

4 tips to Lead Your Family Through the Holidays

- Super encouraging to see you guys. And so if you are new, my name is Mark, one of the pastors here at the church. I'm gonna do a little leadership talk, and then we'll do a little testimony, and then time to hang out. And if you wanna get prayed for, you came to the right spot. So we're heading into the holiday season, so I'm gonna pivot a little bit, four tips on leading your family through the holidays. How many of you growing up, the holidays were pretty rough, pretty brutal, right? A little rough? And so what happens usually is, the holidays are where dysfunctional families pretend. That's the holidays. And so the more dysfunctional your family is, the more pressure there is to pretend during the holidays. Because if you have a healthy family, you're doing life together and having dinner together, if not, you've got one window, maybe Thanksgiving, maybe Christmas, that's all you got, that's your only window to connect and to try and have something that looks like an extended family or relationships. And the problem is, just be honest with you guys, if you, as the leader and head of household, don't lead your family, someone else will, and it's usually the most messed up, screwed up, dysfunctional person in your extended family. If you don't lead, the craziest person will nominate themselves, okay? For those of you that have lived a while, and you've just seen this, is this true or false?

- [Congregation] True.

- The craziest person, the nuttiest person, the most unhealthy person ends up determining what your holidays are. And we work around them, or we accommodate them, because they're family. And the issue is, no, actually you, as a husband, a father, a man, you're the head of your family, you need to make plans to lead your family, and you can't just let the least healthy person in your extended family determine what your family will experience during the holiday season. And here's the big idea. If you don't make a plan, it's going to be painful. That's just the way that it works. So I'll start with my own confession and failure. So Grace and I got married in college. We were 21 years of age, and we would go back from college during the Thanksgiving and Christmas season, and we would just jump in with my family or her family. Well, then we got married, and I wasn't thinking clearly that we had our own family. And one of the big dysfunctions that happens when you get married is the extended family thinks that you're joining their family. So like, I got two kids that are married, they're not joining my family, these kids are not joining the in-laws' family, they're starting their own family. So they get to decide what do they wanna do and how they wanna do the holidays. So Grace and I are married, we're graduated from college, we're working jobs, and it's Christmas. We're used to the families making the plan, we didn't, so we both worked long, hard days. We came home Christmas Eve and had zero plans. There is no evidence that it is Christmas at our house. I couldn't have been convicted in court for celebrating Christmas. There was no evidence in our house. There's no tree, there's no presents, there's no stockings, there's no nothing. We forgot to plan for it. So I look at Grace, and I assumed that she would make a plan because that's what my mom always did. My mom would decorate the house and bake the cookies and buy the presents, and I thought, well, you're the female, you know, that's your delegated responsibility, and my job is to come home and eat the cookies. I thought this was clear. Well, she didn't know that, and I hadn't

communicated that. So all the sudden I've got this unmet expectation and disappointment, and she's like, "Oh my gosh, you're right. I didn't prepare for Christmas." So she goes, we had a big begonia plant, that I hated it with my whole heart, because every time I would walk by it, I would bump into it and I would knock it on the floor, and then she'd put it back up. So it was this point in our marriage. So what she decided was to put bows on the begonia so that we could pretend it was a festive Christmas ornament. Now I hate the begonia more than at any point in my whole life. And so I look at her, I said, "Well, let's at least have dinner." We had no groceries, I kid you not. So all we had was pancake mix. And at that time, everything near us was closed, there was no restaurants open, so she started making pancakes. And I, with just the heart of compassion, said, "I hate pancakes." And so- She starts crying because now we have a begonia with a bow on it and we have pancakes that I don't like. And so I look at her, I said, "Well, that's it. Let's just go watch a movie." And so we found a romantic movie to go watch. I kid you not, Christmas Eve, we're sitting there, it was called "Bridges of Madison County." It's an adultery film. It's where a dude runs around on his wife. So Christmas Eve, full of pancakes and bitterness, we're watching "Bridges of Madison County," right? And at the time, I'll be really honest with you. I was a little disappointed. I thought Grace could have done a better job. But since I am the head of household, whose responsibility is it? It's mine. I didn't ask, "Hey, do we have a plan? What is the plan?" I didn't communicate my expectations. I didn't organize or architect anything. It's not like I had hung the stockings or got a tree or did anything either. We were both waiting for the other person to make it a happy holiday, and we failed miserably. So we forgave each other. I took responsibility. As head of household it's primarily my responsibility. I should have led better. And we started figuring out, how are we gonna do the holidays? And it's hard enough when you're married, and then you start adding little kids, it gets more complicated, 'cause now what are your family traditions, what are extended family traditions? Do we go there for Thanksgiving? Do we allow all the in-laws to come over? If there are certain people that are unhealthy or unsafe, do we really wanna spend the holidays with them? So here's what I wanna talk to you about, four tips for leading your family through the holiday. Next week's Thanksgiving, and that is the pre-season for Christmas, where if it's gonna get complicated, that's where it'll happen. So I'm gonna tell you to get four things, perspective, priorities, a plan, and then a pivot. And the perspective is Ecclesiastes 3:1, "There is a time and a season for every matter under heaven." The Bible says that the same God who made our physical world made our spiritual world, and our physical world has seasons. And in the same way, your life has seasons. And the key, especially when you're planning, especially for the holidays, is acknowledging what season you're in. And plans change when you go from one season to another. So for example, I've got two kids that are in high school, one is in college, I expect them to come over for Thanksgiving. I expect them to be home. My married kids, what do you think? Well, that's up to them, because they have their own family and they got to determine what they wanna do for the holidays. So for them, it's open-handed. We'd love to have you, you guys are welcome to come over for Thanksgiving, you're always welcome at my table, but I don't know what you wanna do. Our family is gonna have Thanksgiving, your family has to decide, husband and wife, what you wanna do for your Thanksgiving. So like last year, my son-in-law, Landon, my daughter, Ashley, they said, "Hey, we've got the week off. We're newly married, we want to have fun, we wanna take a break, so we're gonna take a trip. We're gonna

be gone for Thanksgiving." Answer? Great, that's your family. And I can't look at you and say, no, no, no, you need to be with the family, 'cause if you're married, that's your family. We're your extended family. So what season you're in, so when you're a little, you're a baby, you're a child, your parents make all the decisions. Thanksgiving, Christmas, Mom and Dad decide. You become a young adult, now you're off to college, maybe you're living with your parents during the summer, but you're off at school during the year, in those seasons, when the holidays come, as your kids get a little older and they become adult, and they're in that transition phase of maybe that late teens, early 20s, you gotta talk to them and ask, okay, here's what we're thinking, what are you thinking? And it's not just telling them what to do like they're a child, but it's more in a conversational relationship trying to figure out, 'cause sometimes they're like, well, I wanna take a road trip, I wanna get together with my friends. Okay, great, can you also get with your family? Is there a way that we can help, you know, sort of negotiate this and make this into a win-win. And then you move out of your parents' house and it's a glorious day when your kids leave the payroll, and now they're paying their own bills. This is the adult worker, they got their own bills, their own life, and they may decide, you know what? I'm gonna come over for the holidays or not. I'll travel in for the holidays or not. But now they're adults and they get to start to make their own decisions, because at this point, what happens is something very important in every human being's life, and that is differentiation. Differentiation is, okay, you're my parents, but I'm a separate human being now. I'm my own person. And sometimes what a family doesn't allow you to do is differentiate, until it's a leave your father and mother, and you need to leave your father and mother and differentiate and be your own person. And so at this point, it's asking, okay, if you are the person who's the adult worker, do I need to go to my parents' house or my extended family's house for the holidays? Or is that not what I wanna do? And/or if you are the parents, do we expect them to come home, or are we willing to just kindly allow them to make their own adult decisions? And let me say this, for those of you that are parenting adult children, the more you hold like this, the more likely you are to have no relationship with them. When a child is little, you can control them a little bit. When they get older, you cannot control them, you can only influence them. Especially when they move out and they get their own job and they pay their own bills, you can't control them. You can't control them physically, like when they're a baby, you can't control them financially, like you could when they were a child. They're independent. This is where what unhealthy parents will do, they will seek to control adult children through manipulation and guilt and family pressure and financial gifts. They'll try and control things. You should not seek to control an adult child. You should seek to influence them through relationship because they trust you. And the holidays are where much of this tension occurs. The next season is you get married. When you get married, your prior allegiances and loyalties shift. Before that, the Bible says you're supposed to, as a kid honor, your mother and father, and then it says you leave your mother and father, which means they no longer get to tell you what to do. Any adult parents that are quoting, obey your mother and father verses are really dysfunctional parents. That's for little kids, not for grown adults. So I'm very clear with this with my kids, like, the married couple, you're a family, the other married couple, you're a family, Grace and I, we're a family, now we have three families. And if we're gonna do the holidays together, we need to talk about how this works for all the families. And what I could never do is look at my kids and say, but you need to be with your family, 'cause if they're married, that's their

family. How many of you, if your in-laws understood this, it would just make your life a lot better? Like, you guys are married, you make your own traditions, you make your own decisions, you're your own family, the door's wide open, we love you, you're always welcome, but your family has to do what you wanna do, and our family's gonna do what we wanna do. And if there's anything we can do to accommodate you, we wanna do that because as the parent, you wanna go into the serving position, you wanna go into the accommodating positioning, you wanna go into the welcoming position to make as easy as possible for the adult children to have a relationship with you. If it's a lot of legalisms and guilt and control and financial manipulation, they will opt out. Here's why, you can only have three kinds of relationships, healthy, unhealthy, and no relationship. True?

- Yeah.

- Amen.

- How many of you, your family has only given you two options, unhealthy relationship or no relationship? And that's a hard place to be. The goal is to always say, well, let's work toward a healthy relationship because if all you offer someone is an unhealthy relationship or no relationship, eventually what happens? They choose no relationship. They don't wanna talk with you or hang out with you. In a healthy family system, they wanna hang out with you. If your kids don't wanna be with you, rather than just getting angry at them, maybe ask yourself, why? What happens when you get married is you start a new family. And then when the holidays come, true or false, you had kids, it changes things? Dads of young children testify for all the single men, when you have children, things change, true or false?

- True.

- Totally. So for Grace and I, when the holidays would hit, so we didn't know how to do this. When I say we failed, I mean I failed 'cause I was out of household, it was my responsibility. So here's what we did for years. I didn't wanna disappoint her extended family or mine, so we had two Thanksgivings every year. Yeah, even if you like food, that's a lot. So that was sort of the routine we got into was two Thanksgiving dinners. And then we had kids. Well, guess what the expectation is? We'll do two Thanksgivings with five kids. Does that work? No, I wish you guys would have told me. I ruined so many Thanksgivings, I should have known that. So you put the kids in the car and you go here and then they eat a lot and now they're tired, and then you go here and you do it again. And so then we had to come to the point where it's like some years we're gonna go to this, some years we're gonna go to that, and some years we're just gonna stay home. We're gonna kind of take it year by year. 'Cause what your family wants you to do is make an eternal promise, until the Second Coming of Jesus, we will be there to eat your turkey. And you're like, you know what? I don't know. I'll sign up for one turkey and then we'll see how it goes. We'll take it a year at a time. As well then, once you start, as your kids get a little bit older and they're into those teen years and such, you're gonna need to be more considerate of their friends and their relationships because they are in the differentiation process. And then maybe,

well, I'll do Thanksgiving with you, but then I'm gonna go out with my friends or we're gonna do a Friendsgiving. And this is where as parents, we gotta kind of navigate all that and talk it all out. And then what happens is you're an empty-nester and your kids are gone. All of a sudden, they're not under the roof and you can't tell them what to do. You have to talk with them, and maybe they don't travel to you for the holidays, maybe you travel to them. You're like, well, you guys got kids, we don't. It used to be you would come to our dining room table, but if you'll have us, maybe we travel and go to your house so we sit at your dining room table. Or maybe we can't do Thanksgiving with you because you've got other plans, but maybe there's some way we could get some other time with you. Let me say this, dysfunctional families live for the holidays because it's all you got. Well, if we don't have Thanksgiving together, then we'll miss our whole opportunity. Let me say this, if you have a healthy relationship with your kids, you're gonna eat with them all the time. I love Thanksgiving, I hope they all come over. I don't know if they will. But my goal is to have dinner with my kids so much that if we miss Thanksgiving, we didn't miss the only open window of relationship and memory for the whole year. I would rather do 30 Thanksgivings, and if they miss the one, eh, I got a backup plan, okay? And so as head of household, don't think like most people do, and that is that our whole year rises and falls with the holidays. Our whole year rises and falls with the year, and the holiday is an opportunity to add to that but it is not the only thing that we're investing in. Some families, the only time they sit down to eat its Thanksgiving, that's sad. The only time they all get together is Thanksgiving. Well, that's sad. And so it should be that the head of household is thinking about, how do we architect a healthy family system to where we get to do Thanksgiving once a month or whatever the case may be, we all get together and enjoy one another and do life together. And when you become an empty-nester, you can't guilt, manipulate, and control your kids to accommodate you. You need to accommodate them because they're not coming back to their family, they have their family, and then you need to love and serve their family. And then eventually you become a caretaker, now all of a sudden, maybe you're caretaking for a spouse that's not well. You become a grandparent, now they've got the grandkids involved. You retire, you're out of work, all of these seasons of life. And what happens is, we will do things in one way, usually around the holidays. And we get so accustomed to that, and the expectations are set that when it stops working, we just endure the pain of it, and then we have anxiety going into the holidays, we have frustration, we have disappointment. Sometimes we even start arguing with our spouse. We gotta go to my parents' house. I don't wanna go to your parents' house. Well, you know, the grandparents need to see the kids. Well, the grandparents aren't even nice to the kids. I mean... Well, is your brother gonna be there? Yeah. Is he going to be drunk? I don't know. Well, tell him not to, like, welcome to it. And so what happens for a lot of guys is they can't wait to get back to work. And so what I'm saying is, it's your life, it's your family, it's your holidays. What do you want? What does your spouse want? What do your kids want? And even if what you were doing previously wasn't bad. If life has changed and you're in a new season, you gotta re-discuss and renegotiate that because the way it worked isn't the way it's gonna work. So for example, you know, like I said, we did two Thanksgivings, and once you get to five kids, that doesn't work anymore. So the first thing is, gotta get perspective. What season are we in? Where are we at with our family, with our kids, with our extended family, where are we? The next thing is you gotta figure out your priorities. And Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of

knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." What knowledge and wisdom does, it establishes your priorities. And then Proverbs 3:9 "Honor the Lord with all your possessions and the firstfruits." And what that is is that your first and your best goes to the Lord. So wisdom and knowledge sets your priorities, so here's my priorities. And I tell this to my kids and my staff. What's my first relational priority is who? It's the Lord. If I'm not good with the Lord, guess what? I'm not good. Can I be a good husband if I'm bad with the Lord? No, Grace would tell you no. Can I be a good dad if I'm bad with the Lord? No. So there's nothing in my life that I'm going to be good for, unless I'm good with the Lord, 'cause the, love the grace, the mercy, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, everything I need, forgiveness, compassion, everything I need to do well toward others has to come from Him. So everything I need for these relationships comes from this relationship. So then first and foremost, my relationship with the Lord. And what can happen sometimes during the holiday season, you stop going to church, you get very busy, you stop reading your Bible, you stop praying. Why? 'Cause I'm busy at work, we got holiday plans and the kids got events and their sports, and we're overextended. Let me tell you this, you better make the Lord your first priority. Better get up in the morning, read your Bible, and pray. You better make sure that your relationship with God is solid because you may be very busy at work, and very busy with holidays, and very busy with family, but if you're not right with the Lord, it's not gonna be good. The next thing is healthy spouse. So Grace Driscoll gets the first and best of my time and energy, okay? And then children, if you have them, grandchildren. One of the big mistakes that people make is they lump family together. And if you do that, you will have a crisis when your children launch. So Grace and I are at this age where we're seeing couples that are our age that do know the Lord having cratering marriages, and then people will look at them and say, what's going on? They're Christians, they love the Lord, they're getting divorced, there's a disaster, it's a total crisis. They had such a good family, right, but they didn't have a good marriage. They did great with the kids, but they didn't do great with each other. And what held them together was the children. And if the gravitational center of your family orbit is the kids, what happens when the kids leave home? They spin out of orbit. So what happens in a dysfunctional family system where it's not the Lord at the center and then the marriage, and then the kids, is that what happens is, number one, you can't let your kids grow up. You have to keep over-parenting and controlling them 'cause it's the only thing that holds the marriage together. It's the only thing you got in common. Or if they do launch, you're pushing them for grandchildren because you wanna replace the idol that held your marriage together. This thing only worked when we had a kid. The kids have grown up, hurry up, give us another kid. This is a lot of dysfunction in family systems, okay? I'll be honest with you, I love my kids with all my heart. I love being a dad, one of my sons is in the room. But when they all leave, I'm fine. You know why? I like my wife. And when they're gone, I get her all to myself and we can do way more expensive date nights than we could when we started. So, you know, no more, drive-thru ordering it from a clown, cooked by a high school kid, eating with a spork. Like, we're gonna go somewhere with white napkins. You know, we're gonna do it. And so for me, what I don't want my kids to think is, can I move out, can I launch, can I get married, can I move on with my life, what's gonna happen to Mom and Dad? I want them to say, Mom and Dad are fine. I get to go do what God has called me to do and to be who God's called me to be. What oftentimes happens is instead of spouse and kids, we make family. And when we do that, here's the deal,

you were married before you have kids, and I want you to be married after they move out. Okay? And I want you, as your kids launch, to say, you know what? Our priorities have not changed. The Lord, the spouse, and the kids. And even when the kids grow up and they launch, they still need you, it's just in a different way. And then when grandkids come great. Great. My daughter, Alexi, she's the, I love her, she's great, but it used to be when I would come home, I would look at her, we had this little routine, it was so cute. She was a little blonde hair, blue eyed, looked like her mama, and I'd come home and I'd say, "Come here, Daddy needs to give you a hug and a kiss." And she would always say, "After your beautiful wife." What she was saying was Mom first. You know why? Mom's a priority. What that does for a child, it creates a great sense of security. Mom and Dad are good. And if you're a kid, Mom and Dad are good, the universe you live in is good. If Mom and Dad are not good, the universe you live in is not good. We can think, well, I need to prioritize my kids. One of the best things you can do for your kids is prioritize your marriage, because the best place for a child is in a home with a healthy marriage. So let me ask this, put the list back up. Then it's healthy worker, you've gotta do your job, and then healthy church member, God's family, and then whomever else. So what happens during the holiday is, crazy family, demanding family, needy, broken, demanding person, where do they try to put themselves on the list? One or two. One or two. Almost every holiday, there's somebody trying to get into one or two. They're trying to get as high up in the priority list as they can. Whose responsibility is it to make sure that the priorities with time and energy and money stay in their proper place? You as head of household. If you're like, well, we have priorities, but then this crazy in-law slams into our life for the holidays and we let them turn the whole thing upside down and invert all of our priorities and take our time, money, and energy, and we just kind of endure, the question is, why? And usually the answer is, because they're related to us. What does that have to do with anything? If you wouldn't allow these kinds of people or this kind of behavior in your life with somebody who wasn't related, why would you make an exception for someone who's related? And are you allowing them to reset the priorities for the family? And so you know you violated this law of priority when you get jealous. So jealousy, I'll ask a bit of a trick question, is jealousy good or bad? Yes. It all depends on what the jealousy's about. The Bible says that God is a jealous God. What that means is, God doesn't like it when somebody's in His place. How many of you don't like it when somebody's in your place? I don't like it when somebody's in my place, especially when it's with my family. My wife and kids, and your wife and kids, they're sacred. Our families are sacred, your families are sacred. One of the reasons that here with you is because you matter, and your family matters, and your marriage matters, and your kids matter, and your grandkids matter. They matter so much to me that I'm here with you every week because it matters so much to me. You're sacred, your marriage is sacred, your kids are sacred, your grandkids are sacred. If you've only got 18 Thanksgivings with them, how many are you gonna let crazy relatives steal from you? If you've only got 18 Christmases with them, how many broken relationships are you gonna allow to break the holidays? And we just tend to think, well, we just need to get through it. And the answer, why? Why can't we re-hardware it and enjoy it? And you know that your priorities are out of whack when you or someone in your family gets jealous. There is an unhealthy, ungodly jealousy, there's a healthy, godly jealousy. I always say stuff I shouldn't, so I'm trying to think if I should say this. I always say it, that's how I ended up in Arizona. So some years ago we were going to Thanksgiving with

an extended family. I won't say what side or any details. And somebody met somebody who was broken and had a hard time in recovery and struggling, and invited them to the extended family Thanksgiving meal but didn't ask anybody. So I show up with the kids and Grace, and I'm like, "Who's this?" And they're like, "Oh, they're having a horrible time, and you know, are in withdrawals and homeless and life is cratered, and so I thought it'd be fun for them to hang out with us." Well, it might be fun for them. This isn't fun for me. I don't know them. I got little kids. I don't know if they're safe, I don't know if they're dangerous. I don't let my kids spend time with strangers, especially on a holiday. It's holy. A holiday means it's a holy day. It's supposed to be set apart to the Lord, it's sacred. This is not a common day. This is a special day. And I remember just going, I'm so frustrated because this day is for my family to get with extended family, and now someone else is in the place that they should not be. They shouldn't be at our table. I didn't agree to this. And literally the one guy sat out in my seat. I'm like, I don't know you. I don't hate you, I'm not against you, you're not supposed to be here and you're not supposed... I'm supposed to sit there, that's where I sit, and then my wife sits there. And my wife's sitting there, now you sat there. That's my wife. This is my Thanksgiving, right? I'm about on the verge of using my knife, you know? We get jealous when someone or something takes our place, and so do your kids. Your kids will get jealous during the holiday when they take your time and energy, they're like, don't steal my dad. Don't steal him. When they take the time and energy of Mom. And sometimes that's what extended family does, they shift your priorities and then they trigger jealousy in your family. All of a sudden, this is why there's a lot of fighting during the holidays. Well, why do we gotta go to their house? Well, because they're the priority. Well, why do we gotta do that? 'Cause that's a priority. Well, why do we have to do it this way every year? 'Cause that's the way our family does it, and my family is my priority. You know, this marriage and our kids is not my priority. Why do we gotta spend this money? Well, because you know, the way we do this, it's expected, and there's a lot of pressure, and if we don't, they're gonna think negative of us, and so for a week or two, we're gonna just let them set our priorities. And the answer is, why? You can either have conflict or misery. It's gonna cost you something. What I'm saying is, lovingly, kindly, graciously have the conflict set the boundaries, and don't just pay the price by enduring the misery. Because if you have the conflict, there's a chance that you can enjoy the holidays. If you endure the misery, you're going to expend the same amount of pain and suffering, and you're just not gonna enjoy the holidays. There's no hope whatsoever. Right? When your kids are like, hey, this isn't working, when your wife, hey, this isn't working, so I'm gonna give you a dangerous assignment, ask them. Hey, and don't make it a group, 'cause if you call a group family meeting, you'll get alliances. A couple of the kids will be honest and say, "Dad, we kind of think you suck at the holidays." And then a few of the kids will go, "No, no, Dad's awesome, he's amazing." Now you've got a divided household. What you want is an honest household, so you talk to each of the kids one-on-one. What's it like at Thanksgiving being part of this family? Do you look forward to it or do you dread it? Do you have good memories, do you have bad memories? What would a good Thanksgiving look like for you? What would you wanna do? And just listen. And then ask your wife, Thanksgiving, how's it been going for us? How are we doing? Do you like it, do you not like it? Is it working, is it not working? Do we try and tweak it? Do we try and coach a few people, set some boundaries? Or do we just hit a hard reset and just do it our way this year and see if that works for us? And usually what

happens is, no one says anything because they don't wanna be rude, but everyone's suffering. And sometimes as the man, the head of household, you don't even know until you ask. And there's been times, like with the kids when they were little, give you an example in the changing of seasons. When our kids were little, I was Christmas dad. I'm the fun planner at the Driscoll nation. I always need fun on the calendar. I like fun. I'm pro-fun. So when Christmas would come, we have all these things. I'm gonna take the girls on daddy-daughter Christmas date, just one-on-one, any restaurant they want, shopping, buy them a promise ring, go ice skating, big night out every year, whatever the girl wants to do. And as they get older they pick different things. With the boys, we'd go up in the mountains when they were little and we'd go sledding and the snow hill. And then I would get them in their pajamas and we'd jump in the car and I'd play the old Bing Crosby Christmas. We'd drive around, I'd buy them hot chocolate, we'd look at lights, we'd go to Festival of Lights. Like, I have it planned out. And then one of my kids is like, I don't like being out so much. I was like, come on, man. I'm world's most awesome dad. Like, you have diabetes from cocoa during the holiday season. Like, I have done my job. But for some of my kids, they're like, I love it, some of my kids are like, I don't. I didn't know that. So I gotta listen, gotta ask, okay, I want everyone to have a good holiday, which means I need to hear from everyone, so that as head of household, I can figure out how to sequence and architect a family holiday that everyone has a place where they are blessed and they're like, I love that, and another place where they're serving and they're like, well, that's not my favorite, but it's so-and-so's favorite. We learn to serve one another. That leads to the third point, which is plan. So perspective, where are we in our life stage and seasons? Priorities, who are what really matters most to us? And if I'm gonna say no to someone, it should be someone down the priority list, not up. And then the plan, Proverbs has a lot to say about planning, but Proverbs 12:20, "Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but those who plan peace have joy." The holidays are some of the least joyful season of the year for people and families. And it's some of the least peaceful. You know why? He just told us. If you don't plan, you won't have peace and joy. The theme for the holidays in America is peace and joy, and we don't have it. People are really stressed out and upset and disappointed and hurt. I mean, it's a very difficult time for a lot of people. So what Proverbs says is if you wanna have peace and joy, you don't just have the holidays, you need to have a plan for the holidays. Proverbs 21:5, "The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty," so you gotta make a plan, you got to work your plan, "but everyone who is hasty surely leads to poverty." The worst thing you can do is just start making knee jerk, last minute, overreacting decisions. During the holiday season, starting from Thanksgiving through the end of the year, there's work parties, school parties, recitals, events, church activities, extended family. There's a lot of activity. And the point is, you can't be hasty. You can't, okay, yes, yes, yes. You're like, no, we gotta talk, we gotta pray, we gotta plan, we gotta call a family meeting, gotta talk to my spouse. No, we can't do this, we can't do that. We can do this, we can do that. Because how many of you you find yourself literally just kind of fried heading into Christmas? You've said yes to so much, and as a result, you can't say yes to the things that God is asking you to say yes to. And the last scripture, "Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established." What he's talking about is, everything's saturated with prayer, wise counsel, scripture, and the Lord. So here's my simple assignment for you. I would encourage you meet with every member of your family individually and just have a little conversation. Hey,

Thanksgiving, let's talk about that. What do you like, what do you not like? What do you want, what do you not want? And then we got Christmas, let's have that conversation. And then call a family meeting. And there are three levels of leadership. This is how we do it at the Driscoll nation, a view, a voice, and a vote. A view is where we call a family meeting, and I believe in singular headship, plural leadership. Singular headship, the Bible says that I am the head of the household and that Mom and I are plural leaders. So it says, "honor and obey your mother and father." So I'm the singular head, we are the plural leaders. Call a family meeting, and everything I do, I agree with my wife, I talk with my wife, I pray with my wife. It's not good to be alone, a prudent wife is from the Lord, so all of our decisions we make in unison and agreement. And so then we call a family meeting. And a view is this, you're telling the kids what's gonna happen. The view. The view is, hey, you're all under my roof, you're my kids. Christmas morning, we're gonna get up, we're gonna have breakfast, and then we're gonna open our presents, so you cannot get up at three o'clock in the morning and open your presents, which is what they have planned. Okay, so a view is you tell them what's gonna happen. A voice is where you're asking them for their input and you're listening, and they have an opportunity to influence. If you do not give your kids a voice and an opportunity to speak into things, they'll either become bitter or sneaky. They're either gonna hate you 'cause you don't listen to them, or they're gonna sneak around to get what they want. A view, we're telling you, here's what we're doing. A voice, what do you guys wanna do, what would you like? So around Thanksgiving or Christmas, or especially Christmas, I'd call family meeting, I'd say, okay, everybody here, if you got to pick one thing that would be awesome for Christmas to do or to experience, what would that be? And they would each say that, and then as the dad, I'm trying to think about, is there a way for me to architect a holiday where everybody gets blessed with a thing that they love and everybody serves so that the other person could get their blessing, and then the vote. So there's a view, a voice, and a vote. A vote is, there are things that I'll let the kids decide. Now they're adults, they make their own decisions. And if they want, they can consult me and I'm happy to give counsel. But there would be things that we just let the kids decide. So, hey, what do you guys want for Christmas dinner? They'd tell us. You know, what service do you guys wanna go to at church? Give them a vote. And so when you call the family meeting, it's you and Mom being aligned, and then the view, the voice, and the vote, having them know what's gonna happen, speak into it, and even make some decisions. And here's what you need to do then, you need to literally organize the plan. Text it to them, post it on the fridge, however old your kids are, literally just let them know, here's what the holiday schedule is, 'cause kids have no idea. Like, what, we're gonna Grandma's, what? We're going to, what, they don't know what's going on. So make it clear and then just show them, hey, guys, today, everybody knows, here's what we're doing. Tomorrow, here's what we're doing, here's the plan. And one kid will be like, I don't wanna do that. No, no, no, no, that's what your sibling wanted to do, so you're gonna serve them. And then a couple of days, here's the thing that you wanted to do, and then they're gonna serve you. Oh, okay, so we're all getting blessed and we're all learning to serve. We all got a view, we know what's happening, we got a voice, we got to talk about it, and we got to vote, we got to choose a few things that we wanna do. And then you architect a family plan. But what you don't allow is the extended family, broken relationships, dysfunctional people to make your family plan for the holidays. Because if you don't make a plan, they will make a plan. And I

wanna give you guys freedom and permission as men to not just endure the holidays, but to enjoy them. And then lastly, pivot, and I'll just read this quick. "The heart of a man plans his ways, but the Lord establishes his steps." "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it's the purpose of the Lord that'll stand." What he's saying is this, you can make your plan, and then there are times you just gotta pivot. So maybe you're like, well, here's what we're doing for Thanksgiving, and somebody got COVID. Okay, well, we gotta figure that out. Some years ago, we organized Christmas, we were gonna have it at our house. We decorated the house, we invited the extended family over, Grace was gonna do prime rib, we had it all figured out. Grace got super sick with the flu and was in bed. And so I spent the whole holidays with her family, and I don't know how to cook anything. And so guess what? We order pizza, not 'cause we love it, but because I don't cook for safety reasons. It's a life and health issue. And so maybe you're like, hey, on this night, we're gonna do, you know, pajama night, drive around, look at Christmas lights, and one of the kids got sick. And so you make your plan, but you offer your plan to the Lord in prayer, and then as adjustments are needing to be made, you make them. So may even be one night, everybody's like, yeah, we were gonna go do that holiday thing, but we're all just really tired and we just wanna put our pajamas on and sit around and watch a Christmas movie and eat popcorn and eat licorice. That's what we used to do all the time. Okay, that's what we're doing. And so sometimes what can happen as a dad is we just think that life will organize itself, or as a husband or father or grandfather, we just think life is gonna figure itself out. Question, during the holidays, does it figure itself out? No. So guess what? You're gonna fix it. You're going to be the intentional, emotionally present, organized, listening, responsibility-taking head of household. And you know what will make the holidays awesome is not that you do everything perfect, but the people that are the priorities in your life know they're the priority, and they know that you love them, that you care, that you're intentional, and you're trying. And even if it doesn't all work, just them knowing your heart for them, I'll tell you, that's the best gift you can give them for the holidays. It feels a little heavy in the room. My guess is we've all got a little conviction here, and we've all got certain people that we can think of that if we don't figure out how to create boundaries with them or get some distance from them or put some expectations on them, that it's gonna be a rough next week and it's gonna lead to a rough next month. I love you guys with all my heart. I truly do. I'm proud of every single one of you. I'm honored to be in your presence and in your midst. And I'm sorry for some of the complexities that extended family and friends create, but I just wanna give you permission and freedom as the men of God, filled with the Spirit of God, to lead your family through the holidays. And that may even begin with repentance and saying, I've done it wrong, I've blown it, I made some mistakes. I ask your forgiveness, and it will not be the same this year. Give me a chance. Father, it seems like heaviness in the room. And so I pray for encouragement as we go into a time of testimony and prayer. But Lord, we live in a world that the holidays can be a lot of hope and then a lot of disappointment. For a lot of people, they're hoping that it goes well, but they're fearing that it won't. And God, there are so many unknowns and variables. I pray for these men to have wisdom, to have courage, to have a plan, to have ears that are open to hear, and God, that they would take responsibility. And that if some people are cutting in line and making themselves a priority, controlling, manipulating, threatening, or demanding, that these men would lovingly find a way to lead their family, because God, we know if we don't, the least healthy people in our

lives, they will assert themselves as head and they will determine what happens to our family. And so God, we want the best for them. And God, thank You that these are the men that you have entrusted to love and lead their families. And Lord, I just proclaim in the strong name of Jesus their marriages are sacred, their children are sacred, their grandchildren are sacred, their dinner table is sacred, their Thanksgiving is sacred, their Christmas is sacred, their home is sacred. And Lord God, I thank You that for us the holidays can really be holy days where sacred people get together to worship, to serve, to love Jesus, in whose name we pray, amen.