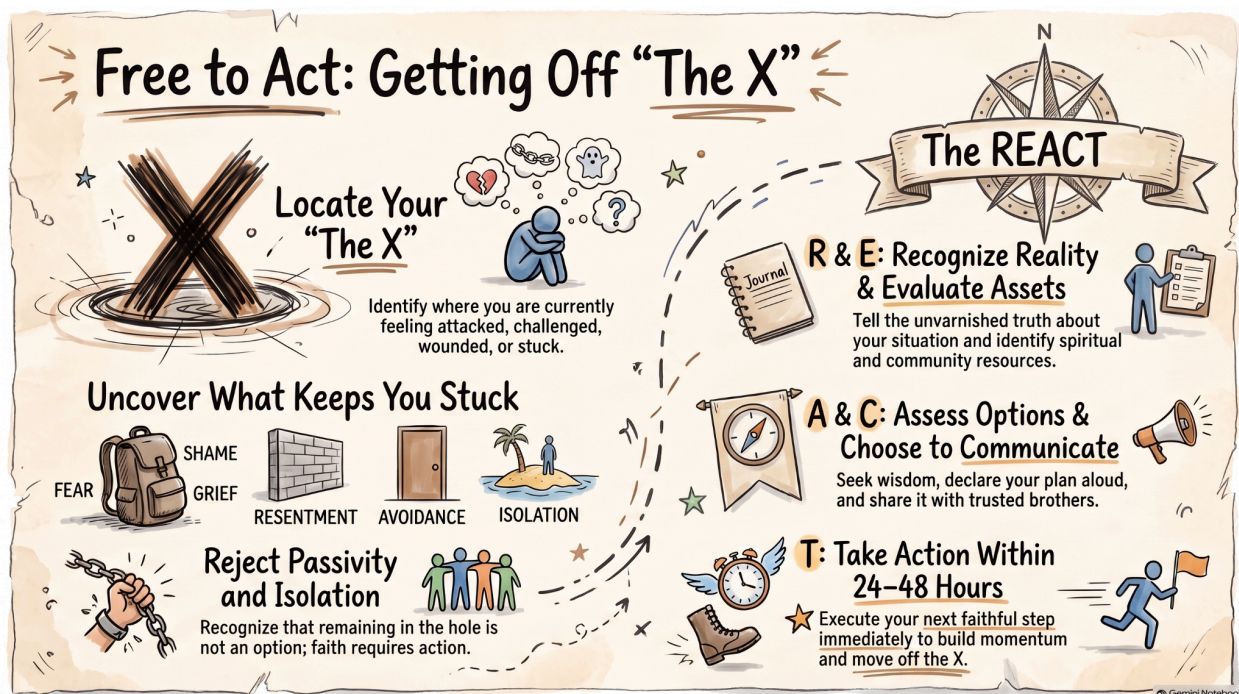




This week's session

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Good morning, good morning. My name is Jeff Cook. Welcome to Men's Roundtable. We're glad you're here. We had a deer camp last weekend. Second, best, third, best? Best one. Best one ever. that we have a couple of those guys on zoom and we have a couple of those guys here in the room so uh welcome welcome uh welcome to thursday morning men's round table we're glad you're here um i'll be remiss we've made a lot of progress on the operating expenses we made operating expenses appeal for for all the work that phil has just given out of his own pocket you know when you run something you end up paying for things yourself and paying for things yourself well that paying thing yourself it's about forty thousand dollars uh not only does he drive up here for free and expenses for deer camp that he just says i'll just pay for that so we're asking people to help we've got about 70 of the goal of 40 000 so uh there's a way to donate for that i'll do you have the qr code that's a check-in code i will we'll put it up later but you can be a part of it and uh instead of what's reaching in a Phil's pocket, reaching to our own, right? There it is right there. You can donate right there and be a part of that, be a part of Phil's pocket. The other thing that I've mentioned is this talk today is on free to act, free to act. And a short, short story on that is God wants, God doesn't speak to me often or I don't know how often he speaks to any of us but one time when I was in prayer clear as a bell I heard him say Jeff why are you guarding your heart for me who taught you to do that I'm like well I think the world taught me to do that you know and as we go to things like deer camp and things like this we start we start realizing oh there's little doors in our heart that we've lost and said, nobody's going to get there. Nobody here. God's not even going to get there. God, we're going to keep you away from that. And what would it be like? What would it be like if you said, okay, I'm going to slowly open that door, that door that's been shut, that's been frozen, that's been locked. And you said, there's going to be freedom to start moving there. some movement there that's been not happening. And it doesn't have to all at once overwhelm you, but there's compartmentalized doors in our heart. And God is asking us all, I think, like he whispered into my ear that day is, why are you hiding that from me? Why are you not sharing that with me? Who taught you to do that? Right? And so with other men, we learn to say, okay, how do we do that? How do we actually start those wounds, those things that have happened in our lives, all the things that cause us to say, not going there anymore. You know, you hear these men come back from war and that's the whole approach. Not talking about that. Not doing that. Can't. Can't. It'll, it'll, I can't survive if I open that door. That will be the end of me. So I think today, you know, this is the approach Phil that uses is what's the freedom to say, let's start acting on that. You know, let's start opening those areas of your heart. Because God is worthy of our trust and God is not one to say, you can't go there. Yes, you can. Yes, you can. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for the opportunity to gather. We thank you for your patience, for your willingness to wait on us to come back to you and to reveal all of our heart to you and trust you in those areas that we thought we could no longer trust in you. We ask you to bless Phil today and bless this message. Thank you for giving us this space and this place. We ask you all

in your son's name. Amen. Amen. Thank you, Jeff. morning gentlemen uh i am experiencing the afterglow of the best deer camp ever right brandon we had a great uh great weekend at ebenezer place and um uh carla uh rode out the hurricane in Fairhope. You know, I was telling some this morning that, you know, some people were concerned that I left Carla in Fairhope and I went to Mississippi and I said, well, sweetheart, I got to teach men how to care for their wives. So she was fine. You know, she was fine. My little Texas rattlesnake is better at handling those hurricanes than I am, you know. She lost power for about three and a half hours and came back on and she was fine. So we actually lost power at Ebenezer Place this weekend for about an hour. So and certainly lots of our friends down in Pensacola and Destin and all of that area got hit much, much harder than we did. We're glad to be here this morning. Glad to be available for God to speak. So this morning, we really are going to look at the plan. What's your plan? We are free to react. We're free. We are able. We're equipped. We're empowered to act. And so I, you know, as a man stood up right over here, and I can tell you his name, but I won't. Several years ago, he stood up as I got started and he said, Phil, help me. Is this a coaching group, a counseling group or a Bible study? And my answer, yes. And today, I want this to be a biblical counseling coaching session. So we're going to dig into the scripture, and I'm going to show you how Jason Redmond's React plan is a biblically sound plan. And if you don't have a plan, then you don't have a direction. So that's what we're going to talk about. I want to offer you a song as we get started to open our hearts, Zach Williams' Chainbreaker. And I'm going to show you just a minute clip or so of Zach Williams introducing this song. Look at the words, and I'll just read a couple stanzas, and you'll get the idea of why we're using this if we're talking about freedom. Follow with me there. The words are on the back of your handout. Chain breaker. If you've been walking the same old road for miles and miles, if you've been hearing the same old voice tell the same old lies, powerful lie, if you're trying to fill the same old holes inside, there's a better life. There's a better life. If you've got pain, he's a pain taker. If you feel lost, he's a way maker. And here it is right here. Just go ahead and underline it. If you need freedom or saving, he's a prison shaking savior. If you've got chains, he's a chain breaker. Freedom. Watch this. Zach Williams, Chain Breaker. So Chain Breaker is a song that I wrote on the last day of a four-day riding trip. It was the first meeting with Mia Fields. And I just remember sharing my story with her and Jonathan Smith. And out of that conversation, Chain Breaker was kind of mentioned. I'd been doing prison ministry at my church, and I thought, what a cool title. What an awesome thing to say about what God's doing in my life and what He can do in other people's lives. I remember immediately after writing it and demoing it out that it was special and that there was going to be something about this song that could really speak to people. Really, the song relates to me on so many levels. I'm thinking about the first verse. It says, if you've been walking the same old road for miles and miles, if you've been hearing the same old voice tell the same old lies, that was just such a part of my life for years, just dead-end road after dead-end road. And just hearing this voice in my head that said, you know, you're not going to make it. You know, everything you've ever tried to do, you get to the end of it and you fail at it. And so for that, that was just a really personal lyric for me, knowing that I have and I've conquered it. But it's been through Jesus and not on my own doing. When I was lost, he was a way maker. When I had pain, he took it away. And he broke all those chains that I had basically given myself. Just looking back and thinking of all the things I've struggled with throughout my life and writing this song, I realized that, you know, not only can Jesus break my chains, but if you're struggling with

addictions or just own personal hang-ups, He can break those chains. All you have to do is surrender your life to Him. We'll heal the chain breaker. If you've been walking the same old road for miles and miles If you've been hearing the same old voice of the same old lies If you're trying to feel the same old holes inside There's a better life There's a better life If you got pain, he's a pain taker If you feel lost, he's a way maker If you need freedom, save it He's a prison shaking savior You got chains, you're the chain breaker We've all searched for the light of day and the day and the night We've all found ourselves worn out from the same old fire We've all run to things we know just ain't right And there's a better life, there's a better life If you got pain, He's a pain taker If you feel lost, He's a way maker If you need freedom, a Savior He's a present shakin' Savior You got chains, oh he's a chain breaker If you believe it, if you receive it If you can feel it, somebody testify If you believe it, if you receive it If you can feel it, somebody testify, testify If you believe it, if you receive it If you can feel it, somebody testify If you got pain, need a pain taper If you feel lost, need a way maker If you need freedom to save him, he's a prison shakin' savior If you got chains, he's a chain breaker Oh, if you need freedom, he's a savior If you got chains, he's a chain breaker Amen, amen, amen. I believe that, don't you? Amen. Right, Bert? Guys, I know so many stories that are like that. You know, that may not be your situation, an addiction issue, but man, I know a lot that are. But again, every man in this room, every man in this room is dealing with something because that's the way God works. He promises us that he's going to use suffering. He's going to use challenge. He's going to use difficulty to grow us. God is more interested in your growth than he is your comfort. Now, you can write that down. It's not original with me. And that kind of makes me a little uncomfortable in a good kind of way. Be on the alarm. Stand firm in your faith. Act like men. Be strong. Words from 1 Corinthians 16, 13. You tell Colin that we miss him this morning. So guys, pick up your pen. I want you to respond to three questions. I want you to really work this morning. I don't believe that growing as a man, growing as a Christian man, is about your comfort. I believe it's about your discomfort being entrusted to Jesus. And so I want to make you a little uncomfortable this morning. And so the first question is, where are you on the X? And as Jason Redman has coined that term, the X is where you're being attacked, where you're being challenged. Where's the uncomfortableness right now? Where has life hit you? Where have you become stuck? and again I realize that you actually may be more concerned for somebody that you love than you are for yourself right now that that certainly could be true for me I've got a situation that when I hear that question I'm more inclined to answer it on behalf of another person that affects me, but write it down. I don't want you to live your life as a Christian generally. I generally love God. I generally trust God. I generally just go along to get along. Put the red dot, the laser dot of God on that issue and trust him with it. So write it down. Second What is keeping you there? Fear, shame, grief, resentment, avoidance, or trying to handle everything alone? Last night, God gave me an incredible gift. I had dinner with a young man that in my own brokenness, and you guys know my story, that I tell at Deer Camp more in detail, and he got entangled in my brokenness over 20 years ago. And it deeply hurt him. And I didn't know how to repair that. And he didn't know how to repair that. And he had the courage to reach out to me and ask if we could meet. And so we met at Nukes last night and went up and smoked a cigar at the, what is it, Street City? Spring Street. Spring Street. And we sat and talked and restored and healed our relationship. That was hard. I was anxious. I was nervous. I was scared. Because one of the last times we sat together, he was so upset with me because I had hurt him. And I had. And I was hurting myself and I didn't know

how to heal him because I couldn't heal myself. But, you know, those ideas of fear and shame and grief and resentment and avoidance got swallowed up over a cigar last night. Pretty cool. Thank you, Jesus. Third question. What is your next fateful move? What is your next fateful move? What are you going to do? and I understand that you may not know the answer to that right now, but my prayer is you'll know the answer to that by the time we leave here this morning. Staying in the hole, staying on the X is not an option. It's like, get up and move. Jason Redman shot up, banged up, about dead. But he had to get out of there or he was going to die. And it's much the same way for you and I. You've got to get moving. So as we dig in this morning, our outline based on these four pillars, set free, get off the X, stay resilient and finish strong. First of all, we are set free. Galatians 5.1, you are free. Now, we talk a lot about being free in our country. We're free as Americans. There's no place on earth that is any freer than this. The idiots can say what they want to, and the good guys can say what they want to, and you can figure out which group you're in. Okay? And so we talk a lot about that as Americans, we're free. But what about spiritually, that you don't have to be enslaved to addiction or your anger or your shame? You are free. Now, again, the Bible's very clear. We can live like orphans. We can be free and live like we're slaves. But we are set free in Christ. In Galatians 5.1, Romans 8.1, details that. Read Romans 8.31-39 afresh. It's incredible. I don't have time to tease that out. We've done that in the past. But we're set free so that we can get off the X, but it's going to take some courage. Fear not, Joshua 1.9. You've got to stay resilient. Mount up with wings like eagles, Isaiah 40, 31. Stay resilient, wait on the Lord, and then we're going to finish strong by focusing on Jesus, Hebrews 12. Before you can move courageously, you need a secure place to stand. I am secure in Jesus. I do not have to protect my image. In my dinner last night, because of my story, my friend was deeply hurt. And a mutual friend of ours is what encouraged him to reach out to me. I didn't reach out to him. I felt like I had wounded him so badly. I didn't know what to do about that. He reached out to me and I thanked him for his courage. But, you know, the thing that I told him, I said, you know, I'm not trying to protect my image anymore the way I did when you and I were more tied together. I don't stand before men afraid somebody's going to find out something about me. I don't have to do that, Brandon. You know, it's like if you've heard something about me, it's probably worse than what you've even heard. How about that? You know, because I know that I'm free to bring my real life to God. That's what freedom is. I can bring my real self, the good things, the gifted things, and the broken things. That's what it means to be whole, is that I'm not trying to show you the good parts and then hide the bad parts. That's not freedom. That's slavery. I am free, but I can live walking around like this, like a one-armed paper hanger, you know? But when we're free, we're free indeed. You know, God has given me gifts to edify those that I'm around, and that's what I want to do with all my being. And yet, guys, I've seen God use my left-handed parts a whole lot more than my right-handed parts. I've seen God glorify himself through my weakness when my strength wouldn't even touch it. That's what we do. So we're going to dig into this idea of Jason Redman's plan, react. and before we do I want one of the guys that was a new guy at deer camp this past weekend our men's coaching weekend so Ernie I want you to come up if you would I wish we had time this morning for every guy that was at deer camp this past weekend as a new guy to just come and share but we're limited on time so Ernie got the short straw this morning and I am delighted to have Ernie share with you this morning. Well, it's great to be here. At my age, it's great to be anywhere. Somebody asked at their camp, they said, how old

are you? I said, well, I was born in 19, none of your business. well i i want you to pray that i don't choke up the way i did when i was writing this i i had a tough time uh replaying everything i saw and everything i heard i want to tell you in many meetings working for the federal government as an architect in 22 states and Washington, D.C., I have never encountered anything that is even remotely compared to this meeting at Deer Camp with such devoted men with sincere submission to God. I've never seen anything like this. Through the three days, we all recognize that God sends flowers every spring, sunshine every morning. when all these men speak God really does listen he hears what we say what we ask what we feel he hears everything these men are rare in this world but through them changing of the guard is the focus in the U.S. and the world. It's not business as usual. It's not church as usual. It's something far outside and beyond that. And it's exciting. It's glorious. I wish I could describe some of that to you, but we can later on. We'll talk some about that. These men, including me, know that God didn't promise days without pain, laughter without sorrow, sun without rain, but he did promise strength for the day, comfort for tears, and light for the way. Watching and listening intently to the hearts of these men, there was a near awakening to be strong and courageous. That comes out of Deuteronomy 31.6 and in Romans 8, 37 and 39. We all learn that we were more than conquerors through God. Nothing in our past, present or future can ever separate us from God's love. I remind myself of this truth when shame or fear from darkness tries to creep in and keep me from receiving God's grace. At one point on Saturday, the top light in the area we were in, it began to flicker. And I know without a doubt, when this happens, there is the angel of the Lord present. Absolutely. I have not lost my mind. I'm telling you the truth. And many more unseen angels were outside the perimeter to protect from darkness. And they defend us. When this begins to happen to you, don't look directly for them. Don't look directly where that light is. Use your peripheral vision. If you look directly, they disappear. If you use your peripheral vision, you will see them. I promise you that. Only when you use that peripheral vision, you'll see. When we were in the woods, where the sound of silence emanated from God's creation was the song of a bird, shirk of the squirrel, or whisper of the wind, I know without any doubt that all these men I've met have become one of God's greatest treasures that I've ever encountered, and I'll never be the same. And this has spurred me even higher to continue searching for the prize of the high calling of God. If you ever have the opportunity to go to deer camp, it will change your heart, soul, and spirit forever. It has certainly changed mine. There's one other thing I need to mention to you. I really want to thank Phil for seeing the invisible, touching the intangible, and hearing the inaudible. 95% of churches in our nation teach. He doesn't teach. You think he doesn't teach. He trains, he equips, and he deploys the same way the army does. He gets people ready to go out. That's what he does. Now, you're leading the way to change hearts, souls, and spirit of men. You are into the kingdom of God. And soon, well, I might say, in Revelation chapter four, verse one, John said, I saw an open door in heaven. Guess what? That door is still open to everyone in this room. It's open. And that's where you came from. And you can go back through that door anytime you want to. many of these men are going to be walking through that door and have them still alive here on earth to see the breathtaking scenes never before that they have ever seen. And it will leave them speechless for days. I want to tell you, I love each one of you. I give my heart to you. And it has been one of the most glorious adventures I've ever had with any group of men anywhere in this nation. Thanks. Thank you, Ernie. Nothing like a living testimony to the glory of God. So, guys, we're going to tease out this plan. You've got to have a

plan. React. You're free to react. So, just pull up that slide. Now, last week, I showed you the portion of Jason Redman's TED Talk, and you've got it there on your handout, the link, so you can go back and watch the whole 15 minutes of Jason Redman's TED Talk. But in the last portion of the talk, he goes through this acronym of REACT. Recognize your reality, evaluate your assets, assess your options and outcomes, choose and communicate, and take action. We talked a lot this weekend about a plan and on a number of occasions we talked directly to guys right Brandon about do you have a plan do you have a plan you got to have a plan you got to write a plan down this is a good way to start with a plan in terms of an acronym but as a And Jason Redman is now a believer, and yet in his TED Talk, he didn't tease it out as a biblical coaching directive, but I am this morning. So this idea of recognize your reality is you've got to bring the truth into God's presence. You've got to start telling the truth. You cannot address what you refuse to acknowledge. Now, the Bible just simply calls that confession, that word confession. But we get the idea, well, you know, I've not robbed a 7-Eleven lately, and I didn't kill anybody, so I don't have anything to confess. Dude, you're missing the whole point. You know, confession in newspaper English is simply telling your story. Tell me your story. And when you start telling your story, you've got things that you didn't even realize needed to be acknowledged. Begin by naming the circumstances, the emotions, or the story that you keep telling yourself. I'm a loser. I can't have a relationship with you. My friend and I that had dinner last night, man, our relationship was broken because of my sin. And I didn't know what to do about it. And he reached out to me. Powerful time last night. Psalm chapter 62. Jeff, if you'll help me with these verses, and I'll just read them off the screen. My help and glory are in God. Granite Street and safe harbor God. So trust him absolutely, people. Lay your lives on the line for him. God is a safe place to be. Now, guys, those are all great words. That's right out of Psalm 62. But what we gave men this weekend, we gave one another, was the gift of safety. We didn't just read about it. We saw it. We beheld it. We experienced it. We saw safety. We experienced safety in telling our story. You've got to start with recognizing reality. And then secondly, if you're going to have a plan, you've got to have resources. Evaluate your assets. And you've got to start to receive the help God provides. After naming what is wrong, you've got to identify what resources you have. Access to God in prayer, scripture, trusted brothers, wise counsel, practical resources. And it might be a treatment center if you're dealing with addiction or abilities that you actually have. But man, being a victim and sitting down and feeling sorry for yourself, that won't work. Look at 1 Peter chapter 4. Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up. So take nothing for granted. Stay wide awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it. If words, let it be God's words. If help, let it be God's hearty help. That way, God's bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus. And he'll get all the credit as the one mighty and everything endures to the end of time. Oh, yes. Guys, are you a resource or are you just dead weight? You've got to evaluate the resources you have, and would you say that you are a resource to others? That's what we try to be when we live in community my responsibility includes asking for and receiving help if somebody asks you for help what would be your response help H-E-L-P is a simple little acronym in my mind H-E-L-P his extravagant love personalized. Have you had it personalized? Every man in this room has read about it. I know you know about it. You've heard about it. But have you

personally experienced it? We did at Ebenezer Place this past weekend. So number three, Assess your options and outcomes. Seek God's wisdom before you move. Don't just run off half cocked, as my grandma would say. You know, again, write a plan down. Look at Galatians chapter 6, 7 through 10. Galatians 6, don't be misled. Again, obviously that's possible. You can be all excited. God spoke to me at deer camp, and now I'm going to rush home and tell my wife what an awful wife she is. Wow. Man, so glad you came to deer camp. Yeah. No one makes a fool of God. What a person plants, he will harvest. The person who plants selfishness, ignoring the needs of others, ignoring God, harvests a crop of weeds. all he'll have to show for his life is weeds but the one who plants in response to God, letting God's spirit do the growth work in him harvest a crop of real life, eternal life are you growing weeds or are you growing flowers? are you growing weeds or are you growing flowers? It's this idea that, guys, ask yourself where the road leads before you start walking. If I make this decision, if I head in this direction, where am I going to wind up? And if you'll just stop. You know, I often ask a guy at deer camp. So when you come back to deer camp in a year, what would you like to be telling us? That's an amazing question. I mean, you know, somebody asked me that question years ago. You know, where are you headed? I mean, if you keep doing what you're doing today, where are you going to wind up? Now, I assure you, the answer to that question is not the same place. You know, as Shawshank Redemption said, you know, either get on living or get on dying. But there ain't no such thing as treading water. If you're treading water, you're going to drown eventually. You either got to swim to shore or swim away from shore and drown. Where are you headed? So then the C in the acronym, once again, is choose a direction. And this may be the most important part, communicate it. At Deer Camp, we call it declare and share. Declare it and share it. Why would you share it? Why would you share it? Accountability, support, encouragement. Guys, this is the way I want to go. Will you walk with me? Well, you know, this is the way I'm going to go, but I'm not going to tell it. I'm not going to tell anybody about it. Well, then you're going to fail, Jeffrey. It's not just me and Jesus. Yeah, exactly, Jeff. Say that again real loud. It's not just me and Jesus. Exactly. That is some of the scariest words that you could ever say to me. You know, I've come to Jesus, and now it's just me and Jesus. Me and Jesus. Dude, that's not what the Bible teaches. You know what the Bible teaches? It says, come to Jesus and get on a team. Walk with me. Walk with those that walk with him. Be a part of the team. Life is a team sport. You're not on your own. And if you is, then you is going to die. Not good. James 5.16. I love this. and we actually have this on a big plaque in our pavilion. Make this your common practice. Confess or tell your story. Confess your sins to each other. Tell your story to each other and pray for each other so that you can live together, whole and healed. The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with. I believe that. I believe that. I've seen that. I've been to the promised land, and I've seen it. I've crossed over Jordan, and I've seen it. It is powerful. So again, give your decision a voice and your commitment a companion. Give your decision a voice. Speak it out. This is what I think I'm going to do. This is what I believe I need to do. And then commit that decision to a friend. And then finally, take action. Get off the X. Take the next faithful step. Look at James 1, 22 through 24. This is the obedient step. Don't fool yourself into thinking that you're a listener when you're anything but. Letting the word go in one ear and out the other. Act. Act on what you hear. Dude, I hate passivity. Absolutely detest it in myself. I am so afraid that I'm going to live one day passively. You know, I love my daddy. He died a few years ago. And my dad had a passivity

problem. Again, you know, I found out later in life he was a whole lot better daddy to me than his daddy was to him in many ways. And I had to work through that forgiveness and all that. But man, I was an angry teenager, an angry young man in my 20s, because I detested my dad's passivity. and I detest it in myself. I hate it when my little Texas rattlesnake calls me out on my passivity that I don't take action and I am committed to not being passive. I don't get that right every day, but by the hand of God, by the hand of God, I am not going to be passive. I may be stupid every once in a while but I'm not going to be passive faith becomes visible in practice God is at work in us and through us and we respond through concrete obedience get moving so here's my question to you what can you do within the next 24 to 48 hours to get off the X what are you going to do so I'll just close our time with this, re-asking those questions. What is your ex? Where are you? Where's the pain? Where are you stuck? My next faithful move will be, and the brother or brothers that I'll ask to walk with me are, and I'll get this done by the end of the day. Guys, God's grace gives us a place to stand. We are free. And his wisdom gives us direction. And his people, our brothers, help us carry the load. What's your next faithful step? Make a plan. Make a plan. Write it down. If you're not writing it down, then you don't have a plan. You're free to react. Let's close your prayer. Father, we bow our heads to acknowledge the resource that we have in you. Father, I pray for every man in this room or guys listening that somehow feel and even believe that they don't have options, that they're stuck, and they're kind of in this self-pity victim mentality. I hate that, Lord, with all my being, because it is a lie from the pit of hell, and help my brothers and help me to see that and call baloney on that. Thank you, Lord, for our time this morning. May we reflect the glory of God, you, to others as you even heal our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen. Have a great day.