
Aaron Brockett:

What's up, Trader's Point family? I hope you have had a fantastic week. And if you've been joining us over the last several weeks, you've been hearing that our 5:00 PM services are making a comeback at all of our physical locations. We're really excited about that. Just wanted you to know that that begins next weekend. I also want to encourage you with this. We really believe that God is going to continue to do just a transformational work in the lives of so many people that have been hurting over the last 18 to 24 months by either bringing them to us online or back to one of our physical campuses. We want to make sure that we are ready to serve them well, and I want you to be a part of it. To find all the ways that you can serve, just text the word SERVE to 87221.

Today I'm really excited to introduce our next guest in our summer message series. Steve Carter is a pastor, a speaker, an author, a podcast host of a podcast called Craft and Character, and the former lead teaching pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, Illinois. Steve and his wife Sarah live in Phoenix now with their two children. I met Steve several years ago and then we actually became part of a cohort together with some other leaders. We get together every spring and every fall. I am always so encouraged when I'm around Steve. Steve not only cares deeply about the craft of communication, but he cares even more about the character of the communicator, and that always comes through when he preaches and teaches and when you're with him personally.

I've always just been so encouraged by Steve and I can genuinely tell you that I love this guy like a brother. You're going to love his message today. It's genuinely going to speak to your heart. At all of our campuses, would you please put your hands together and give a warm Trader's Point welcome to our friend, Steve Carter.

Steve Carter:

Good morning, good morning. It is such an honor to be with you all. I know some of you are at our west campus in Avon or up north in Carmel, downtown Indy, watching online. We are so grateful. But before I go any farther, what's it like to have Hugh Jackman as your senior pastor? That's just amazing, just amazing, like it's unbelievably. But seriously, I love, love Aaron. He is salt of the earth and he is a dear, dear brother and one of the best pastors I know. In character, in gifting, in humility. I think the world of this man. I think the world of Ryan Bramlett who I feel like I'm just trying to get his hair. Kyle and this team. But I want to just take a moment and honor one team, because I started really tuning in to Trader's Point during COVID and I felt like there's a team here that really made it very, very easy for me wherever I was in the world to get connected, to discover, to learn from God's word, to experience amazing worship. But your creative and production team here at Trader's Point is one of the best on the planet. So thank you. Thank you for what you guys do. Volunteers and staff, they're here early on Sunday

mornings so that we can receive and have opportunities no matter where we are in the greater Indy area or all over the globe to experience God's word.

Now, I've been a pastor for over 20 years and one of the things that I often am very, very curious about is why people do what they do. I mean really, really honestly, I get very curious about why I do what I do. But I don't know if you've ever had this moment, or maybe you've experienced just you saying something that you wish you didn't say. Maybe you Tweeted something you wish you didn't Tweet. Or you thought something that you wish you didn't think. You ever just wonder why you do what you do? I mean, do you ever just have those moments going, "Man, what was I thinking? Why did I say that? Why did somehow that person get so underneath my skin that somehow I just reacted?" And if you've ever felt that, then you need to know you are in good company, because the apostle Paul, the one who wrote the majority of the new testament, wrote these words, and he says this in Romans 7, "I do not understand what I do, for what I want to do, I do not do. But what I hate, I do."

Honest question, how many of you in this room or watching online at one of our campuses know exactly what that means? You're like, "Why do I do what I do? The thing I want to do I just don't do, but the thing I hate, I keep doing. I keep doing." And here's what I want to get after today is I want to wrestle with this, why we do what we do, because I don't think any of you wake up one day and you're like, "You know what I want to do today? I want to train wreck my life. You know what I want to do today? Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to self sabotage all the good in my life. Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to literally blow up my family. Here's what I'm going to do. I'm literally going to absolutely destroy my character and integrity. That's what I'm doing today."

Nobody says that. But somehow, it's like little by little by little we find ourselves drifting, drifting. And almost this sense of shame and frustration. "Really? I did it again." This is why I want to get after why we do what we do. But to do this, I want us to look at a passage of scripture from the book of Esther. If you have a bible, turn with me to Esther chapter three. If you have a small black bible, it's going to be page 399. If you don't have a bible, don't worry. It's going to be on the TV. But what I need you to know is we're not going to read this verse one all the way down to the last verse. We're going to flip it. I want you to start at the very last verse and we're going to go backwards because I want you to see this.

It says this, "The king and Haman," that was his right hand man, a little Hamilton reference, "sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was bewildered." Here's the scene, here's the scene. The king, his right hand man sit down for a drink while the entire town of Susa is bewildered. To be bewildered, it means to walk around aimlessly wondering what is going on. I mean, this is what the entire city is doing. They're literally walking around going, "What is going on?" Which makes you wonder, why are they so bewildered? The truth is every day you might come home, you and your spouse and you might have a cup of tea, cup of coffee, a drink. But your kids are upstairs bewildered by your choices. Or you might come home and you actually are bewildered by the choices of a marketplace leader or boss, bewildered by the choices of a friend, bewildered by the choices of someone you go to school with, someone you thought you knew.

A number of years ago, I was living in Grand Rapids and I was coming home from my grandparents' house. I was driving my little Honda Civic and it was snowing. I got my wife in

shotgun, my nine month old son in the back and we're driving. It's just nice flurries and I'm talking to my wife, processing some stuff when all of a sudden, something hits my windshield. And it's not some flurry of snow. It's literally a chunk of ice and I start to swerve. Then all of a sudden, all of this rush of cortisol through my body, I look over to my wife and I'm like, "Somebody threw something at us." So what do I do? I flip the u-turn in my Honda Civic, pull the car off to the side of the road, and off in the distance I can see something running. And I'm like, "Oh no, I'm going to catch you." And my wife said, "What are you doing?" I'm like, "They threw that. I'm going to go catch them." She's like, "No, no, no. Stay in the car. Let's go home." I'm like, "No. I'll be right back."

I get out of the car, cross four lanes of traffic. There's an embankment. I think I can jump it. I try to jump it. I realize I can't. I land squarely in the middle of it and it is filled with freezing cold water up to my waist and now I am livid. So I scream out, "I see you. I'm going to find you. I called 911. They're coming for you." And then I just take off running and I'm sprinting. I'm running through this field that leads into a suburban neighborhood and I'm getting closer and closer, and I'm just sprinting. Then I run out into the middle of this suburban neighborhood and because I watch CSI I know what to do. I close my eyes, put my arms out and just listen for noise. Three doors down, terrible band by the way, garage door closes. I run over. I knock on the door and I'm out of breath soaking wet, freezing pants, and I'm like, "Did somebody just run through that garage?" And this older gentleman's like, "Yeah, my grandson and his friend did." I was like, "Can I have a word with them?"

So in this moment, he closes the door and I'm just freezing. And it's like the holy spirit begins just to whisper within and it's like, "Hey, Steve. Who's the crazy one right now?" I'm a student ministry pastor at this time and I'm thinking I'm going to have a conversation with some college students. Door opens. It's two sixth grade puppies shaking their legs, not even looking at me, and I'm like, "Oh my goodness. What did I just do?" So I look them straight in the eye and go, "Guys, just want you to know that was a nice shot." And I walk away. All of that to say those words. And as I'm reflecting back, and I've got the pure walk of shame because my wife is on the side of the road with my nine month old in a snowstorm, my pants are freezing and I'm like, "What is going on?" You know what was going on? I was leaving my grandparents' house and we were moving to southern California. It was the last time I was going to see them. What was going on? On our way to my grandparents' house, the people who were going to buy our house backed out. And what ended up happening was that this little chunk of ice that hit my windshield, because I did not know how to deal with it, it gave me permission to lose my ever loving mind on sixth graders.

The truth is we do this every day. And when I got back to the car, you know who was bewildered? My wife. You have to ask this question. Every day we're making choices, decisions that are literally confusing, bewildering. What were they thinking? But back to the story, why was the city bewildered? Look what it says. Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces, and this was massive, with the order to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jews young and old, women and children. On a single day, the 13th day of the 12th month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. So why is the entire city bewildered? Because a massive genocide has been decreed. Literally. Young, old, women, children, men. Every single person on one date in the last month of the year genocide. Annihilated. Destroyed.

Which makes you wonder what must've happened to cause a genocide to be decreed. Go back a few more verses. It says this. "Then Haman," the right hand man, "said to King Xerxes," the most powerful person of that day, "'There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. They're different. Their customs are different from those of all other people and they do not obey the king's laws. It is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them.'" And then he says this, "'If it pleases the king, let a decree be issues to destroy them and I will give 10,000 talents of silver to the king's administrators for the royal treasury.'"

He's basically saying, "Hey, king? I will bankroll this. This is how important this move is. I will bankroll it." And look what the king says, "Keep the money and do with the people as you please." Sort of makes you wonder, why would this guy want to bankroll a genocide? Why? That's amazing, is I used to live in Chicago and you know it's springtime in Chicago when the orange barrels are in full bloom. They're everywhere. When you only have three months to actually work on the roads, it's crazy. And what I didn't know growing up in southern California was how there are all of these holes in the road all throughout Chicago, these potholes. And they are literally everywhere. When you're driving around Chicago, you are just trying to maneuver around these. And I remember one time I'm like playing with the radio, probably with sports radio, and all of a sudden I hit a pothole. And I knew right away the damage was done. I pulled the car over, started to inspect the right front tire and I was like, "It's flat."

I remembered that in the city of Chicago if you dial three numbers, 311, it literally goes to a hotline where you can report a pothole and if that pothole has been reported and the city has not done their due diligence to fix that pothole in a certain amount of days, they will literally pay for the repairs to your vehicle, which no wonder the city of Chicago is going bankrupt, but that's another sermon. So I call this number praying, "Hey, has someone reported this clerical error?" And the woman answers and she's like, "Nope, that has not been reported." I said, "Okay. Hey, this is interesting. I'm just thinking about this right now, but you've got your own number to report potholes. How many potholes are there?" And she's like, "Oh, the Chicago Tribune just did a story on this."

I was like, "Oh." She's like, "From January 1st to March 21st, 2018, in just less than 100 days, do you know how many potholes we filled in?" I said, "No. Tell me." She goes, "Take a guess." I said, "No. Tell me." She goes, "Take a guess." So I say 25,000. She says, "A little bit more. Try again." I say 35,000. She says, "A little bit more." I say 45,000. Finally she goes, "No, one more guess." I said, "No, ma'am. Please just tell me. You're like my dad right now asking me the question that he already knows the answer to. We're wasting so much time." And what's amazing is this woman begins to tell me that 108,000 potholes were filled in in less than 100 days. No joke, if you go to the city of Chicago's website, they've got a pothole tracker. They literally show their work, which makes me think when you could bring your parent to school day in kindergarten. Can you just imagine this?

Little Johnny gets up. "I'd like to introduce to you my dad. His name is Khalil Mack. He plays for the Chicago Bears." And the kids are like, "Oh, that's cool. Khalil Mack." Then little Ricky Budmats gets up and Ricky goes, "You want to know what my dad does? He runs the city of Chicago's pothole tracker," and everyone loses their mind. I think that's funny, I don't care. I love this. But here's the thing, though. Some times these guys, they go into a pothole and they

look at it and if you don't know this, because I didn't growing up in southern California, water freezes and the asphalt can't deal with the expanding water that has frozen and it creates this crater known as a pothole. Now, when they inspect it, they look at it and they go, "Oh, that was just created by inclement weather, so we'll just fill it in with some asphalt. We're good to go. Check the pothole tracker, let's go to the next one, 107,999 more to go."

Then some times they show up to a pothole and they recognize, "This wasn't caused by inclement weather. There's actually something happening underneath the surface." There's some sense of erosion. Some pipe has been leaking. Something is happening and if I don't deal with that correctly, this pothole will quickly become a sinkhole. And this happened in 2017 in the city of Chicago. A 72 year old man was just driving and had the ride of his life. He ended up being okay but I'll tell you what, millions of dollars of damage happened from a sinkhole. Here's the point. Every one of us has potholes. Every one of us from the pain, from the wounds, from the things that were done unto us, said that were lies from the pit of hell over us, we have these potholes all around us and the problem is is people. People get close to our potholes. And when they drive up and they hit one of those potholes, we end up erupting. And if we don't have the courage to deal with those potholes, guarantee they will become sinkholes that lead to collateral damage, relational trauma, deep, deep pain not just for us, but for everyone in our sphere of influence.

See, how did this genocide just come about? Let me show you. Esther 3:2, "But Mordecai," new guy to the story. He's a Jewish man. "Would not kneel down or pay him, Haman, honor." Continues on. Says this, "When Haman saw that Mordecai the Jew would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, the Jews, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead, Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes." Wait, wait, wait. So, why? Why was a genocide decreed? Because Mordecai wasn't willing to Tebow for Haman? And it triggered, it enraged this man so much that he was like, "No, no, no. He won't show me honor? I'm not just going to kill him. I'm killing all his people."

Now, I don't know what happened in Haman's life. I don't know what happened in his life that made him feel so small that if someone didn't give him the respect that he thought he was due or deserved that he would lash out and be so enraged, but something happened. Because that's not the common reaction. And the truth is every day, multiple times a day for really, really honest, we are all being triggered. And people are getting really, really close to our potholes. And unless we have the courage to get after this, we'll find ourselves drifting away from the way of Christ. We'll find ourselves doing as Paul says, what we hate to do. Not what we were created to do. We will find ourselves living under the control of pain, or these unhealthy words, or these struggles or problems rather than actually walking in freedom.

Friends, this is what I am desperate to see in the local church. We have to be the kind of people who get after what I call the thing beneath the thing. And thing is an acronym. What I want to teach you is how you can be aware of the potholes in your story, how you can address these potholes so that they don't become sinkholes that train wreck you and those around you, but that you can be someone who lives a life that's whole, holy, and spiritually healthy for God's glory. But you have to have the courage. You have to have the willingness. You have to have

the desire to want to get after the thing beneath the thing. Let's start with the T. That's the word triggers.

This is the setup that sets us off. We all have it. Have you ever been driving and someone just cuts you off and then all of a sudden you're like, "I don't know what I'm doing with my hands, but my fingers are doing something." You got triggered. Or late at night when you should be sleeping and you're at your computer and you're on Facebook and you're like, "Here's what I really think about you." You got triggered. Or if you want to know what's worse than Twitter and Facebook, where real crazy lives, the Next Door app. They're like, "Hey, this is where I live and I think about my neighbor this way." You're like, "What is going on?" And when you get triggered, all of this negative energy is swimming in your body. And literally it's got to go somewhere. All of this pain, all of this trauma, all of this sadness, all of this unmet expectations, all of this is within you and you're like, "I've got to do something with this."

So when you get triggered, it's the setup that sets you off and the first place I've found that most people go are to hideouts. And this is the metaphorical place people go to escape. That takes you right back to Genesis 3, doesn't it? When the man and the woman are in the garden and they are just getting the chance to live in God's presence. It's so good. And God just says, "Hey, I want you to delight in everything except this one tree." But there's this crafty serpent and the serpent's just like, "Hey, God's holding back on you. He knows if you eat of this, you're going to be like him." And when the woman saw that it was pleasing to the eye and desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and she ate. And then she handed her husband the fruit and he's like, "Free food?" And he eats. And all of a sudden they have this sense of profound levels of shame. It's like they realized they're naked. This sense, the woman's like, "I'm naked. That's so uncool." And the guy's like, "You're naked, that's so cool." There's this feeling, they don't know what to do with it. So what do they do? They take fig leaves and they start to cover themselves up and they're like, "I don't know what to do. I'm feeling something I've never felt before."

And then the scripture says that they hear God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, so what do the man and the woman do? Scriptures say they hide. It's the first game of hide and seek ever. And God begins to seek out and he asks three words, "Where are you?" He's not asking, "Where's your GPS location?" He knows where they are. He's asking a more profound question, "Where is the woman and the man that I put my image in? Where's the fullest expression of who I created?" And they're hiding. The truth is we all have hideouts. The problem is some of our hideouts are more socially acceptable than others. If we're really, really honest, we're all addicts. And we all have the temptation to choose something. Workaholism. We can binge watch an entire Netflix show and we actually are proud of it. "I took down Ted Lasso in one night." We feel like it's a badge of honor. For some of us, then you start to move into other things.

Maybe during COVID season, alcohol sales were through the roof. People didn't know what to do when they were triggered. They didn't just have one drink or one bottle. They just kept doing this. Opioids. Pornography. What's amazing is companies know this. They know that your life is filled with potholes, that your life is going to be triggered, so they create opportunities for you to go and hideout and try and soothe that pain. Amazon did this with the one click button. You hit click and by the time you're like, "What was I doing? Why did I buy that lawn gnome? I

don't need that lawn gnome." And by the time you can try and return it, it's already at your house. "What was I thinking?"

Or Chase. I don't mean to throw Chase under the bus, but I will. You know what their credit card is called? The Freedom card. They have marketed, "Do you want freedom? Get in debt." Because they know. They know when you get triggered, you're going to want to sue that, so "Here, take this. Go hide out and become enslaved in bondage in your finances." And this is how many of us live. Why do I do the thing I do? The good I want to do I do not do, but the thing I hate, I do. I want to realize this, for some people it's triggers. For other people, it's hideouts. But when people get triggered, a lot of people go to insecurity and this is when we create a false story about ourselves. You know what this is like when you get triggered and all of a sudden this shame storm starts to rain down messages. "You always screw up. You did that again? They're so right about you. You're never enough. She could do it, why can't you? He could do it. Why? I wish you weren't here."

And I don't know if you're like me, but you have these messages that some times can go on repeat and those tapes can get louder and louder and louder, and all of a sudden you get triggered and it's like you just start to play small. It's like you don't actually believe that God made you for a purpose and God made you for a reason. It's just the old tapes, the old lies are controlling and holding your life in check. But what's crazy is the insecurities isn't just you playing down. There are some people in insecurity, when they are losing control of the room or the circumstances are a little bit too crazy, what do they do? They don't power down. They power up. They try to do whatever it takes to regain control of the meeting, regain control of the family, regain control of the moment and they start just verbally lashing out. Friends, that's all insecurity. Because the thing beneath the thing is they got triggered and they didn't know how to deal with it, that lack of trust, that lack of control, and something inside of them lashes out.

When you get triggered, it's going to send you somewhere. To hideouts, to insecurities. And insecurities are the creation of false stories about yourself, but narrative is when you create false stories about others. And I'll never forget this, a number of years ago I actually was in Indiana preaching at a large student gathering. It was down south and I remember walking towards this auditorium and I saw two massive groups of students and they're screaming at each other. And the leaders are off at a leader meeting and I'm the only adult and I'm walking up going, "I think there's about to be a brawl." I can't hear what they're saying, but they are screaming and taunting. As I get closer and closer, all of a sudden, I hear one group of students go, "Boiler up! Boiler up!" And I'm like, "Purdue fans in the wild? I love this."

Then I hear over here these other students are like, "IU! IU! IU!" And I'm like, "What is going on?" I'm fascinated. I'm literally taking this in. I'm the biggest Michigan fan you will ever meet. Thank you, thank you. Brought to you by another six and seven team. But here's the thing, these two are screaming. The doors open to the auditorium. All of a sudden, no joke, all the Purdue fans on one side, all the IU fans on one side. The music in between the worship song, the song is done and all of a sudden one taunt, "Boiler up! We're better than you, IU!" "No, you're not!" They're just screaming at each other and I'm just sitting front row going, "This is so weird." I feel like God's saying, "You need to do a different message." So okay, I get up onstage, I have

no idea where this thing's going to go. I'm like, all right, here's what we're going to do. "If you're a Purdue fan, I want you to come up on stage."

So basically 50% of the room is now onstage. I'm like "If you're an IU fan, would you come onstage?" It's like 49% of the room is now on this side of the stage. There's like three Notre Dame fans, two Butler fans, and one kid from IUPUI. I'm sitting here watching it, so I'm like, "Here's what I need you to do. I need you to do this for me, guys. I need you to choose one person to represent your school, your institution." So one kid walks out. And I'm like, "Hey, Mr. Purdue. I need you to tell me why your institution is so special." Doesn't miss a beat. "I'll tell you. Because we develop quarterbacks. We develop the best quarterbacks. We prepare people for the league. I'm talking Bob Greasy. I'm talking Joe Breeze. I'm talking Kyle Orton." And I'm like, "That's a little bit of a stretch, bud, but it's cool. I see your point."

I go to IU. I'm like, "What about you? Tell me how great your institution is." He looks at me and goes, "Assembly hall. We've got the best worship pants in all of college basketball. I'm talking about Calbert Cheney, Steve Alford, Isaiah Thomas." And it's like, and a coach who choked a player, but that's cool, too. So you've got these two. So now I'm like, "All right, here's what I need you to do. I need you, Mr. Purdue and Mr. IU, I need you to tell me something that you actually respect and think is beautiful and good about the other school." I go to Mr. Purdue. 16 year old. And he starts to tear up. And I'm like, "Hey, bud. You just got to look for the good, man."

He's like, "You don't understand. My parents were gone and I was raised by my grandma and my granddad. And my granddad was my hero. There's nobody I ever wanted to be like more than my granddad. And then my granddad got sick. We're living in west Lafayette at the time and all of a sudden we went to the doctors and granddad had the church praying. I went to church because he went to church and he taught me and I wanted to be like him. We're praying and the doctors got to this moment where they were like, 'There's nothing more we can do. The only help is to send you to IU's medical school hospital.' So he goes to IU and the doctors there and the power of prayer from the church and God's power, his life was spared and he was set free from cancer and he's healed and I can't even imagine my life if he wasn't here, and I'm so grateful for IU."

No joke. He says that, tears in his eye, and all the IU kids are walking around to the one IUPUI kid and the two Butler kids like, "That's right. We save lives. We save lives." I'm like, "Guys." I look at the IU kid. I say, "Hey, man. You. What's so great about Purdue?" He's just looking down. He's got an Indiana shirt on. And no joke, from the other side, the Purdue, some kids yell out, "Where are you going to school next year?" And he looks down and he says, "Ever since I was a sophomore, I knew I wanted to be an engineer and Purdue has the best engineering program in the state of Indiana and they gave me a full ride scholarship, so I'm taking my talents to west Lafayette." And all of IU was like, "What?"

Here's what I say, it's so easy for us to create false stories about others. They always do that. "All those people are the same." And when we get triggered, all of a sudden we can craft and create narratives about another group of people without seeing that they were created in the image of God. See, for all of us, we get triggered and we're going find a place to go hide out to try and escape. For some of us, we're going to power down or power up when we get triggered,

or some of us are going to create false stories about others. But when you go through the scriptures, there's another way, and that is grace. What you have to understand about grace, and sometimes I think we minimize grace. John Wesley who was a great scholar in the 1700s, he talked about three stages of grace, and the third stage of grace was known as sanctifying grace. And this was the grace literally that would literally get into every ounce of your being, every atom and molecule, every part of your story and your pain and your past, and this kind of grace would make you whole, holy, and spiritually healthy.

See, what's amazing about grace is grace will find you, but when you really allow grace to do what grace wants to do, grace will find you out. And it will find the real you out. It'll find the most broken pieces of you, the saddest parts, the places of shame, the places where the enemies lies have held your life in check, the places in your story that you do not want to look at. And God will say, "I love you so much. I didn't just die for you so that you get some free ticket to heaven. I died so that you would trust me with all of you, and you would allow my grace to make you whole, holy, and spiritually healthy."

I remember a number of years ago I came home and there was someone in my life honestly who just in this meeting reminded me of someone who really wounded me. So I go to my wife and I'm looking for some backup and I'm like, "Babe, they did it again." And my wife goes, "Isn't God so kind?" I'm like, "No, no, no. I'm telling you what they did. I'm looking for some spousal support of backup. What do you mean God's so kind?" She's like, "God's so kind that he keeps sending people into your life who remind you of someone who deeply wounded you. And God's going to keep doing this until you have the courage to honor the truth of that pain." And I looked at her and I said, "Get behind me, Satan." I did not say that. I did not say that. But she was right. She was so right, because here's the truth, here's the truth. For many of us, when we get triggered, it's like, "I don't know what to do with this." And then we go hideout, we go to insecurity, we go to narratives. But what if we got curious? What if when we got triggered we recognized there's a thing beneath the thing and if I don't have the courage to deal with this, this pothole is going to become a sinkhole that's not just going to affect me, it's going to affect those around me.

And this is where each and every one of us has to have the courage and the trust in the almighty God and the trust in grace to be able to answer the question, "What triggers you?" And what's underneath that? When you struggle with control, or with disappointment, or expectation, and you know what expectations are. It's just premeditated resentments. When you don't get that, you don't get what you want, and all of a sudden you're like, "I don't know what to do." The truth is we're going to go somewhere and you have to be able to recognize where do you typically go to soothe. Is it a hideout? Is it insecurity? Is it a narrative? What are the hideouts you run to? Is it socially unacceptable? Is it socially acceptable but somehow you just do it because you're like, "Nobody cares. I'm running up debt. I'm finding some chemical to distract myself. I'm running to this relationship, to this relationship. I'm just staying busy." But man, I tell you what, we keep doing this stuff, our lives are going to be held in check.

And the truth is, my counselor says this all the time, if you get hysterical about something, it's historical. If you ever find yourself just ramping up with anger or sadness, some kind of hysteric, some feeling of, "What's going on?", it's usually connected to something back in your past. And if we don't have the courage, we will react and every time we react, all we are doing

is re-enacting the past. And that's not what Jesus came for. He came to make us whole, holy, and spiritually healthy. Go back to this last question about insecurities and you have to ask yourself, "Are there places that I turn to, turn to around my insecurities, these false stories that I'm telling about myself when I get triggered?" Do you have those? Because they're not of God.

Or, when you get triggered, do you often create false stories about others? And I challenge you this week, write down that word thing and go, "Triggers. What triggers me? What triggers me?" Just write down some words. Hideouts. Where do I go? Where do I go to escape? Insecurities. Man, what are those lies that I keep telling myself that aren't true. Narratives. What is the story that I keep creating about another person or another group of people? And what if I could actually choose to believe grace is as good as grace truly is? If you've ever seen Billy Graham's wife tombstone, it's amazing because it says her name, Ruth Belle Graham. It says the date of birth, the date she passed, and then underneath it it says, "Construction completed. Thanks for your patience." Genius. Why? Because she understood that she's a piece of work, just like you and me. She understood that she, like me, like you, like us, we are all in process and we are all in more need of grace. My job isn't to compare myself to somebody else. My job is to allow God's grace to do what God's grace wants to do, which is to make you whole and holy and spiritually healthy. But for some of us, we're like, "I don't deserve it."

I think that there are some of you here today, and in 1833, this story just popped in my brain. 1833 there were two guys and they robbed a mailman and they murdered the mailman and they stole mail. At that time, that was a federal offense and you got the death penalty. But one of the guys, George Wilson, had friends who were friends with President Andrew Jackson. President Andrew Jackson was given a letter by the friends of George Wilson that said, "Please give this man a presidential pardon." President Jackson goes, "I know these guys. I vouch for their character. I will give them a presidential pardon." He receives the presidential pardon. He could be set free from being incarcerated and he says, "No. I don't deserve it." The other guy dies and then it goes to the supreme court. Can one person deny a presidential pardon? And the supreme court, you can look this up, says, "After great deliberation, we cannot force a man to receive freedom if he doesn't want it."

And here's the crazy thing, I think that there are so many of us who don't understand the grace that God gifted us on the cross. We don't actually think we're worthy of a life of freedom and grace and love and peace. And you know what we're doing? We're like, "I'm denying the pardon, the gospel pardon to be set free and to walk on this journey of grace upon grace upon grace," and we're saying, "This is my lot. I'm going to stay in prison. I'm going to stay in this life." And I'm just saying, "Please. God sent his son for you. You can walk out of that prison today and I'm not saying that tomorrow's going to be easier. I will say, though, tomorrow will be stronger because you will have the king of kings and the lord of lords and the god of all creation and the gift of grace."

And when you can walk out with that, day by day, little by little, going after these potholes, you're saying grace is going to make sure they don't become sinkholes. Grace is actually going to make me more whole. If this is what you need today, would you please just do me a favor, text JESUS to 87221. And if you text this, our team, the team here, they will answer your questions. If you have more questions, engage them. What they want to do is help you take that step, because you've been freed from something, but you've also been freed to something.

Amen? Amen. Let's stand and I'd love to give you a closing prayer. And would you do this for me? Would you just put your hands out, because I would love just to give you a blessing. Some times I just need to receive. What's amazing is we're so good at striving and climbing and chasing. But grace, grace is the only thing that you can just receive. Nothing you can do to earn grace. All you can do is receive grace.

So my brothers and sisters of Trader's Point Community Church, may you know that God has gifted you with a grace that longs to make you whole, holy, and spiritually healthy. And every day as you find yourself being triggered, and all of the past rushing through your body, all of the lies and the fears and the worries and the uncertainties wanting to send you spiraling into hideouts or insecurities or narratives, may you be steadfast. May you stay planted in the truth of who you are and whose you are. And may today and tomorrow and the next day, may we not return to this prison cell, but may we choose to walk more and more and more in his sanctifying grace. And with that, all God's people said amen. Amen. Amen.