



A Trip Around the Sun

Part 6 – How to Live a Life Above a Level of Mediocrity

Adam Donyes

For the last six weeks, we have been going... Because we hit pause for Twolgnite. For the last six weeks, we've been in this series called *A Trip Around the Sun*. A trip around the sun is simply another phrase for a year of your life. I get to wrap the series up today. You feel like JV when I follow up Ted, Dan Seaborn, and Joe White, but, nevertheless, here is the junior varsity to give it my best shot. I'm excited.

At the beginning of this series, Ted asked that some of you would share your trips around the sun. I have a couple that I am going to briefly share. People right here, sitting next to you, sharing how they can maximize a trip around the sun.

Here's a lady that's had two strokes, job problems throughout and in her 39th trip around the sun, this is what she had to say. Pamela Crim says, *"Here I am healed, whole, happy, and ready for the next adventure."*

You're never too old to maximize your trip around the sun. Listen to this from Liz Benson. *"In my wildest dreams, I never thought I would start a soap business at 75 years old. It was something I never thought about and, quite by accident, I learned to how to make soap. I believe, without a doubt, it was God's direction. I was only making soap for my own health reasons and gifts for family. Then I started to pray over the soap that whoever received my soap would be blessed. My prayer was that wherever he directed me, I would follow. I just wanted his will and direction. I believe with all my heart that he is directing because so many unexpected doors have opened to me. I have no idea where he is leading. I am just following. It has truly given me so much joy."*

You're never too old to maximize that trip around the sun. I'm not going to read this whole testimony, but it literally gave me chills as I read it the other day from J.R. Wright. With just family and fighting for custody of his son and just everything he went through... But he ended with this paragraph that is so powerful and makes me feel so blessed to be a part of Woodland Hills. *"So today I write my testimony to say thank you, Woodland Hills. Thank you for always being there when I felt lost and strengthening my love for our Lord. Thank you for making my 27th trip around the sun one of the best trips yet. And finally, thank you for giving me hope, hope that as Christians, we will prevail and everyone's trip around the sun can be meaningful and make a difference."* J.R. Wright.

I hope if nothing else came out of this series that you've heard for the last six weeks, it would be that no matter how old, no matter how young, this is the trip around the sun you begin to maximize; this and every trip after that.

So if you have your Bibles, open them up to 1 Samuel 14, where we will spend the majority of our time. Let me give you a little context of 1 Samuel 14. We see, for the first time in Israel's history, a king and his name is Saul. In 1 Samuel 13, Samuel, the prophet, had told Saul that he was going to come back in seven days and when he did, they were going to make an offering. Saul got extremely impatient with Samuel and he rushed it. He took matters into his own hands when Samuel told him not to and so Saul does the offering himself, without Samuel. Samuel shows up and rebukes Saul.

Then we get into 1 Samuel 14 and we see this king, who was just rebuked by a prophet, being a little pouty face. Now think about Jonathan. He's the first son of the first king in Israel's history, yet he'll later find out he is not going to be the successor. As a matter of fact, we know that will be King David, a man with a whole heart for God. Jonathan remains steadfast too.

1 One day Jonathan son of Saul... Son of Saul... As I was reading that this week... All of us in here are the son of somebody. None of us was cloned. All of us are a son of somebody. I'm the son of Kevin and a lot of times... Some of you had phenomenal earthly fathers, but for a lot of us, including me, there is a deep father wound and we all carry father wounds. I think the reason for that is we often look for our earthly fathers to play a role that only our heavenly Father was ever intended to play. We look for our earthly fathers to fulfill us or satisfy us in a way that only our heavenly Father was ever supposed to do.

Here is a picture of me when I was on my eighth trip around the sun. My father walked out on us when I was on my eighth trip around the sun and they got divorced. I remember sitting against the door of my house, watching him drive away and the affect that and the divorce had on me with the hiding or the masking I tried to have as a young man. So this deep father wound began to build itself in my life. It wasn't until I realized... Jonathan doesn't identify himself as the son of Saul, but we know if we continue reading Jonathan's story, he identifies himself as the son of the Most High. When I was able to get to a place in my own life... Of course, my earthly father is going to make mistakes; he's not perfect. But it wasn't until I was able to get to a place in my own life where I started looking for my heavenly Father to play a role that my earthly father never was intended to that I was able to move past that bitterness and into forgiveness and healthiness.

I don't know if there are father wounds out here, but I know your trips around the sun are hindered when you're carrying a backpack full of bitterness that's weighing you down and you don't feel very liked.

...said to his young armor-bearer, "Come, let's go over to the Philistine outpost on the other side." But he did not tell his father.

In the middle of reconciling my relationship with my dad on my 19th trip around the sun, we took a trip to the Grand Canyon. He was a little worried and controlling, and I was adventurous and I didn't listen

well to people in authority. I still struggle with that if we are going to be completely honest. I'm just a rebel by nature.

I told him I was going to hike the Grand Canyon. He told me we didn't have time; it would take me a whole day and I would have to camp at the bottom before coming back up. I'm 19 and athletic and I don't care. I put on this backpack. I have a pound size bag of pretzels and a bottle of water. I'm going to go down to the bottom and come back up in the same day. But I didn't tell my father because I knew what he was going to say. He was going to tell me there was no way I was going to get down there and back up in the same day.

If any of you have ever been to the Grand Canyon, you know that when you start hiking it, it's just switchbacks. I wasn't a math major, but I'm not an idiot either. I knew that if I would just cut across those switchbacks, it would be a much shorter trip to the bottom than going back and forth all the way.

I got about halfway down and my backpack straps were just covered in salt from my body because I was just pounded the pretzels in and drinking water. The park ranger asked me how far I planned on going. I knew if I told him I was going to the bottom, he wasn't going to let me go all the way to the bottom. I told him I was just going to do a couple more switchbacks. But when I got past him, I just kept sprinting down to the bottom.

I eventually got down as far as I could get. The Colorado River was right there, running through the Grand Canyon. I got down there and I saw some stranger down there and asked him to snap a picture. Then I started hiking back up. I got cramps in my legs, cramps in my abdominal region, and cramps everywhere. I couldn't let that park ranger know he was right. He was at the same spot on the way back and I just passed him and waved. I got past him and then all the way to the top and I was dehydrated as all get out. I finally found my dad and he started pumping fluids in me. It was one of the dumbest things I've ever done, but I didn't tell him because I knew what he reaction would be.

Similarly, here, Jonathan is not telling his father because he knows if he tells his father, his dad is not going to want Jonathan to show him up. He's going to want him to stay there with him and pout with him. ***2 Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree...*** If you have the ESV translation, it might say pomegranate cave. Nevertheless, I can just see him posted up against a tree, doing nothing and pouting, frustrated. God had told him he was going to deliver him from the hand of the Philistines, the uncircumcised.

...in Migron. With him were about six hundred men... Saul has an army. Jonathan doesn't. Look what Jonathan does here. ***3 ...among whom was Ahijah, who was wearing an ephod. He was a son of Ichabod's brother Ahitub son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh. No one was aware that Jonathan had left.*** Some of our most beautiful trips around the sun are when people don't even know what we are doing or what we do when nobody is even watching.

I spent four years in the Branson/Hollister area before I moved to Kansas City. During those four years, I bumped into a young man at Hollister High School. He was a young man who was very much falling

through the cracks. A lot of people weren't paying attention to him; a lot of people were ignoring him. This was actually my 23rd, 24th, and 25th trip around the sun. Check out this trailer.

[Video plays]

I don't have enough of these for everybody, but there are about 25 of these up here. If you want to see the rest of the documentary, I brought some copies with the director's and producer's permission. These aren't released yet, but there are some pre-versions for any of those that want to grab one after the service.

I have a very fun story about Dave. I was at his wedding yesterday at Sanctuary of Hope over on Bee Creek. If you ever want to say hi to him, he works at Country Mart in Hollister and he probably has the biggest smile in the grocery store.

That story is not about me at all, Woodland Hills. That story was simply what happens when we just go. There is nothing significant about Adam Donyes. He was following a significant God and he felt the significant God tell him that he needed to reach out to this young man. "This young man has potential and everybody is pushing him through the cracks; just do something." It was simple.

That's what Jonathan knew too. When God calls you to do something, the only right decision is to be obedient. That's the only right decision. What we see in this text of 1 Samuel is that he continually goes on.

4 On each side of the pass that Jonathan intended to cross to reach the Philistine outpost... The Philistines were just bad mama jamas, just so you guys know. They actually had weapons. Saul and Jonathan were making weapons out of hoes and plowshares and garden tools. There was a sharp crag on the one side and a sharp crag on the other side. ...**was a cliff; one was called Bozez and the other Seneh.** **5 One cliff stood to the north toward Mikmash, the other to the south toward Geba.** You can imagine what it was like going through this ravine.

6 Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer... By the way, the young man wouldn't have been a punk. The young man probably looked better than I did on my 19th trip around the sun. Actually, let's not talk about my 19th trip around the sun. Yes, that is bleached hair and pierced ears. I don't know what I was thinking. You're free to laugh at me. But with the young man who was carrying Jonathan's armor, just so you guys get the context, the reason he is an armor bearer is because he can't fight; he's not a soldier. So you need to get the context of the story. He's an armor-bearer because he's not going to fight. He's carrying the armor for Jonathan. Look at what he says. This is probably the most powerful part in this passage and maybe the most powerful thing we can tell ourselves.

"Come, let's go... That word *go*... Somebody else says that in the New Testament and I think his name is Jesus. He says, "Go. Don't worry about them rejecting you. Don't worry about failure." Jesus doesn't tell you to ask those questions. He says, **"Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised**

men. Perhaps... He doesn't say, "Let's wait for a green light;" he says, "***Perhaps the LORD will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few.***"

What a powerful passage of scripture here. He said, "Let's go. Maybe the Lord will show up on our behalf and maybe he won't, but let's go out in faith because the Lord has already promised us to do a great work." So many times, we just sit back and wait for a plane to paint some clouds in the sky to tell us what to do. He said "Go love people. Go maximize your trips around the sun."

So after I got to hang out with Dave, I was so amazed with what God did, not Adam, but what God did, that I moved to Kansas City. I was an English teacher. One day I was grading English papers and I looked out of this window. The house I was in had an outdoor court just outside where all the inner city kids would play pickup basketball games and I played college basketball. They were all black and I was white so I was a little intimidated. I was just watching them play and I said "I can hang with them; I'm going to go play." I was tired of grading papers.

I went outside and I started playing basketball with these guys. Over time, I built a relationship with this guy who had all gold teeth, tattoos on his neck, and was about 6'5" and 280 pounds. He was a giant of a man, right? He was intimidating. He wouldn't even tell me his real name at first because he thought I was undercover cop because white people didn't go play this court. I asked him his name and he said "State Line Hibachi. This is the court we play on; it's called State Line. And Hibachi because grills always stay hot." It wasn't until two months in that he finally gave me his real name and told me his real story.

He was waiting to be arraigned and incarcerated for being one of the biggest drug dealers in Kansas City. I began loving on him. God, through me, begins loving on him. I had this great idea to hire him as my assistant basketball coach at Kansas City Christian School. Not that there was any legalism at that school at all, not that I got any kickback from that at all. We were going into our league championship game during the first season he was coaching with me. I'm sitting in the front of the bus. Here's a young man that's about to be incarcerated for two to five years, depending on if he serves good time or not. I know he has a relationship with Jesus now. Just by simply going and loving on him... I handed him the clipboard. He looked at me.

I said "You're coaching tonight." He was coaching against one of the winningest coaches in Kansas High School state history. I didn't know that at the time. I realize now it was a big slap in the coach's face. I didn't know that.

I literally went up to the head coach and said, "Hey, I'm letting this guy coach tonight so he's the head coach. He's going to do all the pre-game stuff with you." It was very hard. I sat on the bench, zipped my lip, and watched him coach. He won a league championship game that night.

I showed up to court on his behalf and I told the judge everything he had been doing and how good he was doing. I told him how he had been working with a Christian school and how he was ready to turn this around. At the time, he was expecting baby number two. He already had baby number one that we were all helping to love on. He still had to serve his time so he was sent to Forest City, Arkansas. It was a federal case so he went to Forest City Penitentiary.

I kept visiting him every semester. He got into a discipleship program while we was inside Forest City. He was being poured into. He was eventually transferred to a minimal security prison in Leavenworth, Kansas. At the same time, his son and his daughter are still living with the mom, but we were loving on those kids non-stop.

One day, we got a call that the mom had hit his two-year-old daughter in the back of the head and her head was cracked. It killed the two year old instantly. Leavenworth Penitentiary gave him a furlough, so he was allowed to come out for 48 hours to go to his daughter's funeral. He still had about nine months to serve his term.

He came to the funeral. He got up in front of everybody... The mom hadn't been tried yet so the mom was at the funeral. He says, "I want all of you to know that I forgive the mom who did this, but only because of the power and forgiveness that I've received from Jesus Christ." There wasn't a dry eye at that funeral. He went back and finished his term. He had good time; he never had any hiccups while he was in prison.

The mom was incarcerated, and the son was put in foster care. Less than 5% of inmates ever will get full custody of their child. Less than 5%. He got out and he wanted his son. He has a relationship with Jesus Christ and he's going to fight for his son. Nine months ago, he showed me the stamp; he has full custody of his son.

Can you imagine the scene? He told me about it. He walked up to the foster home and his son came running straight into his daddy's arms. He has a job that he's been holding down for three years. He's doing phenomenally. Christian families are supporting him and helping him. That story, once again, isn't about Adam. That story is what happens when you and I just go and love people like we are called to love people.

Dick Foth says it best in the book. If you haven't read it, I still encourage you to read it. *"Easy risk" is an oxymoron. Risks don't come easy. They leave us exposed.* I didn't know what State Line Hibachi was going to do. I didn't know what Dave was going to do. But I know the gospel doesn't call me to a life of comfort; it calls me to a life of taking risks. Regardless of what you've been through... I get it; we could throw sob stories and say, "you don't know what I'm dealing with" and "you don't know the addictions" and "you don't know the hurt" and "you don't know the breakup..."

I know this. I know that **from our deepest pains come our greatest passions.** Why do you think I'm so passionate about marriage? I grew up in a broken home. From our deepest pains come our greatest passions. Why do you think I'm so passionate about kids that come from broken homes? From our deepest pains come our greatest passions. I don't know if you think *well I could never go out and be used like that.* That's ridiculous. Look at what Scripture says in 2 Corinthians 1: 3-5. **³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. ⁵ For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.**

You might be going through something very difficult right now. And I'm sure, in a room this size, somebody is. Did you ever stop to think that he's going to redeem that so that you will be able to impact somebody else that's going through a difficult marriage, so that you will be able to comfort somebody else that is going through addictive behaviors, so you'll be able to comfort a mom that also had a miscarriage, so that you'll be able to comfort... He's using it. From our deepest pains come our greatest passions.

Dick Foth also said this. *"When we are touched by the eternal, it gives us the now in a way that nothing else does."* We all know that tomorrow is not promised. "I'll maximize next trip around the sun." "This trip around the sun, I'm just going to chill." "I want to just take this trip easy." We are not guaranteed any more trips around the sun. That's why I love reading 75 year old's stories about starting soap businesses and using that to impact people for the kingdom of God.

I had a conversation with Jack Herschend two days ago. I love how he is still impacting the kingdom of God. You're never too young and never too old. When we are touched by the eternal, it gives us the now...

One of my favorite movies in the last two years is *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*. For those of you who haven't seen it, it's basically about a guy that is not maximizing his trips around the sun. He's feeling like he's a little bit of a slouch. He decides he needs to up his eHarmony account. Then he realizes he has nothing to say without lying on his eHarmony account. He's a pretty straight edge guy, he's a square, he's honest. He thinks he needs to start being more adventurous. So he starts going on these crazy adventures and in the midst of that, he loses a negative photo. *Walter Mitty* is played by Ben Stiller. He loses this negative photo that Sean Penn's character took. He has to figure it out because it's going to be the final cover of this magazine that he works for. There's a fascinating clip in this movie. He finally finds Sean Penn up in these Himalayan Mountains, trying to take a picture of this snow cat.

[Video plays] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfjkiTB1fHQ>

I love that clip. How many of us are allowing our trips around the sun to be robbed by this. I think I heard Ted once say, "We used to take pictures to capture moments. Now we take them to try to create memories and, as a result, we are missing them. We are missing trips around the sun because we are so caught up in Facebook and Instagram and so caught up in all these different things.

Ephesians 5: 15-17 says ***15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.*** He says, "I don't like the camera to get in the way of my opportunities to soak in the moment and be fully present."

I would be completely remiss if I didn't close this trip around the sun series on someone who took 34 trips around the sun or 33 1/2 trips around the sun. On his 13th trip around the sun, he decided to stay back and be in the temple so he could learn more about his Father and his Father's house, worrying his

mom and dad to death as they got a day's journey behind them and they realized Jesus wasn't with them.

Then in his 34th trip around the sun, he goes all the way to the cross for you and I. He takes the whips, he takes the thorns, he takes the scourging, he takes the lashes, he takes the beating, he takes the abuse, he takes the ridicule, he takes the dehydration, and he takes the cross. Why did he do this in his 34th trip around the sun? He did it so that you and I would maximize our trips around the sun.

I know this from John 10: 10. This is what it says. ***"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy: I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*** Jesus took 34 trips around the sun so that you may have life and have it abundantly.

Woodland Hills, this is what culture does to you. They set a bar and they tell us to do just enough to get over that bar. "Don't do too much." "Don't be a Jesus freak." "Don't be radical in your faith." Could you all imagine what it would be like if someone shows up to Rio de Janeiro next year and is getting ready to do the high jump...? You know how that get that really cool jump as they are about to go into it. So they are in Rio de Janeiro or they are in Brazil next year and they're looking at the high jump and they are getting their really cool hop going and then they just come up to the bar and stop and slowing climb over it.

But how many of us are doing that? How many of us are allowing culture to set this invisible bar... "Just do enough." "Go to church." "Do your Bible study." "But go talk to people? Go love people? I just like the bar right here; let's just keep it right here." We have a phrase I use all the time: "Elevate the quo." Forget the status quo, right? Raise the bar.

There's a scary passage that I can't help but wrestle with in Revelation 3: 15-16. Jesus is talking to the church of Laodicea and this is what he says. ***15 "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth."*** It doesn't take an amazing Christian. It's just going. There's someone at the grocery store that's checking out your bags. "What can I do to bless you? Can I pray for you?" There's someone you are going to have lunch with today. They might be hungover at your lunch today. "How can I love you? How can I bless you?" When we begin to do what God has already called us to – "Go therefore... Go, love the Lord your God and love other people" – it's amazing what he does.

The stories I shared with you today have nothing to do with Adam Donyes, but have everything to do with being able to act on what God has already called us to do. He's already promised he's going to do it. He said he came so that we would all have life and have it to the full, have it abundantly. So the only question is if you're not living that abundant life, if you're not living that full life, if you're not maximizing your trip around the sun, why not? He has already promised to deliver and his promises never come up void.

I'm living proof of that. Yeah, I had junk. I had every excuse in the world to say, "No, it's not going to work. I've got a jacked up background, jacked up parenting, jacked up everything and it's not going to

work.” Or we can step into his story, his 34 trips around the sun, and realize he died so that we could live. He rose from the dead so we don’t have to taste death. He defeated the grave so we won’t be buried. He did all those things for us and he came so that we may have life and live it to the full. Praise Him.

Father God, thank you for this series. Thank you for the conviction that Ted, Dan, and Joe brought to my own life in making sure I’m making the best use of my time. God, I pray against any lies that anyone in this church is being told about why they can’t go and love somebody. Regardless of addictions, hurt, break, depression, or anxiety... God, your word tells us that you use those in our lives so that we can comfort others. God, I pray that everyone in here would cling to the full life you’ve already promised us. You came so we would maximize our trips around the sun.

God, I just pray that as people go out today, they would live life understanding tomorrow is not promised. God, I lift them all up to you. I pray your favor and blessing upon this church. Thank you for Ted and his leadership and thank you for all that you’re doing in the stories that were emailed in through A Trip Around the Sun and #52IN15.

God, you are a great God. We pause and reflect for all that you are doing in our lives and in this church. It is in the matchless, mighty, powerful and pure name of Jesus that I pray. And everyone agreed and said... Amen.