Tim Lundy: Well, gentlemen, it's good to be together. It's a great time of year. In fact, I love this time of year, because of football season. I love football in all forms, love pro football, especially love college football. And through the years, I think growing up in the South, college football's just kind of life there. And I remember years ago how Gene Stallings tell a story. Stallings played for Bear Bryant at the University of Alabama and then he went on the coaching staff with Bryant and ultimately Stallings won a national championship as the coach of University of Alabama as well. So quite successful there. Talked about though when he was a young coach, first time Bryant ever seen him out recruiting, he called him into his office. He said, "Stallings, I want to make sure you know exactly the kind of boy we want to recruit here at the University of Alabama."

And so Stallings said, "Okay coach, tell me." And he said, "Well, I want to tell you about me." When I was in high school, he said, "I played football. And I won the biggest, I won the strongest, but I had heart." And one day the coach went out it was a muddy day he drew a big circle in the mud. He grabbed the meanest, ugliest, biggest lineman put him in the circle, he said, "Who'll line up across from him?" And even though I was underclassman and undersized, I got in that circle. I got down and he blew the whistle and I hit him with everything I had and he put me face down. Put me in the dark, knocked all the air out of my body, didn't think I could move. But you know what I did Stallings, I got up, I got up and I got back in the circle and I said, "Let's do it again."

The coach shook his head, blew the whistle, and this time I launched with everything in my body. And I hit him, and I hit him hard and he put me face down in the mud. In fact, the mud was coming up through my face mask. You know what I did Stallings, I didn't stay down. I got back up. I wiped the mud off. I lined back up and I said, "Let's do it again." Until finally the coach looked at me and said, "That's enough Bryant." He said, "Now Stallings, do you have a picture of the young man we want at the University of Alabama?" And he goes, "I think I do coach." He said, "What do we want here?" He goes, "We want players like you. We want players who have heart. We want players that no matter how many times they get knocked down, they get back up again." And Bryant looked at me and he goes, "No Stallings. I want you to go get a bunch of those big ugly boys that puts you down no matter how much heart you have."

And if you follow the University of Alabama, they got a bunch of big ugly boys, no offense, they can put you down. We're in this part of better man, that in reality a lot of ways you're going to feel like you got in the circle and you got lined up against one of the hardest opponents you'll ever face. And I'll be honest, as I've done this in my life, it's put me down a few times. We're talking about when a man really deals with what does it mean to be a man, especially maybe some of the unfinished business of your past. If you look in your notes there, we've been looking back and just to summarize the elements we talked about last week, the elements that shape our manhood today. We talked about the challenges of the modern world. The first challenge there's a loss of common manhood vision.

Can manhood be defined? And if we can't define it, you can't ever become what you can't define. I think that is probably what is frustrating men the most today is the definition of manhood itself is changing so quickly and so rapidly and even things that are claimed today won't be claimed tomorrow. And anytime you're trying to hit a moving target, it is a recipe for frustration. That's why we are committed here. We will define it. We are willing to stake some territory and go, "This is what it looks like."

Secondly, we talked about the weightless manhood, the plague of unleashed by absent dads and fatherless homes. That when you don't have a father in your life, when dad's not there, that weight, that ballast, that gives strength to a life is missing. We talked about the radically changing social landscape, merging sex roles, the decline in marriage. We are in a time of social change unlike any other in the last 5,000 years. I mean how rapidly it is changing. And because we're in it, I don't think we realize it. And if you're a young man especially who's coming up in it, I don't think you realize what it means to live in a culture that is redefining these roles literally overnight.

Finally, we talked about the lies that men believe about themselves. Lies like I should know what to do if I tell you the truth about myself, you'll reject me. Things that may be on a conscious level I go, "I know that's not true." But at an internal level I can still tell myself that. I can still as a man want to hide or beat myself up because I go, "Man, I should know what to do." Now, we looked at that this week as we lined up in the circle, the opponent we're lined up against is the challenge of our past. The challenge of the past. And the reality is many men have never taken the time to connect the dots between the past and the present in a way, and I liked the way it says this here in a way that explains why they are the way they are. Why they feel that way. Not just the why about your history, but the why.

Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." And going beyond that, an unexamined manhood is a life where you don't know why you're doing the things that you do. And maybe you're like this person when asked by a wife or a friend, do you ever get these questions and this is a good just list. Ask yourself, when's the last time your wife, your girlfriend, or maybe somebody else in your life asked you, "Why do you get so angry like that? Why do you get set off so quickly? Why can't you share your feelings with me?" You've been asked that before? What makes you act this way? Why do you work all the time? Why do you feel like that? And often men have no answers around it because they've never really examined it. They don't even know why they're doing the things that they do. I remember years ago, I talked to a young man, his dad had been a Senator, US Senator.

And his father ended up having an affair with one of his staffers. Marriage broke up and this young man grew up in that and he struggled because he admired his dad and the success of it, but told literally looked me in the eye and he goes, "Man, I'm never going to do that." And he went into politics himself, became a state Senator. And it was just a few years later, his wife sitting in my office and she's crying because he had had an affair with a staffer. And this part of me I just wanted to go grab him. He wouldn't return phone calls at that point. I just wanted to grab him and go, "Why are you doing the very thing you said you hated? Why are you repeating the script?" And the reality is he probably doesn't know why. He probably has never connected the dots enough to realize the wounds that keep repeating themselves. You ever found yourself there? The things may be you growing up, things that point in your life you go, "I'll never do that." And you find yourself struggling with it.

That's why it's so important to do this. That's why when you minimize or you ignore the past, it undermines our present. And this session in this section of Betterman is why it's so important if you, as we are prone to do as men minimize. We can very quickly just go, "Oh, it's not that big a deal. Oh yeah, I had some stuff back there." And we minimize it or we just completely ignore it not realizing it's still impacting us today. Not realizing it's creating blind spots in our lives. Not realizing it's impacting the people around us today. That's the most important part. A lot of times I'll talk to a guy and they'll say this line, "I can live with it, Tim. I can live with it. Yeah, I hate that stuff. I can live with it."

And I go, "Yeah, you probably can, but can the people around you live with it? Can they live with what you're doing as a result of it?" So that's why it's important. And we're going to take a little time today to just walk through story because everybody has a story. And I'm going to walk through my story with you because I can't ask you to do what I'm not willing to do. And in teaching material like this over the years this is a difficult part in ways, but it's a freeing part in it. Tell you a little bit about my story growing up, my family. My father, Steve Lundy was the second youngest of 11 children. He grew up in Los Angeles as father was brilliant, but he was a raging alcoholic. And when he would go on these benders of just drinking, he was just so angry that everybody would scatter out of the house.

My father and his brother right above him, a lot of times they would just get out of the house for days just to be away from it. Several years ago I was able to fly out to Los Angeles and my uncle took us around and showed us different places where they lived. One thing they showed us in the Harbor, there was this boat right by banana factory there and the boat had sunk in the Harbor and just one end of it was still up out of the water. And he talked about it as teenagers when they needed to just get away, they would go and just swim out to that boat and stay up in that room out of the water. My father didn't really like school a lot, but he did gymnastics. He had a dream of doing Olympics one day, but while in high school coming off the rings came down, busted his knee, gymnastics career was pretty much over and for him school was over.

Went into the Marines, was stationed in Memphis, Tennessee while at a church service one night he started making fun of the girl in front of him because he didn't think her accent could be real. No one talked like that. They started dating. That was my mother. They got married and out of that he never finished college. They lived in Memphis, had three boys pretty quickly and then had a daughter. I was the third son and then had younger sister. Father installed and serviced elevators. So I remember as a kid he would take us to these buildings downtown and we'd be up on top of the buildings and see the different parts. I thought it was the coolest job ever. He loved us in many ways it's one of the things I hold on to is how much he loved us. But he had issues, he struggled, struggled with his sexuality, struggled with affairs, struggled with homosexuality.

And so we're growing up in a conservative Christian church and he has his struggles, led anxiety to the point when I was three years old, he had a complete nervous breakdown. Checked into a mental hospital, did electric shock therapy, and there's a lot of it that I didn't know obviously as a kid you don't learn more till you're an adult. And even in learning it, there's a certain level of shame you can feel around all of it. My dad was determined to move us back out to California. He wanted us to be raised out in California. And so in 1973 when I was six years old, he got in his pickup truck. He was driving out to California, start a job, find a house for us. And I remember him taking off that August morning and on the way he had a single car accident, ran into a tree, went down a hillside and was killed.

I still remember my mom getting the phone call. We were at some friend's house had gone away dinner and the phone rang and I can still see her holding the phone and just the blood drained from her face as she heard the news. The casket was a closed casket at the funeral. Because it was pretty gruesome wreck and there was never real closure. Even as a kid there was this sense always of maybe they got it wrong, maybe he's still alive. I'd have these dreams often where it was a mistake and he was alive and he was coming home. And I would wake up in the night so excited to go tell everybody, "He's coming back." And then I remember sitting on my bed in the dark and that crushing reality. He's never coming back.

My mom did the best she could. She had four kids. We didn't have any money. We were really poor. Fortunately, the house that we lived in was owned by my grandparents so we could stay there it was Midtown Memphis. She had her own struggles, devout Christian woman, but little bipolar. We didn't have those terms then, but anxieties, depression, you had the mood swings that you would ride. A lot of times she would take us, especially on a summer day and put us on the front porch. Feed us breakfast, put us on the front porch, the three boys and she'd say, "I'll see you at lunch." And we would just go kids on the loose in Midtown Memphis. And Memphis is an interesting city, especially Midtown. Quite a collection of characters. Where we lived was interesting. The Interstate 40 was coming across the United States, but when it got to Memphis, there was this classic park, Overton Park that wasn't far from us. It's the central park of Memphis.

And there was a big fight that the Interstate shouldn't go through Central Park and they were able to win. If you go to Memphis today, in fact, when you get on 40 there you have to divert around the city to catch it on the other side. But they had already come through our section and our neighborhood and torn down all the houses for the Interstate that was supposed to come. And so there was our house and a house across the street. And then for about eight city blocks, there were just fields. You had this mix of where you're in the city, but you have these fields all around and you are boys without much supervision. In fact, one of these fields, it was a dead end alley. It was a lover's lane. And so cars would go back there all the time. Go parking.

I mean during the daytime I wouldn't realize as kids, as I look back on it now, it's probably people go in with prostitutes. And then we'd go down and all we knew is they were just making out in the car. We really didn't know everything. But we had this great location behind a couple of trees there where we would get dirt clods and you'd wait. You'd let them get parked there for about 10 minutes and then get these dirt clods and then just all of my brothers now, we'd start hitting the car with it. It sounded like bullets the way it would go. And then you'd watch people pop up and they're going crazy and pulling out and everything. We thought it was funny. I'm glad we didn't get killed in the process, but that was life. We were boys just trying to figure out life on our own.

But five years later my mom remarried to Joe. Again, nice man. Good man. Very passive man. They didn't really love each other. They were just two Christian people trying to raise kids and he had a daughter and we became a blended family overnight. He was a construction superintendent. He had grown up on a farm, didn't talk hardly at all. Worked hard, very hard worker, taught us to work hard but no real interaction with him. And he and my mom both struggled with depression. They both struggled in the marriage. My oldest brother, pretty much from college on, he just moved away for that period of his life for about the next 20 years. My next brother, Todd, I told you about, was very driven, very successful until alcohol caught up with him. And I was left there. I was the responsible one in the home.

I had gotten my own trouble, but I never brought it home. I always made sure I had good grades. I stayed on top of everything and I had to hold everything together and some point along the way as their marriage was struggling as they would struggle individually, I would find myself both of them talking to me. Almost counseling with me. And it's really not a healthy thing when you're counseling your parents' marriage. It's just not, but I didn't know better. I didn't know that at the time I just thought this is how you do life. And I watched as they struggled and I struggled, my two younger sisters really struggled. They're trying to figure it all out. And it was this weird mix of a very conservative family in one way we went to church Sunday morning, Sunday night, I grew up in a Christian school, knew the Bible back and forth. But then you had this other weird mix of just trying to figure out dysfunction and some mental health issues and depression and all of it goes with that.

And along the way, you know what I kept telling myself, "You have to look out for you, you take care of you." I didn't realize it as much until I got married. When I married my wife, she's the oldest of five children. She had siblings that were all the way down to almost elementary school. And I remember even when we started dating and I would go into their home and I'd watch her father interacting with their siblings and every so often it would be like, "Wow, a dad would help you do that? Well, that would have been nice."

There was this disconnect of, wait maybe my childhood wasn't as normal as I thought it was growing up. See, when you're a kid and you're in stuff, here's the thing I'll often counsel people. Kids are great at sensing what's going on. They're terrible at processing. Because sometimes I'll talk to a couple and they're going through a divorce and they'll go, "Oh, the kids aren't picking up on it at all." And I go, "Really? You're telling yourself that?" Kids are great at sensing something's wrong. The problem is they take that information and they process it as a kid. And in the process they come to conclusions a lot of times that really aren't accurate at all. And we can see it in other people's stories. We don't often see it in our story though. And some of us, we still hold on to the things we processed as a kid that were never true.

As I look back on my story, there's some things that I'll take out of it for sure, and it's, everybody walks through their story. You always have to look at, there were good moments. There were good moments. There were hard moments and painful moments, but it's always helpful to stop and maybe if your story's got some trauma or some hardness to it, it's good to stop and go, "What were the good things?" My dad for all of his struggles, he loved us. And I can remember in the middle of those fields every Friday night almost, he would make a campfire out there in the yard because we had all these fields out there. Police would come by every so often and go, "You really can't do this." But somehow he would talk them out of letting us just continue on. And watching the kids that would come and camp out there.

When he died, we weren't the only kids that were crying at his funeral. It was other children. That his life had impacted as short as it was. I look at my stepfather, Joe, he didn't know how to father. He didn't really know how to speak into life. He's very passive and wise, but he knew how to work and he taught me how to work. I remember many a day driving to a construction job site as I went as a teenager and learned how to pour concrete and learn how to work hard in life. There was a certain sense of admiration of this man who I saw who was so quiet at home and never really take charge, but I watched him in that context at least, and I thought, "Okay, that's what it looks like for a man to work."

I'd go, "That's good moment. That's noble moments, noble moments." That's where they taught me things and you realize and that despite the brokenness, they stepped forward and taught in ways that I go, "I can hold on to that. I can see that." My stepfather, he struggled a lot with money as well. Almost miserly a little bit. He had this dream of going through an entire winter without turning on the heat. No lunch. We have this wood burning stove and Memphis gets cold. I mean the 20s, 30s it gets really cold there. But we had this wood burning stove and we'd crank it up and burn wood. And so for that whole season it seemed like almost every Saturday he would wake us up early to go chop firewood. And I mean a day of where you're going out and you're cutting down trees and then you have to take the logs then bring them home, then split the logs and then stack it all.

And at some point we had this firewood pile that was ready for Armageddon to come. It was like, we'll never burn all this for the rest of our lives. But on those days I learned how to work, learned about life, learned you could do things that you didn't think you could do as a boy. There's noble moments in everybody's childhood. I don't care what you went through. And I would really challenge you, especially if this is your first time processing some of this stuff, it is so helpful. Instead of just going to the bed step back and go, "What was good? What was noble?" In every life there's missed moments. I think that probably stands out, especially those years when I didn't have a dad at all. I remember I got into little league baseball and ended up play baseball at a friend who lived a couple of streets over at the Barmes.

And so I'd have to run over to their house, catch a ride with him, go to the game and just go do little league alone. And I weren't a very good baseball player. I remember when especially little, they put me out in right field because that was the time in life nobody hit it to right field. The kids weren't strong enough. And one game that the coach came to me and he said, "You know what? I'm going to put you at shortstop next inning." And I was so excited. I'm out in right field doing my thing, waiting. And suddenly this big kid comes up and he's a lefty.

And so he takes it and pulls it. And this land drive just comes screaming right at me. And I haven't seen a ball on the field the whole season. As I see it and I'm trying to remember what the coach said. And I got down and that, and by the time I put my glove down the ball, it had already gone through my legs. And then I got so flustered, I ran, I picked up the ball, I threw it to another outfielder. The kid had an inside the park home run.

And I remember walking in and the rest of the team, they're disgusted. I'm going into the dug out and the coach just looked at me, he said, "Yeah, let's not think about him field." I sat down on the bench the first thought that came to me, I miss my dad. I wish dad was here. A little later that same season, baseball started to click and one game in particular, I mean just the ball starts slowing down a little bit and you see it and you realize I can hit this. And I had one game, I went three for four great hits, drove in these runs and I remember it was after the game and everybody celebrating and Mr. Barme who gave me the ride, he goes, "Hey, good game Timmy." And all that. And even in the celebration, you know the first thought that came to me, I miss my dad.

Those missed moments of childhood. When the gaps were there. The missed moments that you look at and nothing can make up. The moments throughout my teenage years where my stepfather, when they got married, he didn't value sports at all. And so he just made me quit baseball immediately. And then he damaged his ears on a job site, but they thought it was psychosomatic. So he couldn't be around noise. And so suddenly he weren't around as much. I remember my wedding day when he didn't come because he thought the noise would be too much. And the sad part about it, by that point in my life, I really didn't expect it anymore. I just didn't think he'd be there. Because when you pile up enough missed moments, you have to tell yourself something. Hurtful moments all of us have them.

When you sat at your father's funeral, I don't care what your age, it's a hurtful moment and some of you know exactly what I mean. When you sit down with your parents, I remember sitting at the table at the lawyer's office and finally having to help them divide up their assets as they got divorced. I was about 23 years old. My mom and stepfather and they couldn't make it work anymore and having to speak into it and go, "Stop. We can do this civilly." It's a hurtful moment. When I watched what they did to my siblings, my brother Todd processed it pretty well, but he stayed away for most those years. I watched my brother Todd, who I thought was so successful until he drank himself to death at the age of 42. When I watched my little sister Christie as she went through a couple of marriages, married a couple of huge guys, both of them about 20 years older than her. You think there's a father wound there? Watched my stepsister struggle with drugs in prison and processing life. And the hurt that compounds from it.

And then the defining moments, you have those points where you can look back in your own life and you go, that's kind of sometimes where I came to something myself sometimes where I told myself a lot sometimes where I processed in it. I remember when I was going off to college and my mom and stepfather, they just weren't up to taking me. They both were struggling, some little depression, some sickness. And so as an 18 year old. I got on a plane, I had a trunk, I was flying off to another school. The flights all got delayed. I didn't get in until midnight into a city I'd never been to before. I had to figure out how to get from the airport to the campus and this was pre-Uber days. And the next day I remember being at the campus and I started looking around and I saw all of these incoming freshmen walking around with their parents.

At first I was kind of surprised. I was like, "Wait, your parents can come?" And they're helping them move in. And then I immediately turned it around and I told myself, "Lightweight, glad. I don't need that. Glad I'm stronger than that." At least that's what I tried to myself. And it's in those defining moments that you really do start emphasizing some of those boyhood lies you told yourself that you don't need people. That you are responsible. That you are strong. And some of it is built on some truth, but it gets mixed in with that false thinking of boyhood. That's why it's so important to process it. See, exploring our past helps us explain us. It helps us explain ourselves to ourselves. Then as an adult I can look at that and there's parts of it. Even now as I go through it again, I go, "Wait. That's why I think that way. That's why I do that."

Let me ask you, what's your story? What's your story? Because everybody has a story. I love the John Ortberg book, Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know. And one of the things that's been so helpful for me in working through material like this over the years is it helps me process my story. But as I hear your story, here's what I found out. You're just as screwed up as I am. No maybe not in the same way. Some of you may be, you would look at it and you had a picture as childhood, but there's still hurtful elements there. There were still missed moments.

Some of you you've never looked back because you don't like looking at it. Here's the question you see it in your notes. Do you really know your story? Many of us have never shared our full story, our full story. When we say full story, it goes beyond the facts about what happened in your past. It also includes how people and events from your past made you feel. Whether you were loved, supported, encouraged, shamed, angry, lonely, abandoned, and how those feelings have helped shape who you are now. That's the key thing, not just the facts. Any of us can reel off the facts. Have you thought how your story made you personally feel? How you processed? Let me give you some truth as you look back.

For the rest of this session, let's just look through six truths of looking back. A, the examined past is crucial to better manhood today without examination, the good from our past can go unappreciated and the bad can unconsciously rule over us. Both those things are true. A lot of times if you've never looked at it, you don't realize the good that was brought out of it. You don't realize what God did in it. You don't realize what God redeemed. You don't realize how even the hurtful and hard moments did make you the man you are.

But also if you don't look back at it, you don't realize how it may be unconsciously controlling you. It's still impact in your life. Now, years ago I went to a leadership training. It was like three days of leadership training and the middle day of it was spent with a counselor all day. And I really didn't want to do the counselor. I'd told myself, "I don't really need that." And he made me walk through my story. And as I was walking through it, he kept commenting on several traumatic events, things that had happened in it and how casually I would talk through it. He's like, "Wow, that's pretty hard." And I would diminish it. Oh yeah, it's okay. It's all right.

Some point toward the end of the day, he goes, "Have you really ever dealt with some of this stuff?" I said to him, I said, "Well, yeah, but I mean it made me stronger. I mean, I wouldn't be the man I am today." And I was already a pastor at that point. So I tried to use a lot of God language around it. I mean, God has been so good through it and God has redeemed, all of which is true. And he agreed, "Yes, that's absolutely true." But it's impacted you. And then he said this, he said, "How old is your son?" And at that point, my son Drew was about five years old. He said, "What if I told you starting today Drew was going to live your childhood?"

It meant something in me. It's almost primal. Just I immediately went, "No." He goes, "Why the response" And I said, "I don't want him to go through that." He smiled at me. He said, "It's probably worse than you want to admit to yourself. Is it?" It was a good moment to just step back and go, "Yeah, it's okay to admit." It hurt. In a lot of ways I'm not stronger. Its places where I'm weak, places where my thinking isn't straight and it's okay. It's okay to admit that and to recognize it and to grow in it and to realize, yes, God has redeemed it and He's still redeeming it, and part of that process is facing it as a man.

Point B. When a boy fails to connect with his dad, demons of one kind or another often fill the void. When a boy fails to connect with dad in particular, and we're going to really talk about this, of what happens in a life when you don't have dad there? If maybe you're like me, you grew up and dad either died or you went through divorce or sometimes even harder. Dad came home every day, but he weren't there. And you had just as many missed moments. It almost creates more trauma because it's missed moments, even though he was in your life. And you tell yourself, "Well, he was always home. So am I allowed to even feel that way?" And the problem is if you don't deal with it, if you don't face that, the missed moments, you don't connect the dots with how it's impacting you now.

After we got married, it wasn't long after we got married, Lea and I went to the movies. It was a Robin Williams movie, Hook. And it was kind of a take on Peter Pan and he was Peter Pan. But he had grown up and forgotten that he was Peter Pan. And now he's just this workaholic dad. And Dustin Hoffman plays Hawk. He comes and he kidnaps Peter's children and takes them to Neverland. And Peter has to go there and discover who he is again, but also to rescue his children. And there's one scene in the movie where Hook has set up this baseball game for Peter's son, because Peter never showed up to his son's games. And Hook sets it up away so that Peter's son has the winning hit and all the pirates that are there, everybody's cheering for him. And as the boy comes around, Hook comes and he whispers to him, "Your dad was never there, but I'll be there for you."

And later in the movie when Peter finally discovers who he is, he steps forward and he claims his son. That's my son. And even though it's this kids movie, as I'm watching it, this part of me, I'm thinking about all the missed baseball games. And there was a part of me that was just feeling, no one's ever done that for me. Man what I've given to him that they had to just stepped forward and goes, "He's mine." And I'm processing all this and we get in the car and Lea didn't really even liked the movie. And we pull up at our apartment complex and she said, "So what did you think about the movie?" And I start to try to talk and then I start crying and I don't cry much guys. I don't cry as much as I probably should. I just don't. But I was crying and I'm not just crying. I am sobbing at this point talking about Hook, the children's movie. And my new wife's looking at me like, oh, what did I marry?

But here's the reality. If you've got those kinds of wounds in your life, Hook comes and whispers in a man's ear, and here's what he says, "Hey, come, come with me and give your life to work and you'll feel better about yourself." Come with me and go self-medicate. Or just zoned out with porn, or just pursue sex with abundant. Or just buy the latest toy, or just, just, just, there's always something. There's a Hook that will whisper in your ear. He says, "Yeah, this doesn't feel good. For a little while I can make you feel better." And sometimes we never connect the dots between how did that connect with what I'm living here if we don't face it?

See many men have yet to process the unfinished business from their past that still lives then in them. Many men, sometimes it's due to denial, sometimes it's just lack of courage. Sometimes it's just ignorance. There's guys out there still trying to redeem the family name because somebody did something shameful, maybe dad and they're out to prove that no, our family name is noble. There's some guys out there trying to live up to the family name because dad was a superstar. Everybody respected him and I don't think I can ever live up to that. Some guys are out there trying to prove that they were the sibling that should've been loved more because they know that the parents had picked another one. Some guys that are working all the time, they don't even know why. So young man he was finishing his dissertation to get his doctorate at the University of Chicago and he finally hit the point of the dissertation and he just quit. And when he was asked about it, "Why won't you finish?" He said, "It won't matter. It won't matter to dad."

And he said, "When I told him I got accepted in the University of Chicago." You know the first thing he said, "University of Chicago, it's not Harvard." He just quit. I mean here he is spiting his own life because he's still trying to prove something from the past. It's unfinished business. Unfinished business includes unresolved tragedy, family breakup, personal conflict, abuse, personal, physical or sexual abandonment, betrayal. I mean any of these things in your life, if you have any of that, a lot of times it's unfinished business. And maybe this, you see in the notes there, I just asked you, "Do you have any in your life?" Do you have anything in your life? You go, "Yeah. If I'm honest with myself I've got some unfinished business." Because until a man deals with the pain from his past, he can never truly be free. Until you deal with some of this stuff. And here's the reality. You have to deal with it at new levels.

Sometimes you have to deal with it as a young man and then you hit a certain point as a middle aged man. You come back to it again, you go, "Okay, wait, this is how it's impacted me at this season of my life." Sometimes as you become a father, it impacts you in a new way. As you become a father with teenagers you realize it's impacting in a new way. There's no one point where you go, "Okay, that's all done." That's part of what you're processing. Now you don't live in it, you don't stay in it, but you learn from it and you deal with it as it resurfaces in life. You realize why it's maybe driving you the way it does. There's a guy who's almost 70 years old and he's still working 80 hours a week. Had more money than you could spend. And when he was asked about it, "Why do you keep working like that?" He said, "I was raised in a single wide trailer, white trash, and every day I get up and I am running as hard as I can from that trailer with everything in me."

He is at 70 and the memories of that are driving him today. Guys, I love it when a man has a vision and it propels him forward that's what you want in life. But you know what you don't want you don't want something that's driving you from the past because you didn't deal with it. It's unfinished business. What negative messages do you hear in your head? What do you hear when you wake up? What do you hear when you walk into the office? What do you hear when you fail? What's the first thing that you hear? You know what? I bet it's a message that you took somewhere in the past and you processed as a boy but you still tell yourself as a man. Who or what from the past do you need to come to grips with? Maybe it's a person, maybe for some it's dad, some it's mum, some it's a friend, some it's a sibling.

Who do you need to come to grips with? And as you do that, I cannot emphasize this next point enough. You cannot effectively address the past or its impact in the present without the help of a few trusted friends. There is no such thing as the self made man. You can be a self made success. You can be wealthy because you're self-made, but as a man, you'll never be a man self-made. You have to have friends. You have to have, let me say explicitly, you have to have other men. Other men who speak into your life. Proverbs 17, as iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. You have to have the iron of another man. You have to have strength on strength. You have to have somebody because when iron sharpens iron, sometimes it's a pretty harsh process. But it makes both the better from it.

That's why we do groups here. That's why we interact the way we do here. That's why we invite men to speak in each other's lives here because we want you to be better for it and there comes a certain point in a man's life. You will never get better with just women speaking into your life. You'll never get better if the only person you process with is your spouse. She has a wonderful role in your life. She has a wonderful voice in your life, but you need some iron in your life. And as I looked through my life, I'm telling you the thing I'm thankful for I have a list of men who were iron in my life. And go back to a grandfather when I was a little boy when my dad died, my grandfather owned a junk yard and he'd come get us and take us to the junk yard. And he's not what you would call a real biblical man in a lot of ways, but he was iron in my life.

I think about in high school, my band director, he was probably the coolest teacher on campus, which isn't usually true about the band director. But he had been an athlete he was just one of those kinds of multi gifted guys. Just awesome guy. I loved being around him. I remember at the end of my junior year, we're standing at the award ceremony and he was about to go up because he had to give the band member of the year award. And kind of we're talking there and I said, "Who you giving it to?" he said, "I'm giving it to Jennifer." I said, "Yeah, that makes sense. She's a good musician." I really weren't that great a musician. And he looked at me, he goes, "I struggled this year." I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, we're supposed to give it to seniors, but I almost gave it to you."

I laughed I said, "Me?" I said, "Why would you give it to me, Mr. Iggy I'm not a very good musician. You know that." He shook his head and he goes, "You don't get it, do you? You're my leader." He said, "I got a band full of musicians. I don't have many leaders. Don't ever forget it." And he walked away. I can hear him saying that today because I'm telling you as a young man in a sea of manhood confusion, it was a lifeline. I can't tell you what those words meant. The reality is I still need lifelines. You need lifelines and you need it from a man. You know what spoke so much? He was iron and he was speaking into my life and you know what he recognized? He's iron and he looked at me and he says, "You're not clay. You're iron." An iron sharpen iron.

If you don't have those voices in your life, this is the place to make them. Men, when you sit in your group, you sit around your table, you talk to the other guys. The reason we do the questions, the reason we process here is there's more power in those moments as men finally open up and go, "Here's my life." Here's me, and you have another man speak and you realize the power of iron speaking into iron. Few things more powerful.

Guys, as we finish out, look at this last point. Hold on to this one. For better or worse we are all significantly shaped by where we come from. But though we are the product of our past, no one has to be the prisoner of the past. All of us are the product of our past. We're not the prisoner unless he chooses to be by denying, ignoring or surrendering. The good news is you can break free and find a better manhood. I don't care what your story is and I've heard them all. I don't care what you've experienced. I don't care what has been done. You have been shaped by your past. You are the product of your past. You're not a prisoner. You're not a prisoner.

You can break free. And it can start today in a new way. Why am I confident? Because I've seen it. I know the truth of it. And I know the power of men who embrace this and make it their truth. I'd encourage you over the next few weeks here as we do this together as we look at it. You're going to feel like you got in that mud circle and you're lined up and across from you is something that looks big and ugly and hard at times. And it's always interesting it's this part of this better man journey where a lot of guys determine, I'm not staying in the circle. I'm going to bail. I challenge you stay in with me. Stay in together. Let's experience together what truth can do in a man's life. What God can do in a man's life as we make this commitment.