



A Trip Around the Sun

Part 4

Pastor Dan Seaborn

I look forward today to continuing this series Ted has been involved in called *A Trip Around the Sun*. I've taken 55 of them; I've started my 56th. I know I look a lot older than that, but I've been doing this for a while and I'm going to share with you from my experiences. I know Ted has been challenging you to consider how your life might make an impact for Christ as you take this trip around the sun, and I want to do the same thing today.

As I've reflected on my trips around the sun, I recall people who didn't get as many trips as me. I remember being with a young man who was 16 and I had the privilege of literally holding him while he passed on to heaven. He had cystic fibrosis and he was a very young man. I was a youth pastor and I remember holding him, thinking *this isn't right; this isn't normal; I should be going way before him*. Life has a way of throwing things at us that are really different and unusual.

Some of you, in your trip around this sun this year, you've gone through something that you weren't expecting and it's called life. I also saw a little video this week that I want to show you. On ESPN, there was a video of a man who is 105 years old. I don't know if you saw this, but he is a Japanese man who was in a foot race at 105. He is in the starting gate. There he goes, he is going at it. Give him credit. Check him out. I don't know how many trips you've had around the sun, but you haven't had that many and you can't run that fast if you have. So I'm tickled to see that and I have hope for that down the road for me maybe.

This morning, I want to put it all in perspective. When Ted talked to me about this series, I started thinking about putting into perspective what one year around the sun looks like; really keeping that in perspective of eternity. So I want to start with this fun little kind of thing where we look at a timeline, if you will. I want to let this little orange piece of stick [about eight inches long] represent 80 years. So this is the average lifespan right now. In his word, the Lord talks about 70 years, but in our world right now, we're living an average of about 80 years, so this little stick represents your whole life. I want to put some things in perspective.

In comparison, let me show you how long it took for Noah to build the ark [showing a stick about one foot long]. That was 120 years. So when Noah built the ark, this is how long it took. So you just kind of put things in perspective of how long things take. This is how long America has been in existence [stick about 18 inches]. So you can do a little comparison thing. This next thing [stick about one inch long] is how long Obama has been president. This [stick about three feet long] is how long it feels like... I'm just kidding. This is the length of Donald Trump's hair. So both sides. Nobody can be mad; I was even.

But what I really want to put in perspective today is eternity. So do you mind helping me? What's your name? Brian, come here a second. Do you mind helping me a second? I want you to hold that [roll of orange tape] over your head really high and I want you to start walking, Brian. This is eternity. I want y'all to put in perspective that little stick I was holding compared to this which is eternity. Keep going, Brian, we'll see you man; hope you have a good day. The point is that it doesn't stop.

Now I really want to show you something shocking. This is one year. Y'all can't even see it. I'm holding up a little tiny orange sliver of a stick here. Sometimes we get caught up in our little one month or one year thing up against eternity. I want to ask you today to kind of keep perspective. It's so easy to sometimes let one of these little tiny sticks keep us from remembering where we are headed.

Today, I want to talk to you about: Are you living in such a way that eternity is going to be a reward? I'm going to challenge you today to take a look at your life and say "How am I doing" in an area. I know Ted has covered several different areas. He talked a little bit about the things we accumulate and that kind of stuff. I want to talk to you today about love. What kind of person are you when it comes to showing love? That's what I feel the Lord kind of put on my heart to talk about today. Today is going to be some confession to me. I'm going to tell you that I haven't done it very well and I'm going to show you how.

One of the things I want you to do for a second is just think about what you even consider love to be. If you're here and you're 16, when I say love, you're like "Oh, yes, I know him. He is so hot." I call it Kardashian love. I saw the Kardashians the other day. I was watching the US Open. Kim got out of her limo and I saw the camera pan to her as soon as she got out of her car. The funny part is I saw her mouth literally say "The cameras are on us so smile and look good." She was literally telling them to smile because that's kind of how we've become entrapped to think that's what love is. It's almost a Kardashian feeling and that's not what love is. We just sang about love. Carolyn was just singing to us about love and telling us what it is. And we just get all kind of messed up and we focus on this momentary thing and forget about these eternal things.

Today, I want to take you to a passage of scripture and I'm going to read to you what the Bible says love is and then you get to rank yourself. Ten is awesome and one stinks and you get to decide how good of a lover you are. When you hear lover, it's not erotic love. "Do I love like God loves?"

So I'm going to read a passage of scripture now. I've noticed when I read scripture, people tend to use that time to do something else. If I'm telling a story or I've got Brian running with a big piece of string, you notice that; it gets your attention. And then I start reading scripture. I literally notice people fidget, get a drink, check their Fitbit. It's easy to check out during scripture. I'm asking you... I'm going to read it very slowly on purpose, and I'm asking you to tune in for a second and go "When I think of love, is that what I think love is?" That's what I want you to ask yourself. No matter your age, youngest to the oldest, are you good at loving?

I'm going to read to you from 1 Corinthians 13. You know it's called the love passage. We are all familiar with it in some way or another. We've heard or even quoted it. If you're here and you've never heard of 1 Corinthians 13, in the Bible, it's a chapter that talks very strongly about what God calls love. I'm going to read slowly; listen.

1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient... Can I just ask you to think about somebody? This doesn't mean patience with a lawnmower where it won't crank. The Greek word is *makrothumia*. It means patience with people. Just see if a face just pops up in front of you when I say love is patient. ***...love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails.***

Dan Seaborn doesn't rank up in the ten area. Let me tell you about my devotions. This would be pretty normal for me: I'll go and say "Lord, I'm going to read your word." If I was in 1 Corinthians 13, this is the way my devotions would look: I'll read 1 Corinthians 13: 4 – "Love is patient..." I could stop right there for today and say "Lord, I want you to take those three words and here's what I want to do... Lord, I know they are in the Bible, I know we talk about the Bible, but I want you, Lord, to get those three words up into my life today. Show me what it means to be patient." That's because to me, that's when you really grow in your trips around the sun. From a year ago to now, are you more patient? Have you even checked?

So I was having my devotions and... I told you today was going to be confession day, so y'all get to get on in my mistakes. Y'all are just going to listen and go *He is messed up*. I am and you can leave here today and go "Good to hear him; I'm near as bad as him."

I was sitting in Chicago in a hotel room and I was praying. I was actually reading out of 1 Corinthians 13 and I was thinking about my wife and if I'm good at showing her love. I was going over all these things. I was sitting in bed. I was propped on my pillow. I was by myself. I was just kind of going "Lord, I'm going to go over these things and see how good I am with just showing love to Jane." And I was reading these things: "Love is patient..." *Oh, I'm not very good at that.* "Love is kind..." *Shoot. She just told me the other day sometimes my words aren't kind.* I was bumming. I was just reading it going *Shoot, I can't even go past Jane and I'm already messing up on this stuff.* "Love doesn't envy..." "Love doesn't boast..." "It's not proud..." "Love's not rude..." When I got to love is not rude, I remember sitting in the bed feeling like that was one I felt pretty good about. I'm not rude to Jane. "Lord, I'm glad I'm at least one for five. I'm not rude. Then I felt like the Lord just prompted my spirit and said "Yes you are." I was like "No, I'm not rude. I'm not rude to Jane."

There was a mirror over to the side of the bed. I could see myself. When I turned right, I could see myself. I remember sitting in the bed and the Lord saying "Here's what I want you to do, Dad. I want you to imagine you're driving down the road and Jane is the passenger. I want you to relive what it's like riding with you as the driver and her as the passenger."

When we drive, Jane is really good at pointing out stuff. "Honey, you're crossing the yellow line." "Dan, did you see that sign?" "Honey, watch out; you're going too fast." She is so good at that and it drives me crazy.

So I imagine me driving and I feel like the Lord just kind of put it in my spirit to imagine Jane is over there in the cockpit with me and I am driving and then she says that thing about crossing the center line. "Look in the mirror the same way you would look at her." As I'm sitting in bed... As she says "Dan, you just crossed the center line," I looked in the mirror as I would look at her. I just looked at myself in the mirror and the Lord said "That's rude looking. You're rude."

I felt like he said "We are going to change this. So, Dan, the next time she says that, I want you to look over, smile, and say 'Thank you so much.'" So we are going to practice this, Dan, in the car because... Do y'all get this? I'm trying to improve this trip around the sun. I would love to spend eternity in heaven, so I have to work on these little things in my life just to be a better person and to honor the Lord. Of course, I've received him into my life, but is it changing me? Am I any different than all the other non-lovers? So I practiced. I was sitting there in the bed and I would imagine Jane going "Honey, your crossing the center line." Whatever line; I'm always crossing lines. And I practice: "Thanks, Babe." I thought *Wow, that's going to be crazy*. I looked again with the rude face and then the smiling face. I couldn't wait to get back home.

I get back home and we were going... It didn't take long. As soon as we were in the car together, it's coming up; I know that. We're going to the grocery store or something and she said "Honey, watch out; you're crossing that line again" and I went "Honey, thank you."

I'm not kidding you. She was sitting in the passenger seat and she draws back and goes "What? What are you doing? What's wrong?" She went over against the door like I was doing something.

I said "Honey, I'm just not being rude."

She goes "Well, you're normally very rude."

Shoot. That's what the Lord said too. So I told her that from now on I was going to thank her.

She goes "Well, it's going to take a little while for me to get used to that." We're working on that still.

The bottom line is: Is scripture changing me? We hear sermons all the time. Are y'all any different than you were the last time you heard "love is not rude"? Is there anyone right now who is in your family that would say "Dan, I just want to point out that so and so is really rude." Don't do it. Some of you lifted your hand. Don't lift your hand. The bottom line is: Are we changing? Am I better than I used to be? Am I growing in Christ? Am I having a diminishing interest in the things of this earth and increasing interest in the things of eternal consequences? I'm just saying this is important stuff.

Maybe I'm a weirdo, but I really do what I'm about to tell you. When I'm working on a sermon, I will go sit in a graveyard. Sometimes I sit in a graveyard in my car and just work on a message and then just say

“Lord, what really matters that I’m saying on Sunday. Is it going to make any difference for eternity’s sake? Is the long orange line going to be affected by the way I live or are we just going through the motions?” We all passing through and I sit in a grave yard partly to remind myself that I’m headed there. So I need to keep in perspective the things I’m doing.

To show you how these scriptures get off and into my life, I want to continue in this same vein. When I started dating Jane, I thought I knew what love was. Shoot, I love her. I don’t know if you remember, but I saw her bent over at a vending machine and I loved what I saw. I called that love. It was Kardashian love. I thought *this is love and I’ve found it*. Interestingly now, 33 years into my marriage, I realize that wasn’t love at all; that was lust and that was erotic, but it had nothing to do with love. I know that now.

My mentor is 81 and his name is Ralph. We were actually golfing together last week. He is an older gentleman, a sweet, kind man. He is still a good golfer. He can’t run as fast as that guy who is 105, but he’s really in pretty good shape. We were golfing and he looked at me at one point on the golf course – I was driving and he was sitting there.

He said “Dan, I’ve been married to Dee (his wife) for 61 years. And I think I’m just touching the tip of the iceberg of knowing how to really love her.”

I said, “Ralph, you’re serious, aren’t you?”

He said “I’m dead serious.”

I was just sitting there thinking *Shoot, I’ve got a long way to go*. But I remember when I first thought I knew what love was. I’m sharing this morning, partly, right here, to those of you who are in your teens and early twenties and maybe even thirties and you’re looking for Mr. Right or Ms. Right. First of all, let me suggest to you to *be* Mr. or Ms. Right. Stop looking for them and be them. And as you do that, what you do is check on your own life and say “Am I becoming the person I need to be? And am I seeking someone who can honor Christ?” You see, marriage is not about us and relationships are not about us; it’s how we honor Jesus in them.

So I began to fall into *love* with this girl and you know how it is in the beginning. Your heart beats like crazy and you have the butterflies. We had one lose in here in the first service. I couldn’t believe it. Really, a butterfly started flying around up here. I don’t know if Katie released him or something, but it was cool. But I want to tell you that as I began to fall into what I thought was love, I began to grow and know her more. You can apply this anywhere in your life.

Then I did that thing were you go meet the family. You go meet the family and you want to make a good first impression. You’re looking good and you want to come in all “Good Morning, good to see you too, ma’am. Nice to meet you, mother-in-law.” There are potential people here that you want to care about. I get to meet them all. I care about them because it’s Jane’s family. Of course, they are nice to me and I’m nice to them.

Then, over time, I meet a person in her family who really irritates me. Again, y'all might leave here thinking you really can't relate. That's fine. It would be unusual, but okay. Jane has a sister... I have permission to talk about this. Her name is Sandy. There are five siblings in Jane's family, her included. The father walked out when she was about six, so they grew up with a single mom. Sandy kind of began to go wayward. Sandy messed her life up. Even before I knew her, she was already making really poor choices. Sandy had four children; all from different fathers. I began to not like her. I didn't think highly of her. I thought I was a little better than her. Let me read some of these words from the Bible. "Self-seeking..." That would have been me. "Easily angered..." Yeah, she could do that to me. "Love keeps no record of wrongs..." Well I was keeping record of all her wrongs: four kids. I'm just talking about myself. I was very judgmental.

Now I want you to get something. Jane really loves and really, at that time, loved her sister. Jane was a godly young lady and she was reaching out with godly love to her sister. Jane also really like me as we began to get more serious. And now we are married and that kind of thing. Sandy is kind of between us because Jane is really loving Sandy, but I'm not. I was not patient with her. I was rude to her. I thought I was better than her. I didn't say it out loud. I didn't come into the room and go "Well, I'm a little better than you." I didn't do that, but I'm thinking it. Do y'all have anybody you think you're better than? Be careful. I'm going to show you where it gets you.

So we began to get into marriage. Now we've been married a while and guess who is calling, needing help. Sandy. She would call Jane and say "Jane, I'm in a situation where I could use a little money. Jane, is there any chance you could help me with this?"

I was just like "You know what? You sister..." I want you to hear the words "*Your* sister drives me crazy." That's me speaking to her. What I did to my wife was shut her down. In this area of Sandy, she got to a point where she wouldn't even want to bring her name up to me because of how I reacted. And I was so busy at the church, you know. I'm loving on people; I don't have time to care about my own sister-in-law because I'm so busy ministering. Some of you don't even like me anymore now.

Finally I just told Jane "Can you just stop telling me about it. I don't want to hear about her anymore." So Jane took that part of her heart... She loves her sister. She's torn. She's in the middle. "Self-seeking..." "Rude..." I'm all the things that love is not. So she takes her heart and she puts the Sandy part of her heart into a little corner down there and she takes the key and she locks it and says *I can't discuss that with Dan. We can be one in other areas.*

There's a blender coming up on the screen here. When you get married, you're supposed to become one. And so this blender... You see this pear and this apple goes together here and then you push the button on the blender and it's supposed to blend and become one. Well I didn't want to push the button. I was comfortable with just sticking the two pieces of fruit in there. Snapple took a pear and an apple and made a prapple. You drink their drink and you like it. But I preferred to say "You know what? There's me and Jane and then there's her family and there's my family." If you came to me and asked if Jane and I are one, I'd say "Well, look at us; we're in the blender, can't you see us? We're right there together."

“Are you all mushed together?”

“Well I don’t want to talk about that; just look we’re in the blender.” And I was comfortable with some of the people in Jane’s family, but not Sandy.

I’m trying to show you that just because you’re a pastor and just because you say you follow Christ, it doesn’t mean you show love. And that wasn’t very nice and I made Jane feel very uncomfortable. She couldn’t bring Sandy’s name up to me. When we would get together for Christmas, I could tolerate being around her for a day. I’d just kind of shake her hand and say “Good to see you.”

Then, fast forward and go ten years ahead. My brother messes his life up. My brother is my only sibling; it’s just me and him. He lives in Indiana. He was a pastor of a church and got involved with a secretary and messed his life up bad. I told Jane I needed to go help “my brother.” Did y’all hear the words “my brother”? So I got in the car and I drove down to Indiana. “Is there anything you need, Brother? Is there anything I can get for you, brother? You are my brother. I care about you, my brother.”

And I’m working and helping him, saying to Jane “Well, we may need to help him with a little money. He’s going through a tough situation. He’s not going to have income.”

The whole time, Jane is “It’s fine honey, just help him because I know what it’s like to want to help someone.” Uh huh... I didn’t even catch all that.

I’m driving home one day from Indiana by myself in the car and I was just driving along the road in Chicago and here comes the Lord. No turtle doves hit the car. I didn’t hit a flock of geese or anything. I was just driving and the Lord kind of said “Boy, Dan, you’re really good at loving your brother, but you’re not very good at loving your sister.” That was the word that came to me.

You see, when I married Jane, Sandy is my sister. Some of y’all sitting in here, maybe your dating right now. This is why I’m giving you part of this sermon. Are you ready to love his or hers everything? Some of you are married here today and you’ve got this one person coming over at Thanksgiving and you’re already telling your spouse “Well, they can come, but they ain’t staying over an hour.” You’ve got to change that. It’s “our family” now. “Are you serious, Dad?” “You mean I have to accept his brother?” That’s your brother. This changes everything. If the Lord was like us, he would look down from heaven and go “I love that one and that one, and that one,” but the Lord said “No, I’ll die for all of you.” It’s how we are a whole lot not like Jesus. We have selective loving.

I went on home. I didn’t say anything to Jane about the Lord convicting my heart. I knew I had to change. I knew something had to change. So I walked in the house. I ain’t bringing that up. A few days later, I’m watching the football game and she’s reading a book or something. I said to her “Honey, I need to talk to you about something.”

She said “Okay, what is it, honey?”

I said “Well, I was wondering how your sister, Sandy, is doing.”

Jane was reading the book and she just lowered the book and said “What?” That’s because she had put the lock box on that.

“I just thought maybe you should call her and check and see if she needs anything.”

At that point, she sat the book down and said “What’s wrong with you, honey? Are you okay?”

Then I told her about the turtle doves and how the Lord had shown me all that stuff I needed to work on.

I said to her “Honey, you’ve been really good at helping me love our brother, but I haven’t been very good at helping you love our sister. I want you to call her and I want you to tell her that we care about her and ask her if there is anything we can do.”

So Jane calls her sister “Hey, Sandy, this is Jane. We’re just sitting her and Dan wanted me to call and check on you.”

Sandy said “Dan who? There’s no chance it’s my brother-in-law.” She didn’t even believe it.

She knows I’m a pastor. Did y’all hear that? Sandy’s not involved in church; she doesn’t want anything to do with all that kind of stuff. To make a long story short, Sandy’s heart began to soften toward things of the Lord. Sandy began to... When I would preach at places like this, she would go online and watch me preach. Then she would call Jane and say “Well, he’s pretty descent.” Then we began to grow a little closer and we are at the point now where Sandy will contact Jane pretty regularly, asking for CDs or DVDS of where I’ve been preaching. She wants to hear more.

I want y’all to follow something. This has been happening over the last few years. Sandy’s heart began to change because Dan’s heart also changed toward her. Y’all get this because there is somebody in your extended family right now... I’m saying a godly love in you could possibly change them. Jesus started that way with us first too. You have a shot at a better trip around the sun because Jesus said “I’ll die for you.”

So Sandy begins to seek things of the Lord. Again, to make a long story short, Sandy actually begins to say to Jane “I want to know more about Christ.” Sandy is at church this morning. I don’t know where she’s at in North Carolina, but she went to church this morning. Sandy has asked the Lord to come into her life. Her whole life has changed and I want to suggest to you a part of that change started with my attitude. I’m not the savior, Jesus is. But Jesus could reach Sandy better because I got out of the way. Are any of y’all in the way of anybody?

Let me tell you this too. Sandy has four children. One of them is a stripper in North Carolina. Her name is Stacy. She’s – you’ll hear this word very clearly – is *my* niece. I love her. When we see her... We were down at our moms’... Both our moms passed away in January and we were down at the funeral. I’ll grab Stacy and hug her and I’ll just say “Stacy, come here.”

She's around 20 years old. I'll just take her and hold her in my arms and say "Stacy, I'm praying that someday God will help you find a man who loves you this way." And I just love on her.

She'll just hug me and look up at me and say "Uncle Dad, you're a preacher, right?"

I say "Stacy, I am."

She'll say "And you still love me?" I'll say "Stacy, I do." I do; I love that girl.

I want to tell you something else the Lord has done. I have a heart for single parents like I've never had before. The Lord didn't change them; he changed me. Some of you who are in here who are single parents, I give you a big ole hug. Kudos to you right now with a big ole hug. Thank you for doing what I would not want to do: doing it alone. You're awesome. The Lord rewards you for that.

I'm going to tell you a few things. My favorite sibling in all of both of our families is not even my brother; my favorite sibling is Sandy. She's my favorite. Ask Jane or ask the family and they'll tell you I like Sandy the most. I don't even hide it. She's a hoot and I missed out on that for many, many years.

Let me tell you this too. So like seven weeks ago, Jane and her sisters got together down at the beach in Myrtle Beach. They are near that area; that's where they grew up. They went to Myrtle Beach as a family.

Sandy has contacted Jane. When they get down to Myrtle Beach, Sandy said "Jane, I've come to the Lord. I want you to baptize me in the ocean." Jane is her favorite sister.

Jane said "I can't baptize."

I said "I make you an honorary baptizer in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Honey, you can baptize." So after service, if y'all need to be baptized, Jane is legal; she can do it now.

And they went out in the ocean in Myrtle Beach and Jane said the wind was so strong and the waves were so big, she didn't even get a chance to touch Sandy. Sandy's not very big and the wind grabbed her and the waves put her down. All Jane did was hold her down; it was awesome. Sandy got baptized. And I want to tell you that part of that changed because Dan began to really love her.

Guess what? I'm going to have a few more good trips around the sun on this earth, I pray. During the course of this one, when I get to see Sandy, I'm looking forward to it because I changed. Now you can live the rest of your life, if you want to, all hard and you can say "Dan, you don't understand what my brother's like!" I might not understand what it's like being *your* brother. Have you ever thought about it? Would you want to be your brother? I can tell you right now that a few years ago, Sandy... I would not have wanted me your brother-in-law. The preacher? I would not have wanted to have him as my brother-in-law. But if I'm going to live in a way to honor Christ, I've got to change me because, ladies and gentlemen, I've got to remember I'm living for the eternal. I'm not living for the temporal. And every one of us in this room can become better lovers.

Lord, I pray today that you would take these little thoughts... There are some Sandys scattered all through our families and they drive us crazy and yet it might be us that needs to change. Soften my heart, Jesus, soften all my friends' hearts in this place. Continue to help us be examples of faith and love and grace. May you be pleased with the way we live. May some hearts and some homes be touched today on this trip around the sun as we become better lovers. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.