

SHOWNOTES - Elijah Clark (30/50)

📅 Sat, Nov 12, 2022 6:33PM ⌚ 31:06

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

dad, mom, moved, uncle, daddy, drugs, house, pulled, mississippi, people, live, night, happened, man, head, such bad shape, kids, home, point, fish

SPEAKERS

Scott Hilton (Host), Elijah Clark (Guest)

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Scott Hilton (Host) 00:15

Welcome to another episode. That's my dad podcast Liza Clark's here. I just got a story man, we, I came and spoke at your church. It's been several months ago now and spoke about fatherhood. And he came up to me after the afterwards and began telling me some of your story. And I think he would we were just having casual conversation. But I immediately knew I gotta have this guy on the podcast, because you've got a man, it's a, it's an incredible story. And we were just talking, let me kind of start at the end, because I know a lot of young guys will say, what's he doing now? Well, you're in sort of an executive, you're 32 years old, and you're with Southern Company. And in a pretty important role, I think it's fair to say, we probably don't want to go too far into that I'm sure. You've been very successful, career wise, and very successful family wise, which is even more important, but then start out so great. No, it didn't, they didn't tell me about that.

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Elijah Clark (Guest) 01:16

It started with my mom, my dad, you know, it was a typical love story. My mom and dad were both for a while. My dad was known to get in a lot of bar fights, do a lot of drugs, and sell a lot of drugs and do things that, you know, we know that we shouldn't be doing. They ran out ran around with a rough and rowdy crowd, and eventually, they fell in love. And, you know, my mom, she struggled with mental illnesses. So that was kind of tough, you know, understanding as a young child. And we lived together for a while. And it got to the point where the drugs and the alcohol just kind of consumed the household, you know, with my mother, you know, she, she was addicted to some pretty hard stuff there and beginning with the mental mental illness on top of it. And you know, she would disappear for days at a time, and I didn't know if she was coming back or not. And then, you know, I had to take care of my sister, you know, we didn't know if we were going to have enough food to make it or, you know, if anybody was coming back, or if we were going to several times while I was left wondering, Is she gonna come back? If she did, because the places she was going, I had been to, and I shouldn't have been in those situations. But I had been left out in vehicles outside of crack houses, and having people knocking on my window as a young kid, you know, trying to shelter my little sister. It wasn't, you're talking when you were? I was probably seven. Wow. And it went on for a long time. Early

on, I didn't think there was any escape. And you know, early on, my, my mom and dad were together. And he got to the point where he was abusive. And and I guess there was a point in time. And it's really hard for me to put this in sequential order, because I haven't really unpacked a whole lot of this. So there was a time period where my mom was doing well. And I'm not really sure my brother remembers better than me. But I do remember her speaking scripture to me. And that was the most important thing she could ever done for me, even with all this stuff going on. She spoke scripture to me and she's trying to speak scripture to my dad. And matter of fact, she would put scripture in his lunchbox and I remember one time he got so angry about he came home and he grabbed her by the back of the head and he beat her head against the toolbox and right there in front of me. And that was that was pretty scary. He ended up the cops got called I thought I thought I watched him get shot in the front yard thank goodness they just tased him and pepper sprayed them and they got back together for a little while and then it went south from there. One bad party in drug addicts always around. So mom and dad split and after they split moved into this trailer park my dad's not there anymore that trailer park pretty pretty rough and you know in the St. Louis area and down in South Alabama and you know my mom was was struggling with the you know all the drug issues at the time and and something happened to where we couldn't afford to pay for our trailer anymore that came and repossessed our trailer and it was so such bad shape when I pulled it out of there it just felt pieces like they literally had to come scoop it up with a skid steer because it was in such bad shape that couldn't they soon as they hooked to it it just like collapse.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 04:34

Did you watch when you see that house?



04:36

No, I didn't see that happen. I saw the Aftermath After I went back and looked at it because I rode my bicycle from the other trailer park. We moved into my uncle.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 04:43

So y'all y'all left y'all had to leave. Yes, you would ever happen. And you So you moved had moved in with an uncle,



04:49

my uncle Charlie. He was also an alcoholic. So everywhere I went there, but he was he was nice to me. He was he was good to me, but he was a no nonsense kind of guy. So he came Home and everything was going south, my Uncle Fred, who had just got out of prison, he was there, my mom and him were both looking for prescription drugs that I had hid from him because I was tired of seeing it. And I thought he was gonna kill me. Like, I seriously thought it was gonna kill me. And they were so messed up that they thought these people were, were actually giving away stuff in their home, but they were moving. So they had a bunch of boxes outside their house. So they started going through their stuff. Well, best thing ever happened because some I call the law because that man might have killed me over that, over those drugs. And, and I

wasn't gonna give him up, I got to the point where if I died, I died. It didn't. At that point, it was just like, hey, this has to stop. I want to talk to my mom sober. I don't want to see her like this anymore. And whatever it takes to get there. That's what I'm going to do. And I hit those those strokes, I hit them. And my uncle came home and saw that and then the people found out that they were stealing stuff. They honestly I remember the that situation. They honestly thought that the people were giving it away. That's how out of it. They were they've thought they were just giving away brand new appliances. And they were just walking down to the trailer park with them in their hands, like in plain daylight and cops came. Well, they didn't come immediately call my dad, because they had no my dad because my dad used to get in a lot of trouble in that area. So the chief could call call my dad and told him Hey, you better come get me. My dad lived the Mississippi at the time. So that's a time in my life where my dad was a hero to me because I didn't think I had anyone. And he came and rescued me. Now that situation he went and got when he pulled up Friday was kind of in my face grilling me about where the drugs were, and he might have killed me at that moment. My dad pulled in and right at the right time and got his face and sent him running. You know, he knew my dad from when he was young and and then he took off running. So my dad because we keep rescued me in that situation. And, and to this day, I appreciate him for that because I didn't know what I was going to

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Scott Hilton (Host) 06:56

do. And how old do you think you were there?



06:59

Man? I I'm so not sure. Like there's so much that happened. I would say if I had to throw a dart at the wall, I'd say somewhere between seven and 10.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 07:09

Well, you're doing all this stuff on your own. Your older brothers moved out I think.



07:14

Yeah, I think my my older brother, he's he's about four years older than me. So at that point in time he was he was heavily involved in gang activity. So it was so it's just you and your sister. It's just me and my sister. Y'all fight in the world on your own. That's right, just to y'all. So needless to say. I end up going live with my dad. Uncle. That's a tugboat Captain burns everything we all saw. I don't have any traceability back to like my childhood. Like, I was like having a house fire. So all the pictures of me as a kid, less like a family member had a birthday everything. He was so mad at my mom. They do everything on yard he burned it. So you moved in with your dad in Mississippi that we lived on the Mississippi River, not the Mississippi River out of the Pascagoula River, tributary off the Mississippi River in South Mississippi and man. When I say it was a small town, it was a town that they made fun of me from coming from South Alabama. They said call me city slicker and red light, they probably couldn't spell it. So it was a very, very small town. I was so poor that I didn't know it and he was poor. We cut firewood. I mean, I was born in the 90s. So we didn't have central area of central heat. I cut cut

water, not cut firewood in the wintertime. I mean in summertime for the winter. And we we just lived old school. I remember when I first moved there. I failed the fifth grade because I went fishing more than I did to school. So right off the bat, my dad had me running triathlons. So we live right there on the fish camp. That's, that's what we ate.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 08:50

So what happened to your your mom, your uncle back in Alabama, when you went to Mississippi

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08:55

see that they end up shipping her to rehab. Okay, great thing to happen there. So she she went went to rehab. That was three years. So the problem was, I didn't make it three years at my dad's. I had a stepmom at the time and she was super young. And she wasn't that much older than my older brother. So they were she was probably a few years older than him. And she wasn't she wasn't the nicest to me and she was on the same type of drugs that my mom was as far as prescription drugs. And my dad was too so they I guess they all did that together. And my dad would get to drinking and doing his cowboy thing. You know, we had horses and stuff. He'd ride around with a canteen full beer and 3030 on his side on the side of the horse and ride around the neighborhood like he was John Lane. Thanks for getting kinda abusive for me, verbally and sometimes physical. You know, just my dad would lose his temper he had he had bad ankle problems. And you know, I remember being on river and missing a fish and him breaking the fishing pole over my legs and just stuff that you shouldn't do to a kid, you know, and the verbal abuse was constant. It was it was always a constant. If he got mad, he would throw stuff in the yard. I remember, he get drunk and he'd shoot pictures on the wall like straight that house like he just pulled a pistol out and to shoot a pistol, shoot a bullet to the wall, like it was nothing. But here's something cool that happened in Mississippi, right? So this is God sent me in Mississippi. And here's why. Before things went south, and I'll tell you kind of how it happened. I met a girl of course, and I like I want to stay, you know, pretty girl up the street. And God use her to because she went to a church and the people over in Greene County, Mississippi, that it was nice to come help us poor folk out in George County, Mississippi. And they sent the Baptist Church Bus over here to come pick us up. They drove across and then that's what Jesus, you know, that's what Jesus looks like, right? The hands the feet of Jesus, somebody who got drove across county lines, go pick up some poor folks like us. So the

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Scott Hilton (Host) 10:56

church, the folks from the church bus came to pick up the poor folks, they did it take you back on

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11:02

the other side of town. That's right. And that's why I gave my life to Christ. So what role did the girl have to play in that? Well, she wound up breaking up and I'm dating her cousin. God just got her to get me to the church.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 11:15

So what are your What are you living with your dad and y'all are. Y'all are living off the land.



11:21

Getting off the Church Bus. My dad is out there in the front yard drunk with his buddies. And I remember getting off one time he was getting in a fistfight with somebody that the guy had pulled a knife out. And my brother had come moved in with us and my sister at that time, too. And I remember seeing my brother jumping on you talking about killing off a church bus and seeing this adverse embarrass. Yeah. So what happened? Well, your dad you had to you end up leaving there. Well, thank you just kept getting worse. And my mother, my stepmom, she was really, really verbally abusive to me. And she got where she was getting pretty bad on the on the drugs. And I started trying to talk to him about Jesus. I said that. I said, I want to see you change. I want to I want to see you go to heaven. I don't want to I don't want to see you go to hell. And then she took that what I said, and she said, this is the only thing I do remember and she said, You hear that Glenn? He said he wants you to go to Hill, he told you to go to Hill. And then she came after me. She came across the room and she's she wrapped her her reins around her hands and she just beat me. And I kept standing back up and let her hit me again. I said does that make you feel good? Does that make you feel good hitting them hitting the young man like this, I said I'm not gonna hit you. And she kept hitting me and kept hitting me not saying back up. And finally she got she grabbed that frying pan off that potbelly stove and she popped me over the head with it. And I rolled out the front door The front door was wide open. I mean no need to try to keep in any any air. You know, we didn't have central air. So I wrote off that front door and fell off that front porch. And there was another potbelly stove right there with a piece of plywood on it because we just replaced the potbelly stove with another old popular stove and, and she kicked that piece of plywood off there on me and stabbed me in the side of my arm. And I got up and she thank goodness that she was a little intoxicated or very intoxicated. Because she started picking up rocks. She just hit me in the back of the head rocks. And I remember just getting onto my bike and being dizzy. And or just hit me with rocks. And I made it to a neighbor's house. One of her friends actually in you know, they condemned the actions, you know, call them and you know, almost called wall but they didn't nobody's studying they and I didn't know what else to do. But I knew I had to get out of there. My time there was done. You're just a young teenager by then. I was I was like in sixth grade. At that point in time. I made it maybe a year. And I knew I had to get out of there. I call my uncle a different Uncle. Who was also turns out he was on drugs. I didn't know that at the time. But he was fun because he was functional. And he actually made a lot of money. He was a superintendent for a big company down in South Alabama. So he called me and said he was gonna come get me. I called him and he called me back. So hey, I thought about I'm gonna come get you. So the next day at school, I'm waiting on him to come get me because we've already arranged it. And man, instead of him showing up, he called my dad and my dad showed up and then you tell him about a terrified, terrified time of my life. I've never been so scared in my life. My dad's a pretty big intimidating guy. And I was afraid man I was I was super afraid when he showed up. And I told him I said Daddy, I love you but I'm I'm not gonna live with you anymore. I said Do you can you can either send me away home or run away? I saw I've done all I can hear I love you. And I want the best for you but I can't do this anymore. And he's finally agreed to send me away and I went live with my uncle. And you know, it was just another one of those situations. It wasn't it was a lot better than what I had. had experienced before my

uncle treated me better than my own family had to that point, you know, I still didn't feel like like I was their child. But that was closest thing I ever had to my uncle, you know, he looked at me like a almost like I was a stepchild or something, you know, maybe it wasn't like he often you know, whatever they did for their kids that he would do for me, you know, so he was he was the probably the closest thing I had to a father figure at that point in time and and I'm not saying that he didn't love him like a child but I know there was times where I didn't feel like he did. I felt like he loved me but I never felt like you know, it was the same love as He was showing his kids and I guess that's something that that people who are adopted deal with that live in different homes you know, the struggle of not really feeling like Hey, that's my biological father so it was nothing really against him because he helped me in that situation and he didn't have a whole whole lot because apparently he was spending his money elsewhere at the time but um he taught me the value of hard work he put me to work he bought had some property I started digging fence post heavy moving soul and dirt with a with a wheelbarrow and a shovel and leveling out properly. Property. I remember asking them for a quarter for every post Oh, Doug. Quarter I just a quarter just sock I feel like I was on to something he says on if I did that, and then you wouldn't be on and you keep and you know, I'm putting a roof over your head. And I say, Yeah, I guess you're right.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 16:30

But I'm here you're 13 years old learn and you keep



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already Mikey, I'm talking about he would show up. And because he worked these these outages and he could show up in three, four o'clock in the morning. I didn't realize that maybe he was on crack or Coke or at the time, I'm not really sure one of those uppers. And he'd show up in middle night and talk about, hey, we got to plumb this new house we're building. And we because we had a shed that we built and we had a double wide trailer and everything was nice when we ended up with a double wide trailer was a nice brand new double wide trailer. Well, that came and got repossessed. And the only thing we had built so far was the shed that we were going to build for the house because it was a big shed and they had a bathroom and a living room. No bedrooms. And we all piled up in there. So it's me. Me my uncle, my my grandma. And my two cousins were all inside this little shed, we think they call it they turned it into the little house. I said we still stay in a little house. I was like now that's the little shade. That's the barn. That's the shed man.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 17:27

You're literally 15 years old. Yes. I'm thinking and living by yourself,



17:32

living by myself in this in the shed. And let's get 10 Bring my friends over, you know, the really not used to a whole lot of rules didn't have a whole lot of rules, no, no kind of structure. And meanwhile she would she was sitting with a elderly lady. So she would come on Wednesdays.

And she and I were really really close. She's so she she was like a godsend in my life too. And she took care of me like I was like her favorite. And she saw so much potential in me and she encouraged me. So she was that one person in my life that no matter what she likes, she's like I believe in him. You know, she always said that. And some of the other kids would get jealous with how much she was showing affection towards me, and how much she cared for me. And she always said that no matter what I would be taken care of. Well, she ended up passing away. One day, Wednesday, I was coming home from Allah southern electric, and I was in at Mustang and and I got a call from my girlfriend. And I said, I said, Hey, I'm gonna go see my mom. And she said, Well, why don't you come here first, I did kind of felt like something was up. So I was like, Man, I'm just gonna stop by and check out thank goodness I did. And she called me again. Turns out she was like, she was dead in the driveway. I don't know what happened still this to this day. Nobody tells me the truth. I don't know who knows the truth. Who doesn't know the truth. I don't know if she was attacked. I don't know if you know what happened. And my life changed. I mean, just right then and there. The one person that you know, was really solid for me that I finally felt like I had, she was going after that. I bounced around from house house man, a couch served, moved in from with my mom for a little bit longer. That obviously that wasn't working out. They were still doing they got back on the drugs couldn't be there. It was just an environment that I couldn't be in. So I just took out of them on my own. I probably lived in 20 different homes. I never had anywhere to settle down at and obviously, people. No one had a place for me. You know, it was I remember the last place I ran out of all my couches. And I was on my last couch and the person told me so hey, you know, you can't, you can't live here. So this is where things got crazy. So I didn't have any hope didn't know where I was going next. And I remember this guy had just moved into town, and he played play football. And I played football on and off. You know, I had a hard time I had to run back and forth from practice. So run Anything after practice was tough. So I did play ball a lot, enjoyed it, but I didn't have a ride. So running back and forth to practice it until I got the Miss fishy Mighty Max that was, at that point in time I drive myself to practice and I was doing it. So that's kind of how I met him was on the field. It was my junior year. So a lot has happened, you know, a cow served from probably ninth grade to my junior year. And then he moves in, I got Miss fish mountain Max, I'm doing football. He has a birthday party. We went to his birthday party became friends. He said, Hey, man, I want to learn about someone want to take care of myself, because people were he was rich, and people were coming after him in Moscow, you know, in Moscow. It was all about who could fight who and who can get who and it really wasn't a good mentality. Looking back, it was kind of a rough atmosphere. And you had to be tough to survive and, and he just came from UAMS Preparatory School when he wasn't ready for it. So we got the box and and first day we bought he said, Man, I don't ever want to box you again. I said, Man, we're just we're just born. And he said, they said no, I don't ever want to do that again. So I've heard exactly what, let's just be France. And I said, that's fine. Sandy. Yes. So that's cool. Well, he said, he asked me to stay the night. And I stayed at night and at his house with the spirits house. And they had like, the head the first level, then they had the second level, then it had a third level. And then I had another little room above that, like it's a huge house trailer. Oh, man, they lived on 2800 acres of prime property and saralyn and had three lakes. So I love fishing. So

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Scott Hilton (Host) 21:34

you so you already get your first house was a trailer that fell apart when they pulled it off. And now you've moved into this big time. So



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I hadn't yet at this point in time, I was just staying the night. That's all it was to me was I Hey, I was suspended i That was a bad that was very welcome to that time, because I thought I was going back to the Mighty Max. And that wasn't looking forward to the Mighty Max. So that I didn't say anything to him about it. I was still to this day, I'm not sure who told them that I was homeless. They end up asking me say a second night. And then the second night, you know, I don't know the routine. It's been drilled in my head. And you know, you got to be respectful. Make sure you clean up after yourself. So I've learned all these different things. And he's different houses. So looking back at all those opportunities that I had, I'll learn something from each one of those families. Maybe they weren't the best families. But all of them taught me something. And I learned how to carry myself and how to adapt. And so I'm over there. I'm folding up my blanket. I know the drill. I'm folding my blanket, I'm putting my blanket back where it goes. Because that's that's what you do. You stay at somebody's house, you clean up your lawyer you stayed in, you fold it up, and you leave it as as it was before you got there. And I was folding it up. And I remember his mom Fontaine came up and and I call her tiny mama now. But she she she walked up and up the stairs and she said a lodge and once you stay one more night? I said no, no, ma'am. I said no thanks. I said I don't want to wear out my welcome. And that she just broke down. She She sat here for me. She she knew. And I don't like I said I don't know. I don't know how much. She said, I want you to come live with me. And I was blown away, man. I was. I said it's too good to be true. No, I didn't think I knew God loved me about making. He loved me that way. But he did. And it was the best years of my life. I got to be a kid.



Scott Hilton (Host) 23:34

You've been worried about everything up until that point. So what do you say? And then you graduated from college and you got married and got a beautiful family now. I want to say anything to the to the couple call their name, their first and last name that took you in for your last two years there.



23:52

Oh, yeah. So that's Fontaine and Sandy Howard. Yep. Look in the camera, just speak to them. Well, they, they you know this, I've told you this before, but I appreciate you just taking in somebody off the street and giving them a home. He made a a lifelong impact. forever changed my life and my family's life. And I know, God needs y'all. And I know God's gonna do great things with y'all. Because y'all are still those same people. They can who care for other people. And I just want to say I appreciate that.



Scott Hilton (Host) 24:27

What do you want for your kids?



24:30

I want them to know that they have a father who loves him that's going to be there for him

I want them to know that they have a father who loves him, that's going to be there for him. And that's really what it's all about, in teaching them about God. If you teach them about God, and you teach them about God's love, that's what I want for my children. I want them to grow up and know God and for them to be saved. And that's what it all boils down to. You don't have to be the best the best father out there. And you don't have to have all these shining examples of what a father looks like. You just need to know God. He's a shining example. And if you know God and you can teach your children about God, you leave the rest to him. He's gonna take care of it.

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Scott Hilton (Host) 25:02

I know you're trying to do that. You did a good job of it. So try with your wife's help. We got a little, little gift for you. We'd like to share with you as we close out



25:16

Hi, everyone. My name is Kelsey. In my name is Emma. And this is Jonas, we had to film so excited to be filming this video for a live we were so proud of him. And Evan wants to share her favorite thing about Daddy.



25:38

He held on to me like you are wow, I



25:57

know you're sad. What does he do when you're sad? He helped me feel bad. It makes you feel better. Because he says silly sometimes too. Right? He is he's very silly. One thing that I love about Daddy is that daddy is such a great spiritual leader for our household. He has helped lead me to Jesus, but also help to teach our children about Jesus. And we are so proud of him. He helps our neighbors by cutting their grass and help him build swingset he also makes sure that we always stop to give the homeless and help and pray for them. And every night before bed, we make sure that we say our prayers and say our prayers before we eat and make sure we read our Bible verses for that day. What is something? Or your favorite story about Daddy? 14 I'm Amy. Can you tell everybody who's 14 Oh, and Mimi is



26:56


a dog with a dog. And for chemo? Is my a is he's a human? He fly





27:12


Pertino and made me are homeless. Yeah. And when did you make 14? I made me


 27:18
at your church


 27:19
when we went to Walmart when you went to Walmart with daddy. Yeah. And how to join me


 27:32
Okay, and how many times do you think you and guide you want to go visit 14 Or maybe like seven? What's something that daddy did every time that y'all went and saw them? He prayed he prayed for them and talk to them about Jesus. Which is really cool, right? Yeah, it's really awesome. So Daddy's a really great person for helping them and we still pray for them every night before we go to bed, don't


 27:55
we? Yeah,

 27:56
we still talk about 14 and made me okay. Do you want to share your funny story now about the boat? What happened on the boat?

 28:04
I lowing away. You're floating away on daddy's boat.

 28:09
And what did daddy do?

 28:10
He was crazy. He friended me again. Yeah,

 28:17
you better get through the robot you we are very thankful for Daddy, what's something you want to thank daddy for?



28:29

I want to say bye



28:39

guys are assistant coach too. So he gets to help at practice. All righty. Well, we love you daddy. And we are so so proud of you



28:57

man, that was awesome.



Scott Hilton (Host) 28:58

So you know you didn't you're giving your kids something you didn't have? Absolutely being there. So for the young man as we close for the young man who grew up like you, who didn't have that. How does it feel? To be a dad who flipped the script? And has that kind of family now?



29:21

Sir, shaking man, this is something that I can't really put in words because the Spirit of God man just moving inside my house and you know, just seeing the hand of God moving. It's just unreal to me is sometimes I look at it just awestruck and like, man. How did I make it out of those situations? And I know it was God.



Scott Hilton (Host) 29:43

You rewrote the script.



29:45

God rewrote it was there.



Scott Hilton (Host) 29:48

What an incredible story. Incredible story. Thank you for coming and sharing. You haven't talked a lot about this. I can tell. So this is kind of new to you. But Thank you for sharing and just pouring out your heart. And I believe you know, I read so many stories about guys like you and I knew kids like you that were at the ranch and they need somebody who's that they can

look to and say, Wow, he did it. I can't do. How did he do that? That's what I need to do. So thank thank you. And my prayers that this this story will make it to at least one kid. That's right. And hopefully 1000s Who can say Mac if that guy can pull through I can pull through to Absolutely, thanks. Thank you for that will conclude this episode of The that's my dad podcast are inspiring fathers to become great dads. And we're breaking chains, generational fatherlessness. This guy right here broke a chain. You can do it to see you next week.