in all of this is to really share, to make this and to share it with our church. So, it's not simply a creative exercise; we're not just trying to fill the songbook with new ideas or whatever, but it really is our gift to Fellowship Denver Church. And so, if anybody that's listening to this would be so inclined to share it, to listen to it, but then to also share it, there's no money in this. For us as musicians, this is simply a gift that we desire to give. And so, even if there are people in your life outside of Fellowship Denver that would benefit from hearing some of these songs, even if it's just a particular track that spoke to you, if you would just share that work, it would mean the world to us as people who really desire to see God glorified in song. And so, that takes a real kind of grassroots effort of everyone being willing to kind of email it or to send links, or just to share it practically whether it's on social media or with people in your

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life that you know might need to hear it. So, that would be huge for us in this ministry and just a massive encouragement to the 30 or so folks that put in time over the last kind of year and a half, two years to make this record.

Autumn: Yeah, and I want to say a special thanks to Jesse Cowan. He is our technical director. He produces the podcast episodes, but he also spent countless hours working on putting together that album, getting it to its final form.

Adam: He can't edit this part out. He has to keep it in.

Autumn: Jesse, when you're editing this episode, you have to leave this part in.

Adam: Yeah, we love you.

Autumn: Well, thank you to each of you, Daniel, Jordan, Adam, for spending some time talking about this, for all of your work on the album, and for the way that you lead our church consistently through your presence on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis, and then also in the way that you lead our church in worship. We're really grateful for you, and as we've mentioned, for so many of our musicians, for all of you who serve our church in this way with a lot of thought and intention and in giving of yourselves. If you want to get connected to Adam, he mentioned this earlier, but about worship being a part of our worship ministry. So, whether that looks like auditioning for one of our bands or any questions you might have, you can send that to podcast@fellowshipdenver.org, that questions, and I would be glad to connect you with him. In addition, if you have questions, comments, suggestions—a suggestion, perhaps, of something you'd like to hear us discuss on a future episode—you can send all of that anytime to podcast@fellowshipdenver.org. Thanks for joining us on the Vision for Life podcast. Special thanks to Adam Anglin for our theme music, to Jesse Cowan, our producer, and to Judd Connell, who provides transcription for these episodes.