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## A Trip Around the Sun

### Part 5

Joe White

So Teddy... I love our pastor. I love to brag on our pastor because the guy is a nut, but he also has great theology. He came to me a while a while back and he talked about this trips around the sun and this concept we are going through and I got really excited about it. I thought *what a great idea*. So I'm just going to put it in perspective for all of y'all who think Parakeet Pete's thing is the moon and y'all who admire the cosmos and you think about things that are stellar and gigantic and are fascinated by the creation.

Let me put this whole trip around the sun thing perspective. As you guys know, we live on a little rock that we call planet Earth. We're about 8,000 miles in diameter. It's really a small rock in terms of stellar magnificence. We are flying... This is a wild thought ladies and gentlemen, but we're flying around axes... there's not even an axis, but the theoretical axis... We're flying around this central location point at about 1,000 miles per hour. So you're moving very quickly today as you travel around the sun.

You're traveling around the sun as you spin this morning and you're going to get motion sick when I go through this, trust me. As you spin 1,000 miles per hour around the axis, you're flying around the sun about 92.9 million... It's actually 92, 960,000 miles away from the sun. You're traveling around at 66,000 miles per hour. So you are traveling 1,000 miles per hour horizontally, you're traveling 66,000 like this vertically. In fact, in the average lifetime you will travel about... This is an average; this is not for all of us. You'll travel about 41 billion miles in your lifetime around the sun. That's how far you'll go in the average lifetime around the sun.

But that's not enough. We're also... Our little solar system... For all you people who think it just blew up and it was just some giant explosion, some random explosion some 16.5 billion years ago and there wasn't a creator, our solar system is flying through the cosmos, through the Milky Way, our little tiny galaxy... We've got about 400 billion stars in our galaxy; something like that. And our little system that travels around our sun, our little tiny star is flying 600,000 miles per hour through the galaxy and your hair doesn't even blow. That, men and women, is amazing. Have you ever thought about how fast you're moving?

Our little galaxy is only one, of course, of about 100 billion galaxies in our cosmos. And may I remind you, if your science is messing with your theology a little bit this morning, that our little cosmos, according to Webster's, is a harmonious orderly system. Actually, it is perfectly tuned. Dr. Hugh Ross says, "To the trillion, trillion, trillionth degree of perfection, our cosmos is tuned."

You talk about a giant God, a magnificent Creator who can tune a cosmos like a radio to perfection like you and I could never even fathom so that you could wake up this morning and breathe. If you think you don't matter to somebody, folks... It is amazing that He can do that so that you could come to church this morning, it's amazing what a difference He made, as R.P. sang, in my life.

Some of us get to travel around our fiery star a lot. My grandmother traveled around it 100 times. She wanted to make 100 so she could get on the Today Show. That was her goal in life. She was the most charming woman you've ever met. When she got to 100, she went to be with Jesus. When she died, she had one foot out of bed. True story. This most charming woman... I never called her Grandma because she said "Boy, don't ever call me Grandma; I'm not old enough to be your grandma." When she was 95, she said "Oh, to be 90 again."

My big brother, Frank, only lived 1/365 of one trip around the sun. He just made it one day and somehow, in God's sovereignty, if he would have lived... For some of y'all, you'd be glad, but for some of you... I would have never been born. How God uses all the hard stuff and difficult to understand stuff to make your trip around the sun happen is amazing. Many of us in here realize how many times we've escaped death to get this trip around the sun that we've had this year.

I was thinking this morning in the shower how many times we don't know. Last night, Debbie Jo was driving and we averted death I don't know how many times. I go "Debbie Jo, how many times have you driven down two lane roads and passed semi-trailers?" How many times have you avoided disease that you don't know about? All God has done to get this trip around the sun that you've had the last 365 days... But somewhere between Frank and my grandmother, we are traveling in our trips around the sun; from a day to 100 year or maybe longer.

My question this morning is... And this sermon is probably more to me than to you, but what's your next trip going to look like? What is it going to be like for you? There are two ways to travel next year, folks, and you can choose which way you are going to take your next trip around the sun. I have all these crazy thoughts flying in my mind, but as I think about trips around the sun and all the folks I get to talk to and counsel, I think about the trip most people use traveling around the sun which what I call the U-Haul travel.

The U-Haul travel is just accumulating as much baggage as you can as you travel. Every year, getting more and more baggage in our life, accumulating more and more fear, more and more guilt, more and more shame, and more and more anger. And every year the wrinkles on your faces grow downward and the bags under your eyes grow more saggy and the scars on your heart go more prevalent because life just gets so incredibly hard.

You start off with a little U-Haul trailer, you just put a bigger one behind it, and then you get a bigger one. It's kind of like when you get married and you pack everything in a car and every time you move, married folks, as you know, you have to get a bigger and bigger truck, until finally you're hiring a moving company to move all your earthly baggage. But that ain't the worst baggage when you travel around the sun. I have found that out in my counseling. It's the emotional baggage that we pack into our lives. Our shoulders start drooping and our attitude starts drooping.

I was in a taxi with a Syrian guy named Imad. This is the way of Allah by the way; this is the Muslim tradition in a nutshell. We had a blast. We were together four hours. I paid that guy \$60.00 to drive me around Chicago. As I paid him the \$60.00, we became friends. We had a blast in that taxi. Woodland Hills doesn't stop here; you can have Woodland Hills anywhere you go. We were having Woodland Hills in a taxi and we became friends.

We parked at the driveway of the friend of mine where I'm staying. I said "Hey, Imad..." By the way, his name means cabbage leaf in Syrian. Why you would name a child Cabbage Leaf, I have no idea, but that's what it means. I said, "Imad, can I ask you a question? According to your Muslim faith, what will happen when you die?" He sat up proudly and he said, "God will look at all my good deeds and he'll place them on my right side. He'll look at all my bad deeds and place them on my left side. If my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds, I go to heaven."

I'm back in the back going... He goes "What are you thinking?"

I said, "Well, what happens if your bad deeds outweigh your good deeds?"

He had never thought of that. He said, "Um, I suppose I go to hell."

I went "Wow, Imad, that makes me sad."

He said, "Why, what are you thinking?"

I said "I don't know how you're doing, Pal, but if I had to live my life thinking that if my bad deeds outweigh my good deeds I go to hell, I wouldn't want to live anymore." I could see me at judgement day. If they are weighing out my bad deeds and my good deeds, I don't have a chance. I don't know how good you're doing out there.

He said, "What does your religion teach you?"

I said, "Well, Imad, my religion clearly teaches me, like you, there will be judgment in the end, but according to the New Testament, it says clearly that at judgment, God will not look at my bad deeds and my good deeds. He's not going to look at the size of my U-Haul boxes, but he's going to see the righteousness of Christ in my heart."

Do you remember that song you just sang before you took the communion service? That stuff is real, folks. You've been ransomed, according to scripture. I said, "God will look at the righteousness of Christ in my heart. Sir, based on the righteousness of Christ, I go to heaven."

He said, "Where are you going to church tomorrow?"

I said, "Willow Creek."

He said, "How do you spell that?"

He got a grocery sack and ripped a piece off of it and I spelled Willow Creek for him. He said, "I'm going to your church tomorrow."

There's another way to travel, folks. If you're tired of carrying U-Haul boxes and this last year you've had enough of that stuff in your life and you want to travel light, if you want to travel free, there's another way to travel, according to the New Testament. It's more like a rocket ship. It's more like the stages as you travel around the sun next year because in scripture, it talks clearly about jettisoning the baggage, about every trip letting go. Even the bad stuff that's happened to us, scripture says God takes all of that in your next trip, not for more baggage to carry and more hurt and more shame and more guilt.

The problem with hurt and shame and guilt and fear is it causes a crack in our heart. Our tendencies is to fill those cracks with bad choices like crack and like pornography and like hatred and like jealousy. Generally, we take those cracks, because of things we've done or things that have been done to us that create anger and fear, and we pour poor choices into those cracks and make it even worse to travel. But the Bible says, over and over again, that we are to jettison, to let it go because God calls all of it to work together for our good if we love him.

In fact, 2 Corinthians 1: 4, for all of us who have been seriously wounded, says we even get access; as God comforts us in our affliction, it gives us opportunities to comfort others that have been afflicted the same ways we have been afflicted. So all the afflictions of our past, of which you've had many and I've had many, are our counseling passes to help others along through those same afflictions. The New Testament way says run free. This trip, jettison the crummy baggage.

Isn't it crazy, folks, how the voices of our childhood come back to own our worldview. Remember the first time your parents said "Shame on you"? "You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" Remember those voices? "You little idiot." "You're so stupid." "What's wrong with you?"

Dr. Robert Shuler says I am who I think the most important person in my life thinks I am. So when our coaches, our boyfriends, our girlfriends, our peers, and our parents used to speak all those horrible things to us, a lot of us started believing them, didn't we? I know I did. "You little dummy." "What's wrong with you?" "God's going to judge you for that." Just the things that have been said and things we tell our children... it's crazy. So now, our heart is filled with anger and fear and guilt and shame and baggage and jealousy, so we carry that and we travel around the sun with that stuff. No wonder life is so doggone hard. No wonder we get angry as we drive down the road. No wonder we fight with our spouses and with our children and with ourselves, carrying all that stuff around.

Men and women, I came here today to tell you God's design is not like that. Pick up your New Testament sometime. Lay down the cell phone for a minute and pick up this book. This thing is amazing. Over and over again, it says jettison the baggage. Jesus has been the baggage; he's taken the baggage. He died on the cross to be the baggage of your last trip around the sun. What a heavy cross that was as he carried everything that you've ever done or has ever been done to you on his shoulders. No wonder his shoulders separated on that cross.

In Ephesians 4, Paul talks about it a lot. He says to you this morning. He says, **22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.** All major philosophers and counselors through the years have agreed on one thing. You become what you think about. You become what your mind says you are.

Proverbs 23: 7 says **as a man thinketh, so he is.** If you define yourself with “I struggle with porn,” then you struggle with porn. “I struggle with hatred,” then you struggle with hatred.” I struggle with guilt,” then you struggle with guilt. You are what you think you are. Psychologists say 84% of our self-thought is negative. We beat ourselves to death.

That’s why Colossians 3: 5 says it again. **Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.** If you are a follower of Christ, you are now seen by God in the image of Christ. Think about that.

Philippians 4: 8 describes it for you this morning. **8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.**

Colossians 3: 2 says **Set your mind on things above, not on things earthly things.** Paul says in Philippians 3 **this one thing I do...** and folks this is the message this morning. Do you want to take another trip around the sun, do it like this, Paul says. **But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.** Reach, press... That’s where smiley faces come from. That’s where positivity comes from. That’s where marriages become fantastic. That’s where parenting becomes fantastic and even grand parenting and even sickness and disease.

For those of you all like me that need a picture of what that’s like, I was trying to think last week how we could show this thing. I picked up this hitchhiker. He this old funny looking homeless guy. I asked him if he could rap and he said yeah. I told him we had to do a rap for this church. I said, “We’ve got to picture something.” This guy was a rapper so we put this thing together for you in case you need a picture of what I’m talking about this morning. Check out this guy.

[video plays]

Give it up for R.P.; he’s the father-in-law of that guy. Katie, you married him.

I'm the luckiest guy in the world. During the week, I get to go to college campuses. It's not luck; I'm the most fortunate man in the world. I get to go into these college environments and all these lost kids come by the hundreds and some nights thousands. We were at Oklahoma State the other night with Lecrae and 3,000 kids show up down there. At the end, we build this cross and these students just pour down to the cross. They bring their U-Haul boxes. They bring their junk. The honesty that prevails in those conferences we do is just amazing.

This one kid at the end of this crowd of kids that came forward the other night at Oklahoma State.

He said "Dude I'm hooked on porn and I'm done."

I said "Let me ask you something, buddy. Will you write your future wife a love letter and promise her you'll never look again?"

He said, "I will."

I poked him in the chest and I said, "Will you write your daughter? Will you write your future daughter a letter and promise her that you never will again?"

He said, "I will." And he dumped that baggage on the cross to stay forever.

Another girl came up right at the end. This girl is balling her eyes out. She has two buddies with her and they are all crying. Her eyes were full of drugs and she said, "Tonight, I flushed my pills."

I said, "Tell me about it, princess."

She said, "I've been hooked on drugs for four years, but tonight I flushed them."

I said "Little girl, do you promise the baby that's in your womb... do you promise that little girl that God is weaving in your womb... do you promise her that you will never do drugs again?" I watched as these students honestly walked away from that cross brand new in Christ.

We were at another university. Goodnight, I guess 1,800 kids came down to that cross. One little girl comes down and she's crying her eyes out. I'm out hugging these kids and talking to them. I asked her name and she said "Maggie" and I hugged her.

I said "Girl, that's my granddaughter's name; I already love you. Maggie, why are you crying like that?"

She said, "When I was 17, I died." I asked her what happened and she said, "They filmed me. The boys raped me, they set up, and they stripped me and they filmed me. They made me porn."

I'll tell you, men, there are about a million reasons I hate porn, but the biggest reason is because of the little Maggies that get abused and set up for that trash. Y'all, I didn't know what to say to her so I just opened up my love letter. It was in my back pocket and it opened up to 2 Corinthians 5: 2.

I said, "Maggie, would you look at that. Baby, it says right there that God made Jesus who knew no sin to become rape. Baby, he became porn. Maggie, he became abuse, he became cutting so that you could become the righteousness of Christ in him." How many Maggies are in here today, me included? He became the porn and rape and all the shame and hurt that ever happened to you, little girl, so that you could become the purity of Jesus. I said, "Maggie, do you know how pure you are?"

She said, "How pure?"

I said, "You are a virgin; 100% pure as Jesus is."

Y'all, this white vale of purity falls out of that arena on her little face and no one saw it, but Maggie saw it and I saw it. And ladies, I will assure you that little girl walked out of that arena the most beautiful bride you will ever see in your life because she, like you when you come to the cross, became the purity of Jesus. That's what scripture says about your next trip around the sun.

I was elk hunting a week ago in the mountains. I went on top of the mountain to check my messages and my heart died because I had a two-day-old message that one of my little buddies had just got informed that she only has six months; she's only going to get half a trip. I started balling. Her name is Janet. If you met her, you'd think you met an angel. She's an artist, a painter. She paints the most beautiful paintings of horses and other wildlife things. I talked to her a couple of days ago. She was cleaning out her art room, giving away the paintings, putting away her paintbrushes. It was so sad. I love this lady so much.

I said, "Janet, how are you doing?"

She said, "I'm afraid."

I said "Tell me about it, girl; what's it like?"

She said, "Jesus is waiting for me. I have peace because Jesus is my peace. I have hope because he's my hope. He's smiling and his arms are open. I've had to change the way I think. I can't walk by my feelings anymore. Joe, I was reading Revelation 4 today and I started crying." I think now she started speaking to you and me. She said, "I started crying because it says in Revelation 4 that the door is still open and he is saying whosoever will may come. I'm fixing to walk through that door. How can I be sad?"

What's your next trip around the sun going to be like, Woodland Hills? I'll give you a suggestion. My little buddy, Mamby Lane... A few summers ago in K West I was speaking to the junior high kids... I'd been over there a couple of times and made a lot of new friends. All the kids wanted a hug from Grandpa. They started lining up there and I started hugging all these precious kids. I could tell God was revolutionizing their precious little lives.

At the end of the line, there was this sweet little quiet girl named Mamby. I had never met her before. She was with a buddy who was pretty hyper and her buddy was like "Mamby, tell him your story! Mamby, tell him your story!"

I said, "Mamby, tell me your story"

She said, "My daddy died this week."

I said, "Mamby, what happened to your dad?"

She said, "Well, he had a brain tumor."

I said "Really? Where were you?"

She said "I was here at camp and I got the call and I went home for the funeral, but I asked my mom if I could come back to camp with my friends after the funeral."

I was just tearing up and I go "Mamby, are you okay?"

She said, "I'm doing pretty good."

I said "How?"

She said, "The night before the funeral, I was at camp and my counselor was doing a devotional. She was telling us all these unusual things in nature like a dragonfly only lives 24 hours, a goldfish can't blink, an ant never sleeps, a housefly always hums in the key of F. She was telling us all these interesting things in nature. I came back to camp and I asked my counselor if I could go behind the cabin and just sit there and pray. The counsel told me to take whatever time I needed. I was sitting there praying and a dragonfly landed on a rock by my foot." This twelve year old said "I looked at the dragonfly and said 'Get on with your life. You've only got 24 hours to live; go do something with your life' and God spoke to my heart. He said 'Hey, Mamby, you only got 24 hours to live; go do something with your life.'"

Do you wonder why God has you hear this morning or why you haven't encountered one of those scrapes of death that you don't even know about that you encountered even probably last night...? I think it's because in my New Testament theology, if there's a big jigsaw puzzle and there's one piece missing, scripture says God is patient, slow to anger, not wanting anybody to parish. Not just eternally, but to parish for another day carrying all of those things that have happened to you or that you've done to others... He doesn't want you to spend one more day carrying U-Haul trailers around causing all that anger and fear and bitterness and shame.

There is one piece missing, men and women... He's your dad. He doesn't haven't any lost kids that he doesn't like. As a dad, your family is not complete without every family member. That's why you have this little jigsaw puzzle piece in your hand. This is you. Believe it or not, I got to this point the other night, as I was thinking and praying about this moment. Only in Branson, would you have this thought but forgive me because I'm in Branson. I grew up in Texas. But an old Willie Nelson song came to my

mind. There's no preacher in America who is saying this right now. That old song, *All of Me*. "Take all of me." It says, "I give you my arms." In a theological sense, you're saying "Jesus, here's all of me. I'm not going to hold anybody but you." It says, "I give you my lips." "I have nothing to say, Lord, except to love you and to praise you. I'm going to quit talking about myself the way I talk about myself every day and others. "Here's my lips, here's my arms, here's my heart; take all of me."

Men and women, there are four ways you can react to this little message this morning as you consider this piece of your puzzle and what puzzle it's going to fit in for eternity. One way to look at it is "all of me; none of you." We've all been there. "All of me; none of you" is a one-way ticket to hell and no one wants to go there.

The other way is "all of you; none of me." This is what so many Christians and so many churches live by. "Jesus, I have your grace so I'm just going to keep on sinning. I take all of you, but you get none of me." James says that idea is dead. Paul says may that idea never ever be: to go on sinning because we have all of him.

Then there is a third way you can take this message, a more subtle way. That is "all of you, but only half of me." That's they was probably 90% of the Christians live in this world. "I take all of you, but you just get half of me." I reserve some of this stuff because I want to live my life and do it my way. That's called lukewarm; that makes God gag, Revelation 3 says.

But there is a more subtle way than that that, honestly, church pews are filled with all over the world. That is "all of me, but only half of you." "You're my savior, but I've got to bear the burden. I receive you as my savior, but I'm not going to give you all this painful experience of life; I'm going to carry it."

There is one more way to live folks and I dare you to start living this way today. That is "all of me and all of you." "I receive you as my savior. Yes, I receive you as my Lord. Yes, you've been resurrected from the dead for my salvation, but Lord, I take all of you; I receive your grace. Just like little Maggie, I will walk in the righteousness of the blessing of your salvation."

So as you leave today, may the theology of little Mamby Lane go with you. You have 24 hours to live; go do something with your life. I invite you... If you would like to place your little puzzle piece... if you would like to say in faith "Jesus, today and for the rest of my trips around the sun, however many they are, it's all of me and yes, God, finally, I get it; it's all of you. I will jettison the baggage permanently and I will walk in the completeness of your grace."

Lord Jesus, thank you for making your life and death and resurrection crystal clear and, like little Maggie, that we, by the grace of God, could walk in the veil of purity, unstained, forgiven, that we could live in that... God, for the puzzle piece that is still outside of your puzzle, thank you for bringing that lost, lonely, hurt puzzle piece to this church this morning. Thank you that the blood of your cross is sufficient to receive that puzzle piece. For that child today who wants to step in by faith and say "all of me for all of you and all of you for all of me," thank you for being that savior.