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## A Trip Around the Sun

### Part 3 – Accumulate Experiences, Not Possessions

Pastor Ted Cunningham

So we're continuing in this series *A Trip Around the Sun*. We're looking at our life like a journey, like a trip. Every year, every 365 days, the earth goes around the sun. I am 41 years old which means I have completed 41 trips around the sun; I'm on my 42<sup>nd</sup> trip around the sun. If you've taken 80 trips around the sun, would you raise your hand? Anybody with over 80 trips? That's our first service, just so you know. If you've completed 70 trips around the sun, would you raise your hand? There are a few more. Sixty trips around the sun? Fifty trips around the sun? Forty trips around the sun? Thirty trips around the sun? Twenty trips around the sun? Ten trips around the sun? Isn't that something to think about: the Twentieth Century as history? That makes some of us a little bit sad.

Today we're talking about how to accumulate experiences, not possessions. We encourage you to get the book by Mark Batterson and Dick Foth. It's called *A Trip Around the Sun: How to Turn Your Everyday Ordinary Life Into the Adventure of a Lifetime*. That book is full of stories challenging you in your faith and how to take everyday, ordinary moments and turn them into momentum.

I'm on my second journey through that book. I've enjoyed that book so much, but one of the challenges our family has taken on this year is to begin to experience more and buy less. Does anybody know what I'm talking about? I'm done throwing away stuff. I'm going to ask you a question. How many of you believe you could live in this house right here? It's about 187 square feet. A few hands just went down. "That's a shed. I'm not living in a shed." Raise your hand if you could live in 187 square feet. You're a family and you think your family could live in 187 square feet, let me see your hand. Here's what I love about the conversation. It's called the tiny house movement. It's the rebellion towards the crash eight years ago. It's like "We'll show it to the banks; we won't take out any more mortgages."

I think this one is actually on wheels and you can move it to wherever you want. Some of you are going "I told you, honey, if we wait 20 years, our house would be cool again. You didn't want to live in a trailer, but you're rethinking that one right now."

People are saying "I'm done with the stuff. I'm done with the hoarding. I'm done with calling 1-800-GOT JUNK every now and then and hauling stuff away that we loved so much a few years ago." We are tired with the upkeep. We don't want to come home and just take care of more stuff. We're tired of the mortgage. We want to free up to pursue more.

Have you seen the commercials? The commercials that are fantastic. There are stores now that are mocking the tiny house movement. I don't want to call out names, but Havertys has a commercial right now and they make a joke of this. Has anybody seen it? They said we put the shed back in the backyard where it belongs and we moved back into a real house. Why is that? It's because they don't want you buying a 187 square feet and not buying furniture. They want you buying a lot of furniture.

Today, please don't hear me as being down on houses. I, Ted Cunningham, cannot, under any circumstances, live in 187 square feet. That would mean the children would always be in the room with me and I have a big no thank you to that one. My kids are into this right now. They want each of them to have their own tiny house. I said that's called a mobile home park; it's not anything new. We've got them here; we don't have to create it. But I love the thought of getting by on less.

Jesus asked this question... And I think it's a question every single one of us needs to wrestle with, not early in our faith, but I think all throughout our faith. Not at the beginning, but all along the way, we need to be asking the question Jesus asked us. He said this ***"What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"***

Again, if you live in a great house because you've had great success, we say "Good for you." Do you know what you do with that big house and the room full of Havertys furniture or Pottery Barn or whatever it is? You receive that from the Lord with thanksgiving. But there's the question: Are you trading anything for that which you have? The answer is within the question. Don't trade your soul for the accumulation of stuff or position or possession or prestige. Don't trade your soul.

There is a country music song that I love. It talks about a great trade. I downloaded it on my iPhone a couple of months ago and it just brought me back to my dad's Plymouth Volare in the 80s and driving down the road. If you know it, I welcome you to sing along with me. It's inspiring, but it talks about a trade and it's one of the best stories about a trade we've ever heard. Does anybody know what song I'm thinking about right now? It goes like this:

*Well the Devil went down to Georgia  
He was lookin' for a soul to steal  
He was in a bind 'cause he was way behind  
And he was willin' to make a deal*

*When he came across this young man  
Sawin' on a fiddle and playin' it hot  
And the Devil jumped up on a hickory stump  
And said, "Boy, let me tell you what"*

*"You probably didn't know it  
But I'm a fiddle player too  
And if you care to take a dare  
I'll just make a bet with you"*

*"Now you play a pretty good fiddle, boy  
but give the Devil his due  
I'll bet a fiddle of gold against your soul  
I think I'm better than you"*

This next line is the best line. I love it and I change voices when I'm singing it. You all sing this song, so don't act like you don't. Charlie Daniels is a Christian. And if he's a Christian, we can sing the clean version of that song all we want.

*The boy said, "My name's Johnny  
And it might be a sin  
But I'm gonna take your bet, you're gonna regret  
I'm the best there's ever been"*

*Johnny you rosin up your bow and play your fiddle hard  
'Cause hell's broke loose in Georgia and the Devil deals the cards  
And if you win you get this shiny fiddle made of gold  
But if you lose the Devil gets your soul*

*The Devil opened up his case  
And he said, "I'll start this show"  
And fire flew from his fingertips  
As he rosined up his bow*

I could do the whole song, but that's all you need for the point. Thank you. Russell gave me no reverb on that one; I had to do that one all alone up here.

But don't make the trade. Don't get through your trips around the sun and be like "Wow, look at all this stuff. Look at everything I've worked hard to accumulate, look at everything I worked hard to maintain" because every square foot you own owns you and all God's people said... Amen. Don't make that trade.

Move forward in life. That's what I love about this series. It's reminding us of experiences and journeys. Jesus talked a lot about money. You know that. He says this in Matthew 6: **19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.** Not only do you have to buy stuff, now you have to hire a security company to keep your stuff safe. "I have stuff I can't fit in the house anymore so I'll go rent a storage unit to store more stuff. And I won't ever use it and they will auction it off..." And I love those sales. This stuff meant something to someone years ago and now it's in the ditch on Highway 76, being sold. Jesus said don't make that a priority, don't make investing in stuff and possessions your life's pursuit. **20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.**

The Apostle Paul took this as he was encouraging young Timothy as a leader in Ephesus and he was encouraging the church in Ephesus as he said this in 1 Timothy 6: **6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.** Pursuing your relationship with the Lord, being content with what you have and not comparing everything you have or don't have with what your neighbors have or don't have... It's saying I want to learn to be content because when I learn to be content, this journey, this adventure... I've got margin for it, I've got room in my soul to pursue what God has called me to do. **7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.** I want every parent to Read verse 8 with me. **8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.** Isn't this the verse to share with our children? We have food and clothing.

Matt Gumm does that 50 things parents say in 90 seconds or less. One of them is "we've given you food and clothing; everything you've ever wanted." I probably wanted more than food and clothing when I was growing up.

But here, he's saying let's learn to be content with less. All throughout the scripture you read this theme. In Ecclesiastes 5, Solomon says as goods increase, so do those who consume them. You're friends start coming out and consuming what you have. Then pretty soon you're trying to sleep at night and when you're sleeping at night, you can't sleep because you're thinking about all the stuff that has to get done and all the things you have to take care of – all the stuff that you own.

I was driving back yesterday morning from the Springfield Airport and I called Amy and said "Hey, Babe, how's it going?" We had like a five second conversation before I started getting this "Honey Do" list of everything that needed to happen on Saturday. Now I was coming down Hwy 65 at about 75 miles an hour until I started getting that list and then I slowed down to about 35 miles per hour. I was thinking there was a lot to do when I get home. After we got to 8, 9, 10 things to do, I had forgotten 1, 2, 3, 4. I thought this was going to be a fun day. Nope, no fun today; it's getting stuff done day. But that's exactly the point. We get owned by our stuff.

We take the transition today away from our stuff and towards experience. I want to share with you some simple points of why experiences are better than things and I want to do it through these two scientists. Two scientists got together and did some research. They came up with seven reasons why experiences are better than things or better than stuff. I always love when scientist release a study or release research and they are all excited about what they discovered. I love reading what they have discovered and the whole time reading it think *I already knew that! But I didn't get it from a research report; I got it from the Bible! I discovered that when I was just a kid with the flannel graph in Sunday school.* We would have the Temple there. It was everything. It was the Temple and then they would turn it into the Colosseum. And remember you had Moses and because we kept losing people, Moses was Noah. Any Old Testament character... We learned all of this, but scientist are acting like it's all brand new stuff. It ain't brand new stuff. This is timeless truth that was before the foundations of the earth. God has given us this and he has shared it with us in his word.

Let's look at these reasons experiences are better than things. I thought there was some redundancy so I kind of just put it all together as though I should be talking or even conversing with PhD scientist.

## 1. Adaptation is the enemy of contentment.

Yeah, we get that. You'll never find contentment in stuff. We receive it from the Lord with thanksgiving, but... You buy the latest iPhone and now you're waiting for the next one to come out. We adapt to stuff, we don't adapt to experiences. We get used to stuff. We build a new house. We fill it with new furniture. After a couple of months or a couple of weeks maybe, we start to lose excitement. It's just not as awesome as it was.

It's different with experiences. Herschend Family Entertainment – "Creating Memories Worth Repeating." You have a great experience and you want to do that again. If you buy a car, you're like *Okay, this car is getting a little bit old.* Right now, Carson is looking at every car on the road, realizing they are way more awesome than our van. He has just learned that *awesome* means Cadillac so everything is a Cadillac. A Volvo can go by and he says "Look at that Cadillac, Dad."

"At one time, this was a very nice van, but we had to put you kids in it. I can tell you the story behind every stain." They'll ask if we are going to get a new vehicle and I'm like "Yeah, when you leave home. Because we want the new car smell for at least three days." We're getting to a point where we've named our van. We talk to our van. We are grateful for our van. We are turning 170,000 miles. I talked to a buddy last week and he has a truck that just turned 330,000 miles and that became my new goal. We're getting that 2007 Dodge Grand Caravan to 330,000 miles.

All the plastic holding the seats together is falling off. I'm one step ahead of them. When we bought the van, I bought all gray interior that matches duct tape. Some of you haven't learned this. You buy the fancy brown or black and the duct tape just sticks out. Mine blends right in to everything that needs to be fixed.

What's better through is we had a rock from construction hit our sunroof and it exploded and we got it replaced. I love the body shop that works on our vehicles and we've had them fixed, from hitting deer, three times... But it leaks in the corner right above the driver. You know the ridge that goes around it and in a car wash it just puddles up and you're not getting hit until you hit the gas and move and then it all splashes down on you. It's so great. It just started happening and I forgot to tell Amy to stuff tissue in there before you go to the car wash. I met her for lunch and she steps out of the van with a look on her face. She was not happy. "Oh yeah, you should take a towel or something..."

But I love our van. I'm content with it. Again, if you bought a new car, good for you. I'm excited for you. But I don't want to go through all the hassle right now. I don't want to go and pay the tax on it. What's tax on a vehicle now? You go to the DMV with your check book and they're like "Okay, you owes us \$14,500.00."

Adaptation – getting used to something, getting comfortable with something – is the enemy of contentment.

## **2. When you compare your stuff, it leads to envy.**

When you compare an experience, it bonds you with other people. So you look at your iPhone 4 and your friend shows up with the iPhone 6 Plus. You're like *Look at this small little piece of junk. I can't even see that. What is this? 1970? I shouldn't have this; I should have that.*

But when your friend shows up and tells you about the trip they took, because it's all based on personality and experience, and they tell you about what they did, you don't go "Man, I wish I would have been able to do that." You get into their story because your experience is a story. Even if you book that same trip or even if you book that same flight and the same destination and the same hotel, when you get there, you're going to do different stuff that fits you or your family.

Then you get back from your trip and now you are comparing your experience to their experience and you start asking questions. You don't ask your friend any questions about his iPhone 6 Plus. You start tearing it down. "Where do you put that iPad?" You want to make theirs lessor so yours feels more. That's the heart of envy.

## **3. The wait is great.**

We don't want to wait for stuff. We want to always be getting the better and the latest and the greatest. But when you plan an experience that may be six months out, they call this anticipatory pleasure. It's the reason #52IN15 is working so well around here. For some of you, your date is not going to happen until Wednesday, but you're thinking about your date right now. Some of you are holding a baby and you're going *Oh, I'm thinking about that date.* That's is anticipatory pleasure; the wait is great and you enjoy it.

## **4. Through positive reinterpretation, our memories bring the best bits to the front and the annoying, tiresome parts fade into the forgotten background.**

We do this. We're all exaggerators when it comes to our memories. We all remember things better than they actually were. The fight we got into. The long lines. The heat. All of that fades away and we remember the moment that was created.

Dick Foth, one of the co-authors of *A Trip Around the Sun*, says this: "Our experiences shape the way we think, the way we interact with each other, and the way we live. They add richness and depth and meaning to our days. You could give you children toys today that quickly end up in tomorrow's trash. Or you can deliver a living, breathing experience that shapes their souls, enriches their lives, and makes their world and yours a door way to tomorrow."

The other co-author, Mark Batterson, says "Your children are going to forget. Twenty years from now, your kids will forget what you bought them. They will not remember what you bought them, but they will not forget what you did with them. Those they will remember and keep track of."

So I want to take you to Ephesians 2: 10 as we turn the corner from possessions and move towards experiences. I want to take you to a verse that if you go into a Christian book store, you're going to see it on mugs, on plaques, on t-shirts, on bookmarks... it goes all over social media. I want you to see the two parts of this verse as we break it down in the life and journey and adventure and the trip around the sun that the Apostle Paul was taking.

In Ephesians 2: 10, he writes ***For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*** You are a masterpiece. You have been gifted. You have a personality. All of that creates and forms these experiences in your life and you put that together with your passion and you are a one of a kind. You are the artwork, but he is the Artist. Your trips, your experiences, will be different. By now watch... This is how we live. This is how we are to approach each day. We are created in Christ Jesus to do good works. Now remember salvation is by grace through faith, not by works, so that we can't boast about it. We are not the ones who bring about salvation in our lives. That is the person and work of Jesus Christ. But these good works are referring to the believer who has placed faith in Jesus. These good works have been placed out in front of us and we don't work towards them. The emphasis of this text is walking in them. Through faith, we go throughout our day and this is the illustration that he uses: ***which God prepared in advance.***

The idea here is from a Middle Eastern custom where if the king was going to take a journey, he would send an advanced team out. They would go out days or weeks ahead of time. They would prepare the stops for the king along the way so he would be comfortable and ready to go. Then they would also be checking the safety of the route. In this text, Paul is taking that idea and he's flipping it and he's saying "No, you don't go out ahead of the king to prepare for him, he goes out ahead of you." He flips it. Your King of kings is going out ahead of you, preparing these good works for you – your journey along the way – and you are walking by faith.

We would probably understand it about the President of the United States. Before he takes a trip or goes to an event, the Secret Service goes out days and sometimes weeks ahead of the president to prepare the way.

I remember when Liberty University brought in George Herbert Walker Bush as a commencement speaker. Weeks before leading to that and then days before, they were bringing in the armored vehicles and a limo... Does anybody know what they call the presidential limo? They refer to it as "The Beast." Anyway, I'm always intrigued when I watch the president speak. I tend to move off of him and onto the Secret Service because they are constantly checking around the crowds. They are preparing the way for the president.

This is the idea behind how God prepares the way for you. The Bible Knowledge Commentary sums it up this way: God has prepared a path of good works for believers which he will perform in and through them as they walk by faith. This is a great concept. This is a great truth for our lives that as I take this trip around the sun, I want to be on the lookout for these good works. I want to live by faith and trust that this is something the Lord has placed here.

Mark Batterson says it a different way. He says God is setting you up. He is in the business of strategically positioning us to be in the right place at the right time.

This how the Apostle Paul lived his life. If you want to do a great study this week, I encourage you to dive into one of the greatest journey books of the Bible. It's the Book of Acts. You see these missionary journeys. It's where the church got started. The church launched in Acts. At the beginning, the church launches and you see the believers coming together and they are sharing their possessions and they are doing studies together, worshipping together, eating in one another's homes. But now, we are called to take this out to the ends of the earth so it begins to spread. Paul didn't stay any place too long because he was an apostle, so he was on the move.

In Acts 20, we get Paul's second missionary journey. He calls down to the elders from the Church at Ephesus. He's telling them he is leaving. He wants to explain to them why. In Act 20 he says **22 "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there."**

Some of you are that place right now. You know you're being called to something. You know you need to move forward, but it's too uncertain for you, it's too unknown. And we, as followers of Jesus, need to trust the advancement team of our King of kings. We need to trust that he has gone before us. He is going before us and he's preparing the way. He says I know what's going to happen, but you don't see him slowing down. When you study this and you read it, he doesn't go to the elders, he has the elders come to him because obviously there was a layover on his journey and he didn't want to be slowed down. So instead of one person going to the elders... He had places he had to go.

**23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.** He didn't know what was going to happen, but he knew it would probably be very difficult. And challenging. For some of us, the challenge is what stops us. For some of us, we think about the difficulty that might be ahead and what we are being called to do or the advance works that have been prepared for us and we start to think we don't want to do them because we don't know exactly what they are going to be and if they will be too hard.

This is why it says "by faith." We move forward by faith. And he's moving forward. He knows it's going to be difficult. I love Verse 24 and this is our anthem. As we pursue life, not for success, not for survival for those of you who are living paycheck to paycheck, we are to live compelled by the Spirit, knowing that as a follower of Jesus, we have a bigger purpose and a bigger mission. He says, **24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.** "My life is worth nothing to me. I will go on this journey, I will face uncertainty, I will face the unknown, I will deal with the hardships and prisons if necessary, but I will move forward."

Next year in May, our family is taking our very first trip to Israel. I've been researching it and trying to figure it out and the stops along the way. It's a very safe tour company. I feel good about it, but there have been those moments where I'm wondering if my kids are ready for Israel.



My friend who runs the tour says they are going to be just fine. I have to have those moments where I'm reminded why we do what we do and not live in fear.

I asked a friend about it. The connecting city to Tel Aviv is Amon. I looked it up on a map. I asked my friend if I was safe going to Amon. He's somebody who works in this world. He said I was probably more safe in Amon than I was when I went to Haiti. He said we think that since Haiti is only an hour and a half from America by plane that it's safe. I want to begin now creating experiences for my children to where we say there is some risk involved in what we're going to do.

I don't say this lightly, but my kids know that I do have a sense of humor and there will be times on airplanes... We were just on one as a family that was experiencing some turbulence and that was when I started singing *Live Like You Were Dying*. Most passengers would think that's not really appropriate at that moment. But that's okay. I told my family that I would love them... It's funny but when I get on a plane, I'm there with my family, protecting them, ready to go.

I have to watch the exit. I'm going to be ready, but I told them not to wait for me when I grab the microphone from the flight attendant and I am preaching my last message. We will share the gospel with those going down. Could you imagine? I would love to see a plane of people raising their hand. "Yes, you're following him now, ain't you? You believe in him now, don't you?" Wouldn't that be fantastic?

And then the plane levels out and you just get to your destination and land. "No sir, you placed faith in Jesus. I was there. You believed in him." The task of testifying to the good news of God's grace...

Now look at what Paul says. Again, it a passage we know, but when you begin to tie them all together and understand them... He says in 2 Timothy 4: **6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near.** He's not talking about going to the next city there; he's talking that the end has come. The trips around the sun are ending for him. **7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.**

I remember 1992. I graduated high school in 1992 and took a job mowing lawns in my school district. So for 40 to 50 hours a week, I would mow lawns and weed eat. I was either pushing a mower or weed eating. A song came out in 1992 by Steven Curtis Chapman called *The Great Adventure*. It starts off with *Saddle up your horses...* It was such an inspiring song.

So you have to picture it. I was just on fire with it. So I got the cassette tape. I remember pulling off my yellow Walkman, flipping down that lid, popping it up. I stuck in *The Great Adventure* and put that lid down and put the Walkman on my side. Then I took those Styrofoam headphones, put them over my ears, and *The Great Adventure* came on. I mowed alongside a friend named Kevin Schnabel. We would run two push mowers in front of the riding mowers. I know there were times he looked over at me and I was just going with that mower. That fired me up. Listen to some of the lyrics of this song.

*Started out this morning  
In the usual way  
Chasing thoughts inside my head  
Of all I had to do today  
Another time around the circle  
Try to make it better than the last*

*I opened up the Bible  
And I read about me  
Said, I'd been a prisoner  
And God's grace had set me free*

*And somewhere between the pages  
It hit me like a lightning bolt  
I saw a big frontier in front of me  
And I heard somebody say, "Let's go"*

*Saddle up your horses  
We've got a trail to blaze  
Through the wild blue yonder  
Of God's amazing grace*

*Let's follow our Leader  
Into the glorious unknown  
This is a life like no other  
This is the great adventure, yeah*

When I think about that song... I have a good friend in this church who, for the last 13 years, has completely and totally inspired me around the idea of adventure. I watch him correlate the adventure of a lifetime. This guy doesn't have an everyday, ordinary life. He's decided there will be nothing mundane about his life and he is going to live it to the fullest for the glory of God. The way his faith and the adventures of his life... I'm younger than he is and I just watch and I said "Amy, that's it."

He invited me to go horseback riding probably eight or nine years ago now. His name is Gregg Bettis. He asked me to go horseback riding with him one afternoon. We were having lunch. I'm not a cowboy, but I said sure. We went to Busiek State Park and he pulled the two horses down. Now I've watched movies, so I'm going to be able to do this; it won't be a problem. I grew up with my dad and John Wayne. And this is all I ever pictured. Every time John Wayne got on a horse, it was just this smooth ride. If he had to kill somebody, he would pull out a gun, turn around and shoot them, and put the gun back in its holster without missing a beat. So, in my mind, I'm thinking that's going to be horseback riding.

So I got on the horse and Gregg was leading out. Gregg is one of these guys that's not a real big fan of trails. He doesn't like to ride a trail. And I'm thinking *Let's go where others have been before us. Let's*

*do that where it is flat and safe.* Nope. He is going up hills with thick brush, jumping over things. He's a little John Wayne. Not me! I've got both hands... I'm not even holding the horn. I'm holding on with both hands on the saddle. I'm holding on for dear life. We're going up steep hills. And then if you've ever cut or blazed your own trail, you know you have to move branches. So I'm getting all the leftover of Gregg. So I'm dodging braches and then I have to duck for all the branches he would bring.

In the middle of that, I kid you not – Gregg goes “Hey, Ted, lets’ have a time of prayer together.” I can only do one thing at a time. All my prayer was proclaiming “Lord, I know the victory is yours; let me have a little bit of it right now. Keep me safe on this horse.”

Gregg is riding, blazing a trail, praying to his Father in Heaven “Oh Father, thank you for your beautiful creation; we are grateful to be...” He is speaking directly to him and I'm so glad we didn't have GoPros back then because I'm sitting back there thinking *Oh man, I have no desire to pray right now at all.* You know that awkward moment when someone says “Thank you Father” and there is a pause because now it's your turn to pick it up. When it got to me, I just said “In Jesus Name, amen. That was a good prayer Gregg.”

I wanted you to be inspired by his story this morning.

[Video plays]

**Gregg Bettis:** Good morning, my name is Gregg Bettis. Since the time I was just a young boy, I've always been pretty optimistic, wired to believe in the impossible. I've always been kind of one of those who believes that if you're not living on the edge, you're taking up too much space.

On June 10, 2004, I stared death in the face as the high performance, single engine aircraft I was piloting encountered a severe wind shear. I wound up going through the top an adjacent tree to the runway, watching the propeller bend before my eyes as I cried out “God, help me. Oh, God, help me. Oh, God, help me.” I went into the ground at over 130 knots. I actually broke my right foot completely off. Over 90% of the bones in my body were severely broken. All of my ribs and my knee and my arm and all of the bones in my hands were broken. By God's grace, I survived that crash and have the opportunity to do many things I never thought I would ever get to do.

Two months after the crash, being wheeled into church and sitting down on the right side and standing up for the first time out of the wheel chair to worship was powerful. I was just sensing God's strength. It was sort of at that point that he reassured me that one day I would be back.

Climbing the Grand was a completely bananas idea. My family and friends tried to talk me out of climbing right up to a week before the ascent. Actually, I never ever dreamed that I would get to climb again. I didn't even know if I would ever run again or walk again, but I never dreamed I would ever climb the Grand until we made it a goal a year ago.

Gary has been a dear friend of mine for the past 30 years. Some five years ago, Gary lost his son to a hunting accident. A year later, he lost his precious wife to cancer. He himself is a cancer survivor. He's

really been through a lot in his life. So for him to be willing to get out of his comfort zone and box was pretty phenomenal. There were times where we wondered whether we might have to abort because of his lungs and wheezing or my left knee which has been opened up some 17 times since the accident and my right ankle which I have a titanium ankle. It actually took us about eight hours to climb the first 6,000 feet to the lower saddle. We got up at 3:00 in the morning... Actually 2:30 in morning and we were climbing by 3:00. We reached the summit just a little before noon so I was standing on top, on my birthday, July 20<sup>th</sup>, with my dear friends, having conquered the Grand Teton.

I really believe that it's all about faith, it's all about our belief. Wanting to live outside of my comfort zone and for the Lord especially and wanting him to be able to use me no matter what situation I might encounter or find myself in with people and sharing the good news with others and being able to use experiences, even the crash, for his glory.

[Video ends]

**Ted Cunningham:** We started this series by asking the question and challenging all of us to ask the question every morning when we get up "Lord, what do you have planned for me today?" The reason Gregg's story inspires me is because challenges, setbacks, they don't keep us from moving forward. They are part of the trip. They are part of the journey. But we keep moving forward, compelled by the Holy Spirit to do this work which God has prepared in advance for us to do through the person and through finished word of Jesus Christ. And that's our challenge for you today. Dick Foth says it this way. "We don't know the number of trips around the sun we get to enjoy. Only God knows. But to saturate those truths with people and places, moments and memories, creates a richness that never stops. It allows the question 'Remember when . . . ?' to fire the joy all over again."