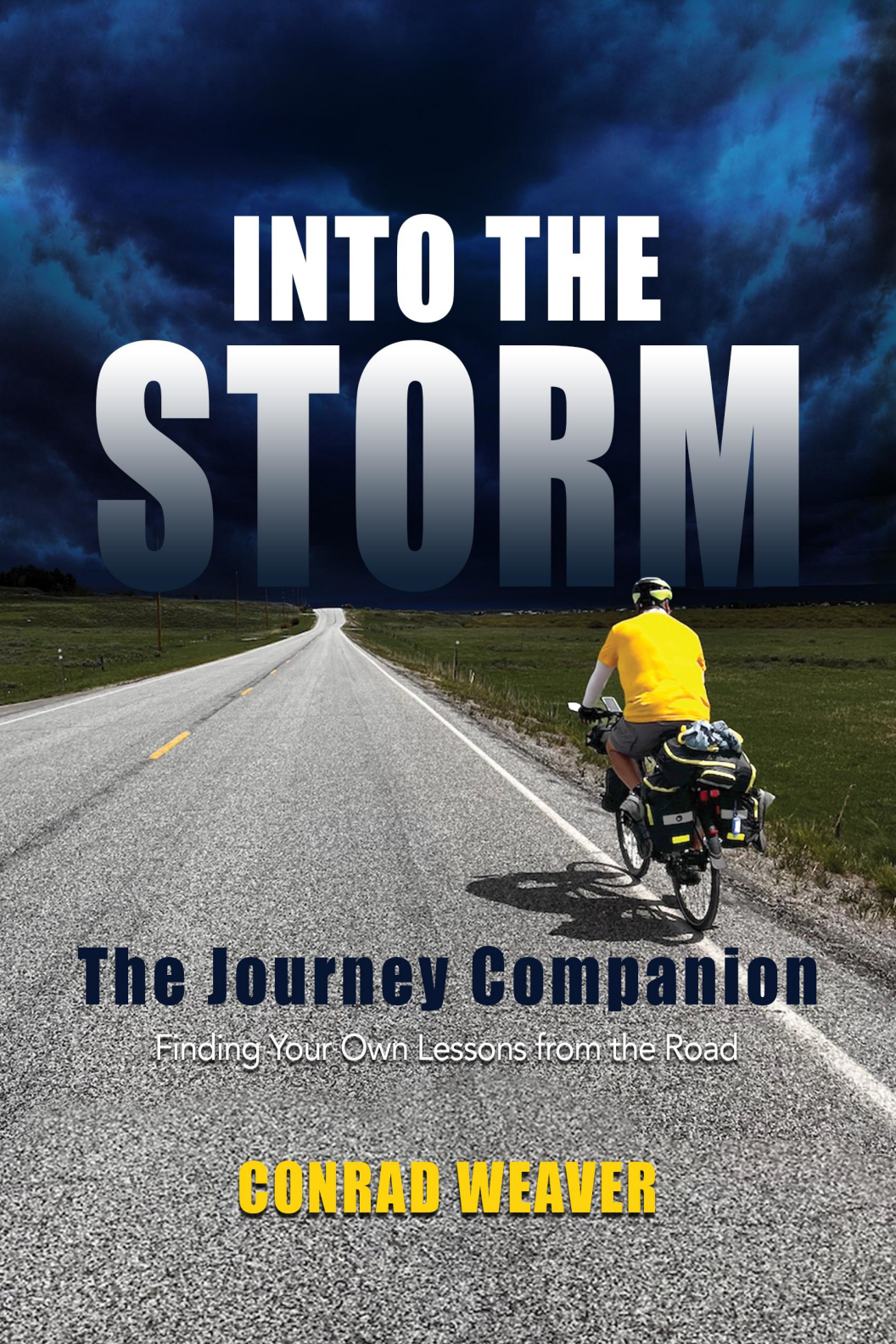


A person wearing a yellow shirt and a helmet is riding a motorcycle away from the viewer down a long, straight, two-lane road. The road has a yellow dashed line on the left and a white solid line on the right. The landscape is flat and green, with a dark, stormy sky in the background. The title 'INTO THE STORM' is overlaid in large, white, bold letters.

INTO THE STORM

The Journey Companion

Finding Your Own Lessons from the Road

CONRAD WEAVER

Into the Storm

The Journey Companion

FINDING YOUR OWN LESSONS FROM THE ROAD

By Conrad Weaver

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Companion to Into the Storm: 65 days, 3,500 miles and what the road taught me about life, by Conrad Weaver.

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INTRODUCTION

The Journey Continues

Most people think a bicycle ride across America is about endurance.

It's really about attention.

When you're riding ten or twelve hours every day, there's nowhere to hide from your own thoughts. The road has a way of stripping away distractions until you're left with what really matters.

Some days I celebrated breathtaking mountain vistas.

Other days I fought brutal headwinds that made every mile feel impossible.

Sometimes I laughed until my stomach hurt.

Other times I wondered if I had anything left to give.

By the end of sixty-five days, I realized something.

The bicycle ride wasn't changing the world around me.

It was changing me.

That's true of every meaningful journey.

Whether you're leading an organization, raising a family,
recovering from loss, building a business, or simply trying to
become the person God created you to be, the road is always
shaping your character.

That's why I created this companion.

Not to help you remember my story.

To help you discover yours.

As you work through these pages, don't rush.

Sit with the questions.

Write honestly.

Invite God into the conversation.

And remember...

You're not trying to finish another book.

You're becoming another person.

PART I

Setting Out

CHAPTER

One

The Road

Where are you headed?

*"A road doesn't determine your destination. Your
decisions do."*

✦ Along the Road

Every morning on the ride began the same way.

We packed our bicycles.

Checked the tires.

Filled the water bottles.

Looked at the route.

Then we started pedaling.

No matter how difficult the day became, we always knew where we were headed.

Life isn't always like that.

Many people spend years working incredibly hard without ever asking whether they're traveling in the right direction.

Activity isn't the same as purpose.

Movement isn't the same as progress.

The road only matters if it leads where you truly want to go.

That's why the first question isn't "How fast are you moving?"

It's "Where are you headed?"

Looking Inward

Spend a few quiet moments considering these questions.

Don't rush.

Write honestly.

REFLECTION

Where am I trying to go?

What season of life best describes me today?

- ☐ Beginning
- ☐ Growing
- ☐ Waiting
- ☐ Healing
- ☐ Restoring
- ☐ Leading
- ☐ Unsure

What is consuming most of my attention?

What road have I been avoiding because it feels difficult?

If nothing changed over the next five years except the direction I'm currently headed, where would I end up?

What kind of person is God inviting me to become?

✦ Leadership Insight

Great leaders don't drift.

They choose.

They don't merely react to circumstances.

They intentionally move toward a destination worth pursuing.

Leadership begins long before anyone follows.

It begins with choosing your own direction.

Scripture

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight." — Proverbs 3:5–6

✦ Leadership Challenge

This week...

Identify one decision you've delayed.

Don't spend another week thinking about it.

Take the first step.

One phone call.

One application.

One apology.

One conversation.

One act of courage.

Forward is forward.

Prayer

Father,

Thank You for leading me, even when I can't see the entire road ahead.

Help me trust You more than my own understanding.

Give me courage to choose purpose over comfort and faith over fear.

Show me the next step, then give me the strength to take it.

Help me become the leader, spouse, parent, friend, and follower of Christ You've called me to be.

One faithful step at a time.

Amen.

✦ Weekly Commitment

This week I will...

CHAPTER

Two

The Pack

What are you carrying?

*“Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he
will never permit the righteous to be moved.”*

— PSALM 55:22

✦ Along the Road

Every ounce mattered.

Before we ever touched the Pacific, John and I spent months deciding what would ride on the back of our bikes for 3,500 miles. Somewhere in Idaho, a shop mechanic found that all four of our tubes were the wrong size, installed back home by a shop that meant well and never checked the fit. We had ridden a thousand miles trusting cargo we'd never inspected.

Weeks later, in Nebraska, I met a man carrying something far heavier. A bike shop owner in Scottsbluff, fixing my blown tire, quietly told me he'd lost his mother and then his daughter within the same year. I didn't offer advice. I just listened. The flat tire that felt like a setback had arranged a meeting I didn't know I needed.

Read the full stories in *Into the Storm*, Chapter 7: Brisket and Bad Tubes (pp. 53–58) and Chapter 13: Nebraska (pp. 97–106).

What Weighs You Down

We all ride loaded. The question is whether we know what's in the bag — and whether we've noticed who else is carrying something heavy.

Looking Inward

Spend a few quiet moments considering these questions. Don't rush. Write honestly.

REFLECTION

What am I carrying today that I haven't set down in a long time?

Which of the following describes what's weighing on me most right now?

- ☐ Grief
- ☐ Fear
- ☐ Comparison
- ☐ Resentment
- ☐ Responsibility for things that aren't mine
- ☐ Old failure
- ☐ Something I can't name yet

What was I told to carry that was never actually mine to carry?

If I inspected everything in my pack the way that mechanic inspected our tubes, what would I find that's the wrong size for this season of my life?

Who in my life is carrying something heavy right now that I've been too busy to notice?

What would it feel like to ride one mile lighter?

✦ Leadership Insight

Leaders often believe strength means carrying more. Carrying everything. Carrying it alone, and carrying it well enough that no one notices the weight.

That isn't strength. It's a slow leak.

The strongest leaders I've met aren't the ones with the fullest pack. They're the ones who know what to leave behind, who ask for help before the tire blows on a lonely stretch of road, and who notice when the people around them are carrying something they haven't said out loud. Pat O'Toole, a Wyoming rancher I once filmed, had that gift. He could sit two people down who saw the world in opposite ways and get them working side by side, because he never assumed he already understood what someone else was hauling.

Before you can lead anyone else's pack, you have to be honest about your own.

Scripture

*"Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you;
he will never permit the righteous to be moved." — Psalm
55:22*

*"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I
will give you rest." — Matthew 11:28*

✦ Leadership Challenge

This week, take inventory.

Name one thing you're carrying that isn't yours: an expectation, a grudge, a fear that was never actually about the present moment. Write it down. Then tell one trusted person you're setting it down — not because it disappears the moment you say it out loud, but because naming a weight is the first step to putting it down for good.

And look around. Ask someone close to you, honestly, what they're carrying. Then do what I did in that bike shop. Don't fix it. Just listen.

Prayer

Father,

Thank You for the invitation to bring You everything I carry, the parts I'm proud of and the parts I've hidden even from myself.

Show me what's dead weight and what's worth keeping. Give me the humility to set down what was never mine to carry, and the courage to ask for help with what is.

Help me notice the people around me who are carrying more than they're saying. Make me the kind of person who listens without trying to fix, who lightens a load simply by paying attention.

Sustain me, Lord, the way You promised. I don't have to carry this alone.

Amen.

✦ Weekly Commitment

This week I will...

CHAPTER

Three

The Compass

Who — or what — is guiding you?

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on
your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him,
and He will make your paths straight.”*

— PROVERBS 3:5–6

✦ Along the Road

We had Route 30 planned out of Clatskanie, Oregon — straight up a big hill, then on toward Portland. Then, the night before, over pizza, a stranger introduced himself as the town's fire chief and warned us the highway was a gauntlet by morning. "Take Beaver Falls Road," he said. "Longer, but safe, and the scenery is something else."

We checked his route ourselves before changing course — trust, but verify — and the next morning rode through an old-growth forest, moss hanging from the trees, waterfalls crossing beneath the road. We'd set out looking for a safer route. We found one of the most memorable stretches of the whole trip.

Read the full story in *Into the Storm*, Chapter 3: A Change of Plans (pp. 33–36).

The Habit Underneath the Habit

Every morning of the ride, before either of us clipped in, I read a passage of Scripture and named what I was thankful for. That habit started decades earlier at my grandparents' farm. A compass doesn't move — it just tells you true north, whether or not you feel like listening.

Looking Inward

Spend a few quiet moments considering these questions. Don't rush. Write honestly.

REFLECTION

What — or who — is actually setting my direction right now: Scripture, prayer, other people's opinions, old habits, fear?

When was the last time someone with real experience offered me a better road, and how did I respond?

Do I have a daily practice that orients me before the day's demands take over? What does it look like, or what could it look like?

Whose voice have I been trusting that hasn't actually earned it?

Whose voice have I been ignoring that has?

✦ Leadership Insight

Confident leaders can mistake their own certainty for a compass. It isn't. Certainty tells you how you feel. A compass tells you what's true, and the two aren't always the same thing.

The best leaders I know actively seek out people who know the road better than they do, and they check what those people tell them rather than either dismissing it or swallowing it whole. Trust, but verify, applies as much in a boardroom as it does on a bicycle. A leader who won't take counsel is riding on faith in their own map. A leader who takes counsel without ever verifying it is riding on faith in someone else's. Neither is a compass. Both are guesses.

Scripture

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight." — Proverbs 3:5–6

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."
— Psalm 119:105*

✦ Leadership Challenge

This week, do two things.

First, build fifteen minutes into your morning — Scripture, prayer, silence, whatever sets your compass before the day sets it for you. Protect it the way you'd protect any non-negotiable.

Second, identify one person in your life who knows a road you're about to travel better than you do. Ask them. Actually ask, not just listen politely. Then verify what they tell you and decide, with open eyes, whether to change your route.

Prayer

Father,

Thank You for being a compass that doesn't move, even when I do.

Forgive me for the times I've trusted my own certainty over Your direction, and for the times I've been too proud to ask someone who knew the road better than I did.

Set my heart toward You before the day's noise sets it toward something else. Give me the humility to seek wise counsel, and the discernment to know it when I hear it.

Make my path straight, Lord, even through the parts I can't see yet.

Amen.

✦ Weekly Commitment

This week I will...

PART II

The Miles That Change Us

CHAPTER

Four

The Climb

Growth is rarely comfortable.

*“Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season
we will reap, if we do not give up.”*

— GALATIANS 6:9

✦ Along the Road

Southeast Woodard Road was supposed to be a shortcut outside Portland. Instead it announced itself as a two-mile wall, rising nearly six hundred feet. I learned to keep my eyes off the summit and focus on a point twenty yards ahead — a crack in the pavement, a mailbox. Get there. Then choose another point.

Weeks later, in Ohio's Amish Country, a different climb tested the same lesson: over a mile long, sections near a twelve-percent grade, steep enough that for the first time on the trip we got off and pushed. The lesson held. We weren't riding across America. We were riding to the next mile marker.

Read the full stories in *Into the Storm*, Chapter 4: The Gorge (pp. 37–42) and Chapter 16: Ohio (pp. 119–126).

Why the Climb Doesn't Skip Anyone

The climb is the growth, not a delay before it. Comfort builds nothing. It preserves whatever you already are. Growth asks you to climb.

Looking Inward

Spend a few quiet moments considering these questions. Don't rush. Write honestly.

REFLECTION

What "climb" am I currently facing that I keep hoping will turn out to be shorter than it looks?

Where in my life have I been staring at the summit instead of the next twenty yards?

What is one difficult thing I've repeated so many times it has quietly become strength?

Am I trying to grow without any discomfort? What would it look like to accept the discomfort as part of the process instead of a sign that something's wrong?

What's the next small point ahead of my front tire — the next single, manageable step — on the climb I'm avoiding?

✦ Leadership Insight

Leaders are often expected to make hard things look easy. That expectation is a trap. The climbs that shape a leader, the ones that build the judgment and the character other people eventually rely on, are rarely comfortable while they're happening.

Chunking works off the bike as much as on it. A leader facing an overwhelming season doesn't need a plan for the whole mountain. They need the next faithful decision, made well, followed by the next one. Big vision matters. But big vision gets climbed one switchback at a time, by someone willing to stop looking at the summit long enough to take the next step.

Scripture

"Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up." — Galatians 6:9

"We know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." — Romans 5:3–4

✦ Leadership Challenge

Name the climb you're on right now, plainly, in a single sentence. Then break it into the smallest possible next step — not the whole mountain, just the next twenty yards. Take that step this week. When you reach it, choose the next one.

Resist the urge to look up at the summit until you have to. It'll still be there. Your job right now is the mailbox, the crack in the pavement, the shadow just ahead of your front tire.

Prayer

Father,

Thank You for the climbs, even the ones I didn't ask for and wouldn't have chosen.

Help me stop staring at summits I'm not ready to reach and start faithfully taking the next step in front of me. When my legs burn and my resolve wavers, remind me that the struggle is not a sign I've failed. It's the process working.

Build in me the kind of strength that only comes from repetition, from showing up again on the same hill until it no longer beats me.

And when I finally crest the ridge, let me remember to say thank You before I coast down the other side.

Amen.

✦ Weekly Commitment

This week I will...

CHAPTER

Five

The Headwind

What's slowing you down?

"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles."

— ISAIAH 40:31

✦ Along the Road

We climbed out of Pomeroy with a tremendous tailwind, cruising to the ridge feeling smug about it. The moment we crested it, the wind shifted straight into our faces — descending a hill, pedaling every foot of it, gravity and wind canceling each other out. Resistance doesn't check the map before it shows up.

Weeks later, on Togwotee Pass — fifteen miles to a summit above nine thousand feet — I learned that same resistance calls for pacing, not attacking. You don't win a climb like that in the first mile.

Read the full stories in *Into the Storm*, Chapter 7: Brisket and Bad Tubes (pp. 53–58) and Chapter 11: Pace Yourself (pp. 85–90).

What Headwinds Are For

A headwind doesn't stop you. It reveals you — whether your legs, and your commitment, are as strong as you believed on the easy days.

Looking Inward

Spend a few quiet moments considering these questions. Don't rush. Write honestly.

REFLECTION

What headwind am I facing right now that has no business being there, given how well everything else is going?

Where have I been attacking a resistance that actually calls for pacing myself instead?

What has this resistance revealed about me that the easy days never could?

Am I trying to outmuscle something that actually requires patience and endurance?

What would it look like to keep pedaling through this headwind at a sustainable pace, rather than either sprinting into exhaustion or coasting to a stop?

✦ Leadership Insight

Every leader eventually pedals into a headwind: a season where effort and results stop lining up the way they used to, where the tailwind that carried the team for months disappears without warning. The instinct is often to panic, or to attack even harder, burning reserves that were meant to last the whole climb.

The leaders who last are the ones who recognize a headwind for what it is: temporary, revealing, and survivable at the right pace. They don't pretend it isn't there. They also don't let it convince them the whole journey has gone wrong. They settle in, manage the effort, and keep the team moving forward a little slower than they'd like, which is still forward.

Scripture

"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

— Isaiah 40:31

"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair." — 2 Corinthians 4:8

✦ Leadership Challenge

Identify the headwind you're in right now, specifically, without minimizing it or dramatizing it. Then ask honestly: am I attacking this at a pace I can sustain, or am I burning reserves I'll need later?

This week, adjust your pace on purpose. Not your commitment. Your pace. Keep pedaling, but pedal like someone planning to finish.

Prayer

Father,

Thank You for renewing strength I didn't know I had left.

When the wind shifts against me, and it will, help me resist both the urge to panic and the urge to attack past exhaustion. Teach me to settle into a pace I can sustain, trusting that You see the whole climb even when I can only see the next few yards.

Remind me that the headwind is not a sign I've gone the wrong way. It's simply weather, and weather changes.

Give me wings like eagles when I need to rise, and steady legs when I simply need to keep pedaling.

Amen.

Journal

✦ Weekly Commitment

This week I will...

CHAPTER

Six

The Storm

Adversity reveals what comfort conceals.

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.”

— ISAIAH 43:2

✦ Along the Road

Eight miles from West Yellowstone, a storm closed in on Highway 191 — lightning flashing through the trees, no shelter of any kind, bear country besides. I found myself praying out loud, quietly, just to be heard over the wind. Then something moved through me that I still can't fully explain — not adrenaline, not my legs, which were spent. John drafted off my wheel. We made it to the hotel, and I wasn't even tired.

Read the full story in *Into the Storm*, Chapter 10: Yellowstone (pp. 77–84).

What Only the Storm Can Show You

Under a calm sky you can believe almost anything about yourself. It's only when the wind hits you head-on that you find out what's actually true. Comfort is a poor teacher. The storm isn't.

Looking Inward

Spend a few quiet moments considering these questions. Don't rush. Write honestly.

REFLECTION

What storm am I in right now, and what is it forcing me to face that I've been avoiding?

What has this storm revealed about me — my faith, my character, my limits — that comfort never could?

When have I prayed the way I prayed on that Montana highway: simply, honestly, without eloquence?

Have I ever experienced strength that didn't feel like it was fully my own? What did that teach me?

What would it look like to stop asking God to remove the storm, and start asking what He wants to show me inside it?

✦ Leadership Insight

Every leader eventually leads through a storm they didn't choose and can't outrun. The instinct is to look for the person who caused it, or the plan that failed to prevent it. Sometimes that's worth examining. But the deeper question a storm asks isn't who's to blame. It's who you're becoming while it's happening.

The leaders people remember, the ones who earn real trust, are rarely the ones who avoided every storm. They're the ones who kept leading inside one: who told the truth about how bad it was, who didn't pretend to have strength they didn't have, and who somehow kept the team moving forward anyway. That kind of leadership isn't manufactured in calm weather. It's revealed in the wind.

Scripture

*"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you,
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you." —
Isaiah 43:2*

*"He said to them, 'Why are you afraid, O you of little
faith?' Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea,
and there was a great calm." — Matthew 8:26*

✦ Leadership Challenge

Name the storm you're currently in without softening it. Then ask, honestly, what it might be revealing about you that comfort has been hiding.

This week, instead of only praying for the storm to end, pray the harder prayer: God, show me what You want me to see in here. Then keep pedaling.

Prayer

Father,

Thank You that You do not promise to remove every storm, but You do promise to be in it with me.

When the lightning flashes and there's no shelter in sight, remind me that You have carried people through worse than this, and You can carry me too. Give me the strength I don't have on my own. Surprise me with reserves I didn't know were there.

Help me stop asking only for calm and start asking what this storm is meant to teach me.

And when I finally reach shelter, remind me to say thank You before I forget how afraid I was.

Amen.

Journal

✦ Weekly Commitment

This week I will...

CHAPTER

Seven

The Detour

God's plans are often different than ours.

*"Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the
purpose of the Lord that will stand."*

— PROVERBS 19:21

✦ Along the Road

Two planned screenings, in Cincinnati and Wheeling, fell through within days of each other — and in their place we found Ohio's rail trails: smooth, paved, separated from traffic, carrying us through a Fourth of July parade in Columbus and the region where I grew up. None of it was the plan. All of it turned out to be a gift.

In Iowa, a construction manager refused to let us cross a bridge. The detour around him cost us ninety minutes — and delivered us to a firehouse in Harlan, where a family fed us, gave us hot showers, and asked for nothing back.

Read the full stories in *Into the Storm*, Chapter 16: Ohio (pp. 119–126) and Chapter 14: Iowa (pp. 107–112).

What the Detour Was Actually For

We make plans, but the purpose that stands is the Lord's. Some of my favorite chapters of that summer exist only because the road I wanted wasn't available.

Looking Inward

Spend a few quiet moments considering these questions. Don't rush. Write honestly.

REFLECTION

What detour am I currently on that I didn't choose and don't yet understand?

Looking back, can I identify a past detour, a job that fell through, a relationship that ended, a plan that collapsed, that turned out to be a gift in disguise?

Am I holding my current plans tightly enough that a closed road feels like a crisis instead of a redirection?

What might this detour be positioning me for that the original route never could have?

Who has this detour put in my path that I wouldn't have met otherwise?

✦ Leadership Insight

Leaders build plans because plans are useful. But the leaders who suffer most are the ones who confuse the plan with the purpose. When the plan breaks, they experience it as failure rather than redirection, and they either force the original route at any cost or they stall out entirely, unable to move until the "real" plan is restored.

The steadier approach holds the plan with an open hand. It asks, quickly and without panic, what this new road might be for, rather than mourning the one that closed. Some of the best outcomes I've been part of, in filmmaking and in ministry, started as the backup option after the first plan collapsed.

Scripture

"Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand." — Proverbs 19:21

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." — Romans 8:28

✦ Leadership Challenge

Think of the detour currently frustrating you most. This week, instead of only mourning the closed road, ask out loud, in prayer or on paper: what might this be positioning me for?

Then take one step down the new road, even a small one, before you know exactly where it leads.

Prayer

Father,

Thank You that Your purposes hold even when my plans don't.

When the bridge is closed and the sign says stop, help me resist the urge to force my way through or to sit down in frustration at the barricade. Give me the flexibility to take the longer way and the faith to believe You can use it.

Show me what this detour is for. Show me who I'll meet on it that I never would have met on the road I originally chose.

And when I finally look back on this season, let me see Your hand in the reroute as clearly as I see it in the plan.

Amen.

✦ Weekly Commitment

This week I will...

PART III

Becoming

CHAPTER

Eight

The Rest Stop

How are you being renewed?

*“He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me
beside still waters. He restores my soul.”*

— PSALM 23:2–3

✦ Along the Road

On a rest day in Missoula, crossing a pedestrian bridge on foot, John caught himself looking down and to the left — checking for a mirror that wasn't there. Twelve days on the road had rewired something deeper than our legs.

Days earlier, wildfire smoke and ninety-degree heat had made it dangerous to keep riding, and we made our first call to Joe and Yvonne to come get us. Asking felt like admitting failure. It wasn't. Ten minutes after a later call, lightning split a telephone pole right beside the road we would have still been riding.

Read the full stories in *Into the Storm*, Chapter 8: Two Are Better Than One (pp. 59–66) and Chapter 6: The Easy Road (pp. 49–52).

Rest Is Not Retreat

A rider who never stops eventually can't ride at all. The green pasture in Psalm 23 isn't a detour from the shepherd's path. It's on the path.

Looking Inward

Spend a few quiet moments considering these questions. Don't rush. Write honestly.

REFLECTION

When did I last take a real rest stop, not a distraction, but genuine renewal?

What has months or years of pushing rearranged in me that I haven't noticed, the way John's body kept checking for a mirror that wasn't there?

What is my resistance to asking for help actually protecting: my pride, my image, or something else?

Who in my life keeps offering help that I keep declining, and what would it cost me to finally accept it?

If I gave myself permission to rest without guilt this week, what would that look like?

✦ Leadership Insight

Leaders often treat rest as a reward they haven't yet earned and help as an admission they're not equipped to lead. Both instincts are backwards. The leaders who last decades, not just quarters, build rest into the plan rather than waiting for permission to take it, and they let people help before the crisis forces their hand.

Refusing help doesn't make a leader stronger. It just means the team learns their leader would rather struggle alone than let anyone else contribute. That's a lonelier kind of leadership, and it rarely lasts as long as the leader hopes it will.

Scripture

"He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul." — Psalm 23:2–3

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." — Matthew 11:28

✦ Leadership Challenge

Schedule one real rest stop this week, not stolen minutes between obligations, but genuine, planned renewal. Protect it like an appointment you can't move.

Then identify one place where you've been resisting help out of pride. Say yes to it before the storm forces your hand.

Prayer

Father,

Thank You for green pastures and still waters, and for the reminder that rest is not a failure of faith but an expression of it.

Forgive me for the times I've treated exhaustion as a badge of honor and help as a last resort. Teach me to receive rest the way I'd want someone I love to receive it: without guilt, without apology.

Restore my soul, Lord, not just my schedule. And give me the humility to let others do for me what I would gladly do for them.

Amen.

✦ Weekly Commitment

This week I will...

CHAPTER

Nine

The People Along the Road

Who is riding with you?

*“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward
for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow.”*

— ECCLESIASTES 4:9–10

✦ Along the Road

We started calling them Road Angels — Hugh, who rerouted us around a dangerous stretch and introduced us to Herman, a ten-foot sturgeon; Julie, a gravel-bike racer in her sixties who fed us at a campground and drove us to find dinner; a fire chief who handed us the keys to a meeting room to sleep in; an old friend who quietly picked up the check in Iowa City. None of them had to do any of it.

But the most important person on that road was John. On the logging-truck gauntlet of Highway 12, we called out hazards to each other — "car back," "hazard left" — because neither of us could see everything alone. Somewhere on that highway I thought of my late friend Pat O'Toole, whose gift was never assuming he had the full picture.

Read the full stories in *Into the Storm*, Chapter 4: The Gorge (pp. 37–42), Chapter 5: Gravel (pp. 43–48), Chapter 8: Two Are Better Than One (pp. 59–66), and Chapter 14: Iowa (pp. 107–112).

No One Finishes Alone

Nobody accomplishes anything significant alone. Not filmmakers. Not cyclists. Not leaders.

Looking Inward

Spend a few quiet moments considering these questions. Don't rush. Write honestly.

REFLECTION

Who is my "John" — the person watching my blind spot, calling out hazards I can't see on my own?

Which Road Angels has God placed in my life recently that I haven't properly thanked?

Where have I been trying to ride alone on a stretch of road that was never meant to be traveled solo?

Am I someone else's Road Angel right now? Who needs me to show up without being asked?

What would it cost me to be more honest with a trusted companion about what I actually see up ahead?

✦ Leadership Insight

Isolated leadership is fragile leadership. The leaders who last surround themselves with people who watch what they can't, and they build a culture where calling out a hazard isn't seen as criticism but as care. A team that has permission to say "car back" without fear will always outlast a team where everyone rides in silence, hoping nothing goes wrong.

Pat O'Toole's gift wasn't charisma. It was his refusal to assume he already had the full picture. That posture, more than any single skill, is what makes people trust a leader enough to ride beside them on the dangerous stretches.

Scripture

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up." — Ecclesiastes 4:9–10

"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." — Proverbs 27:17

✦ Leadership Challenge

This week, name your Road Angels out loud. Send one message of specific, genuine thanks to someone who showed up for you without being asked.

Then find one person riding a hard stretch of road alone right now, and offer to watch their blind spot. Don't wait for them to ask.

Prayer

Father,

Thank You for every Road Angel You've placed along my path, the ones I recognized in the moment and the ones I only understood looking back.

Thank You for John, for Jodi, for the people who show up with exactly what I need before I know how to ask for it. Help me be that for someone else.

Forgive me for the seasons I tried to ride alone out of pride or fear, and remind me that no one finishes anything significant by themselves.

Teach me to call out the hazards I see, and to trust the people You've placed behind me to do the same.

Amen.

Journal

✦ Weekly Commitment

This week I will...

CHAPTER

Ten

The Summit

What have you forgotten to celebrate?

*"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and
be glad in it."*

— PSALM 118:24

✦ Along the Road

Togwotee Pass: fifteen miles to a summit at 9,658 feet. At the top, John and I gave each other a fist bump — a small ritual that meant something: the hard part counted.

That same posture carried us to Ocean City. Riding down the boardwalk after sixty-five days and 3,500 miles, we heard the crowd before we saw them — Jodi at the front, our son with his camera, the people who had driven and flown across the country to close the circle. I rolled straight to Jodi and kissed her. I've received an Emmy. Nothing compared to that boardwalk.

Read the full stories in *Into the Storm*, Chapter 11: Pace Yourself (pp. 85–90) and Chapter 18: Ocean City (pp. 133–140).

The Discipline of the Fist Bump

Celebration isn't the opposite of discipline. It's part of it. A rider who never celebrates any summit eventually stops believing the summits matter.

Looking Inward

Spend a few quiet moments considering these questions. Don't rush. Write honestly.

REFLECTION

What summit have I recently reached that I moved past without pausing to acknowledge it?

Who deserves a fist bump from me this week, a genuine, specific acknowledgment that their hard part counted?

What would change if I treated celebration as reinforcement rather than indulgence?

Is there a finish line ahead of me right now that I'm already dreading instead of anticipating? What would it take to look forward to it instead?

Who would I want standing at my boardwalk when I finally arrive, and have I told them what they mean to me?

✦ Leadership Insight

Leaders who never celebrate train their teams to expect that nothing is ever enough. The next target replaces the one just met before anyone has had a chance to feel the weight of what was accomplished. Over time, that erodes morale far more than any single hard season does.

Marking the summit, publicly and specifically, isn't soft leadership. It's reinforcement. It tells the people who climbed with you that the climb counted, and it gives them the fuel to climb again.

Scripture

"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." — Psalm 118:24

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever." — Psalm 107:1

✦ Leadership Challenge

Identify one summit, personal or professional, that you reached recently without properly marking it. This week, mark it. Tell someone. Write it down. Take a picture. Give someone a fist bump, literal or otherwise.

Then identify one person who helped you get there, and tell them specifically what their part in the climb meant to you.

Prayer

Father,

*Thank You for every summit You've carried me to, including the ones
I rushed past without looking back.*

*Teach me to celebrate well, not as indulgence, but as gratitude that
reinforces the next climb. Help me notice the people standing at my
boardwalk and tell them, clearly and often, what they mean to me.*

*When I reach the top of what I'm climbing now, don't let me hurry
past it. Let me stand there long enough to say thank You.*

Amen.

✦ Weekly Commitment

This week I will...

CHAPTER

Eleven

Keep Pedaling

Your journey continues.

*“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I
have kept the faith.”*

— 2 TIMOTHY 4:7

✦ Along the Road

The ride taught me that many of life's limits are self-imposed — the mountains were never as steep as they looked from a distance, and the storms never lasted forever. I came home stronger, not just physically but mentally and spiritually: I learned to appreciate small things, accept help when I needed it, and trust that the impossible becomes possible one mile at a time.

The ride ended in Ocean City. The mission didn't. I still see God's fingerprints all over that journey — in a fire chief's warning, in three bars of cell signal in the Wyoming flats, in every Road Angel who showed up exactly when we needed them.

Read the full story in *Into the Storm*, Chapter 18: Ocean City (pp. 133–140) and the Epilogue (p. 141).

Where the Road Companion Ends and Yours Begins

I built this companion around eleven questions because eleven questions were what the road asked me. Your road will ask different ones. That kind of attention doesn't end when you close this book. Keep it.

Looking Inward

Spend a few quiet moments considering these questions before you close this companion. Don't rush. Write honestly.

REFLECTION

Of the eleven questions in this companion, which one is still unfinished for me?

What have I discovered about myself in these pages that I didn't expect to find?

What is one self-imposed limit I'm ready to stop believing?

Who do I need to become on the next stretch of my road?

If I gave myself permission to begin, right now, without seeing the whole staircase, what would I take the first step toward?

✦ Leadership Insight

Every leader eventually reaches the end of a season, a project, a chapter, and faces the same quiet question: was it worth it, and what now? The temptation is to treat the finish line as the whole point, to coast once you've arrived. But the leaders who keep making an impact are the ones who understand that arriving is simply the start of the next road.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s words that opened this companion are worth returning to at the close: you don't have to see the whole staircase. You just have to take the first step. Then the next one. That was true on a bicycle in Oregon. It's true wherever you're standing right now.

Scripture

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." — 2 Timothy 4:7

*"Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal." —
Philippians 3:13–14*

✦ Leadership Challenge

This is the last challenge in this companion, and it's also the first challenge of everything that comes next. Choose one thing this book surfaced in you, a direction, a burden to set down, a person to thank, a storm to walk into with open eyes, and take the next faithful step this week.

Then don't stop. The mission continues. So does the road.

Prayer

Father,

Thank You for every mile of this companion, and for the road still ahead that I haven't ridden yet.

Thank You for what these pages have shown me about my direction, my burdens, my compass, and the people riding beside me. Help me carry what I've learned past the last page, into the ordinary Tuesday mornings where the real living happens.

Give me the courage to keep pedaling, to keep beginning, to keep trusting that You are making my path straight even when I can't see around the next bend.

The ocean marked the journey. Let the storms keep changing me, for good, for as long as I'm on the road.

Amen.

Journal

✦ Final Commitment

As I close this companion, I commit to...

Leadership Covenant

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

— JOSHUA 24:15

Every rider needs a reason to keep pedaling when the miles get hard and the summit isn't yet in sight. A covenant is that reason, written down while your head is clear, so it can carry you when your legs are tired and your resolve is thin.

This isn't a contract with fine print. It's a commitment you make to God, to the people riding beside you, and to the person you're becoming. Read it. Sit with it. Then, if it's true for you, sign it.

- I believe the road has something to teach me, and I choose to pay attention.
- I will not mistake activity for direction. Before I ask how fast I'm moving, I will ask where I'm headed.
- I will take inventory of what I carry, keeping what serves the journey and setting down what doesn't, especially the weight that was never mine to carry in the first place.

- I will seek wise counsel from people who know the road better than I do, and I will verify it rather than either dismissing it or following it blindly.
- I will treat the hard climbs as the growth itself, not as delays before growth begins.
- I will manage my pace instead of only my effort, understanding that I can go hard or I can go long, and that the mission usually requires long.
- I will not assume every storm is a sign I've gone the wrong way. I will ask what it's revealing, and I will look for God inside it rather than only praying for its end.
- I will hold my plans with an open hand, trusting that the purpose that stands is not always the one I drew up myself.
- I will build rest into my life before exhaustion forces it on me, and I will let people help me before pride talks me out of it.
- I will not ride alone when I don't have to. I will call out the hazards I see, and I will trust the people riding behind me to do the same.
- I will celebrate the summits, mine and other people's, as reinforcement rather than indulgence.

- I will keep pedaling. Not because every mile is easy, but because the journey is where life happens, and I don't want to miss it staring at the mile marker.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Letter to My Future Self

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on
your own understanding.”*

— PROVERBS 3:5

On the morning we rolled our bikes down to the Pacific Ocean, I had no idea what the next sixty-five days would teach me. I couldn't have written this book before I lived it. That's usually how it works. The lessons that matter most are rarely visible from the starting line.

That's why I want you to write a letter now, before you know how this season of your life turns out, to the person you'll be when you look back on it.

Someday you'll finish whatever climb you're on right now. You'll stand at your own version of that boardwalk in Ocean City, and you'll want to remember what it felt like at the beginning: what you were afraid of, what you were hoping for, who was riding beside you, and what you believed about God and about yourself before the road had a chance to change you.

Below is the letter I wrote to myself somewhere around day thirty, sitting in a hotel room in Nebraska with a strained foot and a newly lanced bug bite, half sure I wouldn't finish and half sure I couldn't quit. I'm including it not because your letter should look like mine, but because I want you to see that it doesn't have to be eloquent to be true.

Dear Conrad,

By the time you read this, you'll know things I don't know yet. You'll know whether the foot healed, whether the friendship with John grew the way I hope it will, whether the film reached the people it was made for. I hope it did. I believe it will, but tonight, halfway across the country, I can't be certain.

Here's what I want you to remember about right now: I am tired in a way I didn't expect, and grateful in a way I didn't expect either, often in the very same hour. I am learning that asking for help isn't the failure I always thought it was. I am learning that Jodi's quiet strength is the reason any of this is possible, and I hope you never stop telling her that. I am learning that the storms aren't punishment. They're where I find out what's actually true about my faith.

If you're reading this and the dream you're chasing now has changed shape, or ended, or turned into something you didn't expect, I hope you'll remember that the mission was never really about the miles. It was about who the miles were making you into.

Keep pedaling. Whatever "pedaling" looks like for you now.

With more faith than I probably deserve, Conrad

Now it's your turn. Write to the person you'll be when this season of your life is behind you.

About Conrad

Conrad Weaver is a mission-driven filmmaker, entrepreneur, and speaker dedicated to strengthening leadership and wellness across public safety. He serves as President and CEO of First Responder Wellness Solutions (FRWS) and founder of Conjo Studios, LLC, where he creates media and training initiatives that drive awareness, cultural change, and real-world impact.

He is the creator and producer of the documentary PTSD911, which has helped thousands of first responders and leaders start informed conversations about trauma, mental health, and sustainable performance. In May of 2023, Conrad and his friend John Patterson rode bicycles 3,500 miles from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic, hosting film screenings and connecting with first responders in cities and small towns along the way. That journey is the subject of his book, *Into the Storm*, and the inspiration for this companion.

He also hosts the First Responder Wellness Podcast, interviewing respected voices in law enforcement, fire, EMS, clinical practice, and leadership development. A John Maxwell Team Certified Speaker, Coach, and Trainer, Conrad equips leaders with actionable tools to build resilient teams, increase trust, and shape healthier agency cultures, especially in high-stress, trauma-exposed environments.

Conrad currently lives in Maryland with his wife, Jodi.

If this companion encouraged you, challenged you, or reminded you that you're capable of more than you thought, scan the QR code on the final page to continue the journey: behind-the-scenes videos from the ride, a photo gallery, and leadership resources to help you keep growing long after you've closed this book.