



YOU CAN'T CLEAVE UNLESS YOU LEAVE

Pastor Mark Driscoll RealMen | November 8, 2023 Sermon Link:

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Good to see you guys. Welcome to guys. Night out. We're the new guys. New guys. You guys join me. Welcome all the new guys. Thanks for joining us. We're outta seats. If you see a new guy, uh, find him a chair. Don't sit him on your lap. We don't do that. A real men. Uh, but it's really good to have you guys. My name's Pastor Mark and uh, I've got a special talk for you tonight, and it's gonna be super practical. We're headed into the holiday seasons, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and, uh, these can be complicated times because you need to deal with your extended family, also known as your in-laws, occasionally behaving like outlaws. And so what we find ourselves in this time of year is how do we manage all these different relationships with immediate and extended family? So I wanna give you a little preview. After Thanksgiving through the new year, I'm doing a special series and it's gonna be, uh, leaving Cleve on Family Systems. This'll be a little bit of an introduction and here's why. Uh, I want to get you guys thinking about where this sermon series is going, and I want you to go home and tell your wife if you're married, kind of honey, we need to start praying. Uh, pastor Mark is gonna meddle in our marriage and offend our in-laws. Uh, and that's his Christmas present to us. And so, uh, and just let her know what's coming and there's gonna be, uh, published as well through Real Faith. I wrote a 45,000 word, uh, workbook to go with it. If you're, uh, single, you can do it. If you're married, you can do it. Your wife can do it. You can share notes together. And, uh, yeah, just super, super grateful and glad. So the big idea is this, that, uh, when it comes to life and dealing with, uh, our family, um, it is the time of the holidays that create the most pressure or sometimes the most grief. And maybe you love your family, but that relationship isn't healthy or that extended family relationship is not really life giving. And it's complicated. Most of us have that situation. For those of you who are new, I'm gonna talk about family systems. So I, uh, I'm married 31 years faithfully, married to a woman, a girl, a female. Um, she, she identifies as female as well. So we're really blessed at my house. Um, and so we've been faithfully married 31 years. We've got five kids, three boys, two girls. My oldest three kids are married, and, uh, the oldest two have, uh, sons. So I've got two grandsons. And then I've got a daughter in college and a son who's a senior in high school. So we're at that age now where we're trying to figure out even with our own kids, okay, how do we relate to them and how do we have a healthy relationship with them? So two things. Lemme start by defining family. Family is an emotional, um, relational group, unit of people who spend time together. The way that you get something that feels like a family, whether it's a biological family or it's a friend group, or it is extended family or church, family is time together. So when we come together every week and you get that time together, you're building relationships and you're sharing life together, that's ultimately what a family is. It's a relational, emotional unit that does time together. And the more time you spend together, the deeper the relationship goes and the deeper the emotions are shared. What happens in a family system, they live under the same emotional skin, some counselors will say. And, uh, just to be clear, some of what I'm sharing is from a family systems theory called the Bowens Family Systems Theory. Been doing a lot of research on it. Everything I do is gonna be rooted in the Bible, but this is a family systems theory that'll be helpful. One of the things they say is that you share emotions. And so in a family system, the emotion that sometimes travels the most quickly and is shared, uh, the most deeply is anxiety. Anxiety. So if somebody in the family has a crisis, we're all rallying to support them. If somebody gets diagnosed with cancer or a child goes prodigal or uh, there's problems in a marriage or there's a miscarriage, or grandpa dies, the emotion and the anxiety gets shared. And so what happens then is a family system in large part determines whether or not you're a healthy person. There's three levels to this. And a lot of times people will be like, okay, I wanna be a healthy person. Great. That's what we want for you.

There's three levels to that. There's the personal or you personally healthy, like physically, are you healthy mentally? Are you healthy spiritually? Are you healthy emotionally? Are you healthy? The second level is your interpersonal relationships. Let's say you're married. How are you and your wife? Okay, if you got kids, how are you with each of your kids? If you've got parents as I do, um, how is your relationship with them? So there's the personal, then there's the interpersonal. But over all of these relationships is a system. And here's what I'm telling you. You can't be a healthy person or have healthy relationships in an unhealthy system. And a lot of times what happens is we, we feel broken, hurt, frustrated, going at why, why do I not get along with my parents? Why do I have family strain? How come that side of the family doesn't talk to us anymore? Why? Why, why are our relationships so bad? Maybe because the system is broken. And so what I want to do is I want to get in this series, and it's gonna take me five sermons. I want to get above the personal and the interpersonal. And I want to get to the level of system. I'll give you an example. Let's say for example, the family system is dad is the domineering, overbearing dictator in the family. He's non-emotional. He's non-relational. He is like a grenade with a pin pulled at any point, he just explodes. And our goal is not to upset dad. And dad never says he is wrong and never says he is sorry. And everybody just does what dad says. Otherwise, you endure dad's wrath. Okay? Is that a healthy or an unhealthy family system? Very unhealthy. So if you grow up in that home, are you going to have healthy relationships? No. Are you going to be a healthy person? It's gonna be really hard 'cause it's an anxious, domineering, overbearing family system. I know it's never happened in your family or your wife's family, but just hypothetically, consider this possibility of a broken family system, uh, in the family. The mom is the queen. And, uh, there's a phrase that says, if mama ain't happy, nobody says, so you, you, you've heard of this person. Uh, uh, so then the point is this, that mom always gets her way. And if mom doesn't get her way, mom gets very emotional. She'll get very emo. She'll either yell or cry or both, and then all the, and then dad steps in is like, Hey, don't, don't, don't make your mom cry. Don't make your mom angry. You kids need to do exactly what mom tells you to do. So in that family system, who's the boss mom? And how does she lead by controlling and manipulating through emotion. And so then in that family system, the whole goal of the family system is, uh, don't make mom emotional. That's the whole goal. Can you be a healthy person and have healthy relationships in a system where the entire objective is not to allow the highly emotional woman to get emotional? No. You, some of you guys chuckle and you're like, yeah, this now explains my family. Okay, so this is where we're going. So let me do this. Let me throw a scripture up and I'm gonna just do this lecture on one verse. And, uh, it's one that you may know. Genesis 2 24. We'll do it from the old King James version, therefore a man. Okay? And just for you guys that are new, there are men and women, okay? Okay. Tell your friends. We want this to catch on as an idea. A man shall leave his father and mother shall cleave unto his wife. The two shall become one flesh. I just wanna talk about those two words. Leave and cleave. Leave is literally, as a young man, it's a process of maturing and differentiation. So you don't just leave, but there are steps to leaving. So let's say you're a teenage young man. You get a driver's license, now you have a little independence, you get a job and you should get a job. Now you're starting to pay some of your own bills, though you're still living with your parents. You graduate from high school. Let's say you go to college or you get a job. Now you're launched and on your own, you gotta get yourself up for work. You gotta cook your own meals, you gotta do your own dishes, you gotta clean your own laundry. You gotta make your own budget. You gotta take care of yourself. It's a process by which you become a fully functioning adult male. And let me say this, when the Bible speaks of marriage, it says that men take a wife or a woman, and that

daughters are given in marriage. That's the language of the Bible. So a boy is to grow up, become a man, an independent, a woman is supposed to be responsible and mature, but she's supposed to remain connected to who her father and her family. And they love and protect her until her husband comes. And then literally they walk down the aisle and the father hands off the daughter. And from that point forward, her priority is to him. But prior to that, the priority is to the, to the family and to the father. So a, a husband, a man needs to leave his mother and father be a fully independent, functioning adult, and then cleave to his wife. And Cleave is an old word, but it means to pursue with vigorous passion. How many of you guys have things you're excited about, right? Some of you're the car guys, some of you're the golf guys. Some of you guys are really excited about the Arizona Diamondbacks until the very end. Uh, you know, some, some of you have got things that you're very passionate about. Hunting season comes, you're all about it. Fishing, you're all about it. It's that passionate pursuit of your wife as a priority. Someone in something that you enjoy and you're enthusiastic about. And you can't cleave to your wife unless you leave your mother and father. 'cause if you're cleaving to your mother and father, you can't cleave to your wife. So you have to leave your mother and father so you can cleave to your wife. There are four major scriptures in regards to mother and father. Uh, this is the one I'll share last. So the first one is obey your mother and father, the word there is for when you're a little kid, not an adult. Weirdest counseling session I ever had, kid you not, this is in the book. The dad was like in his seventies, and the son was like in his fifties and they were having conflict. So they asked me to mediate. I was like, in my twenties, I, I was like, I don't know what I'm doing here. Um, and the dad was like, yeah, he won't obey his father. I was like, he's in his fifties. Like, I like, like, like, I don't think you could, like, if you still have a wooden spoon, I think it's time to put it away. Like you're in your seventies, he's in his fifties. The Bible says to obey your mother and father, but the word for children, there is always little child. When you're in your twenties, do you need to do what your mom says? That was not a trick question, gentlemen. That was not a trick question. I'll ask again. When you're in your twenties, do you need to do who your mom said? No, you don't. The guy's like, I don't know, mom said, I'm telling you, that's why, that's why you're a real man. Share the link with your mom. Okay? Um, so there's another scripture that says, to honor your mother and father, that is for every season of your life, when you're a little kid, you should honor your mother and father. When you're a young adult, you should honor your mother and father. When you get older, you should honor your mother and father. My mom and dad are great. I love my mom and dad, and they love the Lord. And they're very, very good to me. And they're in their seventies. And I, I need to honor them and I do wanna honor them. And so obeying your mother and father is only when you're little honoring your mother and father is throughout your whole life here, we just learned, um, leave your mother and father at some point. You've gotta leave. That's what we're gonna talk about. And then there's another thing that Jesus says, and lemme say this too. What happens is religious parents, especially emotionally controlling religious mothers who over mother. And as a result, the children are under fathered. They always just quote the obey your mother verse. And, and if you're in your twenties, thirties, if you're married and your mom or your dad are still quoting the obey me verse, it no longer applies. If you want to give them a verse, here's the verse to give them, are you ready? Jesus says to blank, your mother and father hate, hate. So if, if that word hate is strong, you're like, the Bible says to a bigger mother, Jesus said to hate you. Now, what does that word mean? It means to prioritize. In another one of the gospels, Jesus says, if you don't make your relationship with God more important than your mother and father, then you're acting like you hate God. And if a family forces you to choose between God and them, and you

choose God, they're gonna feel like what? You hate them. Every once in a while, there's a really unhealthy family. Let's say they're all atheists and you're like, I love Jesus. No, our family doesn't worship Jesus. We're gonna disown you. I'm sorry. I need to leave my mother and father. I need to go walk with Jesus. I saw this in a devout Hindu family some years ago. A friend of mine became a Christian and he told his devout Hindu family, um, I became a Christian and I'm gonna get baptized. I said, if you get baptized, we're gonna have a funeral and we're gonna consider you dead. He had to hate, not emotionally aggressively oppose, but choose God over his family. And it felt to the family like he was turning his back on them. He wasn't. He was turning his face toward Jesus. And so ultimately what Jesus is talking about with, hey, your mother and father is you gotta get your priorities straight and you gotta keep your priorities straight. And what happens is, before you get married, who's your priority? Your mother and father, once you get married, what's your priority? Your spouse and your new family? Let me, uh, lemme just do this. Let me share a few things with you. I made a few charts. So lemme start with this one. This is a complete enmeshed family. Some how many of you, when you got married, uh, somebody said, we're so glad you're joining our family or the family. How many of you heard that, okay, that was wrong. That was wrong. Here's what I tell my kids. I've officiated the wedding of my three oldest kids that are married so far. The same thing I say at all the weddings is this. He's not joining her family. She's not joining his family. They are starting a new family, a new family, a family that doesn't allow newly married couples with their children to form their own family. It's like there is only one family and everybody lives in the family system. And then everyone who is born next generation into the family gets added to the family system. You know what that is? Pressure. And so this is what a completely enmeshed family looks like. You, you've got great grandparents and then grandparents, and then parents, and then children, and then grandchildren, great-grandchildren. And then the assumption is that whoever is the oldest gets to be in charge. That they get to tell you where you're gonna live and if you're gonna go to church and what church you go to and how many kids you have and, and where your kids go to school. And they want to sort of in effect, uh, operate as head of household and just give commands and demands and orders and say, this is what you need to do. Now if you don't agree with those generations that came before you and the imposition they're trying to make on your family, then what they do, they will grab the other family members and they will form an alliance to pressure you to get in line because you're part of our family. And that's how our family does it. Has anyone ever seen this? We see this all the time, right? It's Thanksgiving. Like, Hey, you need to come to town and uh, you need to stay at our house. You need to bring your spouse and your kids. It's Thanksgiving, we're all getting together. You're like, we don't want to do that. That's what our family does. You're part of our family. No, no, we have our family. You have your family, we're gonna talk about this. And uh, you are now my extended family and my priority is my immediate family. And sometimes the way this works in a dysfunctional family system, they will start to manipulate or threaten, well, you better do what we say or we're gonna cut you outta the family. We need to, you need to do what we say or we're gonna cut you out of the inheritance. You need to do what we say or we're gonna cut you out of the family business. And what it is, it's multi-generational control. And if you marry into that family system, let's say this is your wife's extended family, you hate your life, you hate your life, you're like, I got a bunch of people that I did not marry that are all telling me what to do. And they're saying that I have to abide by this sort of mafia concept of family. And at that point, what happens is, if you are married into that, your spouse is literally in a hostage negotiation between you and their extended family and, and you, and, and let's say this is your wife. She's carrying that anxiety and stress. Some family

systems are completely enmeshed. Um, what happens when you get married? Your priorities change. So let me, let me flip it from the other side. So I, I'm a dad. I love my kids with all my heart. I'm blessed to have five wonderful godly kids. It's one of the great blessings of my life. But let's say for my daughter. So my oldest daughter, um, she's married and she's got a baby boy. So before she was married and had a baby boy who was the main man, the number one guy, first in line in my daughter's life, it was me. Then she got married. Guess what? I got demoted to second position. When I walked her down the aisle and handed her to him, I literally was putting him in my place as the priority. Now she's got a baby boy. Guess what happened? I got another demotion. I'm now in third place. And as a father, true or false, this is a little tough 'cause you're like, man, I'm, I'm, I love daddy dates. I love taking her to school. I love, you know, Christmas events with her and going out and I love tucking her in at night and I love seeing her after school. And now she doesn't come to my house after school and I don't get to tuck her in. I mean, that'd be really weird for her husband and me. So, um, so as a dad, I've gotta realize that the position I was in was to prepare her to become a wife and then a mother. And then I need to accept my new position. And my joy can't be found in how close I am to her, but how healthy her family is. Is their marriage good? Is their child good? Do they love each other? Are they doing good? My joy is not being the main man in her life, but being the man who was there to love and protect her until she got her husband and her child. And to honor and respect that my, um, so my three sons, they are, I know this will shock you. They're very strong personalities with a lot of opinions. Obviously they got that from their mother. So pray for me. We're dealing with this in my house. If I told my sons, Hey, I'm in charge and you need to do what I tell you. And when you get married, I'm gonna tell you what to do with your marriage. And when you have children, I'm gonna tell you what to do with your children. And if I'm still around and you have grandchildren and they're my great-grandchildren, I'm going to be telling you what to do. And the family's gonna be exerting a lot of pressure because this is how we do it. My sons would not stand for that. My sons would be forced to create strong boundaries with me or actually cease having a relationship with me altogether. It's called cutoff. It's something we'll get into in a moment. Let me share another one with you. So what happens when a couple gets married, we're still dealing with the leave Cleve, there's the wife, extended family, the husband's extended family, and then there's a newly married new family. So like my youngest, uh, my middle son rather, he just got married a few months ago to a wonderful gal. She's our kids' ministry coordinator. Now what happens is she had her extended family and he had his extended family. And what we need to do is now honor the fact that they're a new family. And if we don't do that, what happens is then the husband's side of the family is pulling, Hey, you guys need to come over for Christmas, need to come over for Thanksgiving. We need to spend the holidays with us. We need to go on vacation. You know, family dinner Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Um, you know, we need to do everything together. We need to see you for your birthday. His side is pulling, guess what? If her side is pulling, no, we wanna see you for Christmas. We wanna see you for Thanksgiving. We wanna do vacation with you. Uh, we want celebrate the birthday with you. We want to do life with you. We want to hang out with you. What does that do to that young couple? It potentially divides them because she's like, well, I don't want my family to be, you know, abandoned by me. He is like, well, I don't want my family to be abandoned by me. And so it creates this pulling tension on this young couple. And it causes strain sometimes. This is because the family system is broken. Uh, for example, um, I'll never forget, I'm just, I always verbal process this one. But, um, I'll never forget a newly married couple I was dealing with some years ago, Thanksgiving, Christmas, all the birthdays, vacations, her family just expected that she would be there. 'cause

she was always there before she was married. So they're like, well, just 'cause you get married doesn't mean anything changes. Well, yeah, everything changes. So for a few years he's like, okay, I'll go to there for Christmas and Thanksgiving and vacations and holidays and dah dah dah. Then he finally realized my, uh, father-in-law and Mother-in-law don't have a healthy, loving, joyful marriage. And the reason that they always have to have the kids around is 'cause they need the kids to give them something in common. They actually don't like being together. So they're never alone. So what he said was, honey, let's spend some of the holidays with them, but I wanna have our own traditions. What do we want to do for Christmas? What do we want to do for Thanksgiving? You know, your parents go on vacation sometimes. I don't wanna go on vacation with your parents. I just want to get a break. And um, she told him, she said, we can't do that. And he said, why? She said, because I can't abandon my family. And I told her, I said, sweetheart, I said, he's your family. They're your extended family. She said, but my parents don't have a good marriage and they both love me. And if I'm not there, I think they're gonna get divorced. I was like, so your job is to be the savior of your parents' marriage and you can't leave your mother and father and cleave to your husband because you need to rescue and save their marriage. She's like, yeah, that's right. So the whole poll is out of a broken marriage and system. Um, I'll go another level deeper. Sometimes the one thing that holds a married couple together is the kids. Guess what happens when the kids grow up and they leave their mother and father, the marriage craters and collapses. Grace and I, as I said, we've been faithfully married 31 years and, uh, we're down to one son at home and, uh, he's differentiating, he's launching even this summer. He is like, dad, I'm gonna be outta state. I'm getting a job at a construction crew and, uh, helping out at the church and I'll see you in some months. I was like, you know, you're 17 and you can't like rent a car or, uh, you know, like a hotel. He is like, I'll figure it out. All right son, good luck. See you in a few months. Um, so he's he's figuring it out, you know? So, uh, so we're very close to empty nest when he goes to college in the fall, we're seeing lots of our friends' marriages, even Christians, even some pastors. We know their marriages are imploding because you know what held it together, the kids. And so what happens is sometimes you can't let your kids leave and cleave because what do we have? Well, then you gotta work on your marriage. It's not your kids' responsibility. Um, in addition, um, what happens then? I I, I'll share another thought. What happens then is let's say your kids leaving Cleave and the only thing that's really holding your marriage together is kids. Guess what? You start pressuring your now married children for grandkid. Where's the, where's the, where's the grandkids? Is she fertile? Is it, you know, like, hey, get outta my ovaries. Like this is none of your business, right? Um, but then it's pressure. Why do, why do, why are we pressuring them to have kids? Because our marriage only works when there's children. We don't really have a close relationship, but where it's face-to-face, we do shoulder to shoulder, and we're really good at serving children, and now our children are gone and they need to give us more children so that we have something to do together. And this is where bad marriages, especially with emotional, and sometimes, uh, misprioritized, uh, mother-in-laws start pressuring, um, the next generation to give them grandchildren as soon as possible. And there's a lot of pressure put on that young couple to cover the dysfunction and brokenness of the prior generation. And what happens is, if you get pulled into a dysfunctional marriage or family system and you're thinking, I'm gonna save them, or I'm going to rescue them, or I'm going to help them, the point is this, you've taken that broken system and you've now just extended it to another generation. This is how you get generational curses. A generational curse is something is broken in the family. The kids grow up and they don't wanna leave their mother and father and cleave to their spouse. So they stay within the broken system. And now that

breaks their marriage and their children grow up now in a multi-generational, broken, dysfunctional family system. And next thing you know, it's generational curses. It's like, why is this family so screwed up? Well, because nobody will leave in Cleve. Everyone is stuck. How about, um, the other reason this will be more positive, the other reason why there's sometimes a pull back to your extended family, they love you. It's not bad, it's good. They're just like, Christmas. We love having you around Thanksgiving. We love having you around vacation. We love having you around. But it is then having that conversation of, well, you love having us around and we love you as well, but we need to leave and cleave. We can't do everything with you because we have our own family. So like, for example, we've got Thanksgiving coming up. I'll give you guys an example. So Thanksgiving's coming up and we called a big family meeting because I don't have a family. I've got four families. I've got my family, me, grace, and our two kids that are unmarried, my two sons, they're married, uh, with their wives and one of them has a son, and then my daughter and her husband and their son. That's four families. Well, if we wanna do Thanksgiving, I can't tell three families what to do. We gotta get together and talk, okay, four families, what do you guys want to do? And try and figure out if there's a win for everybody. And some years passed, some of the couples said, we got time off work, we're leaving. We won't be there for Thanksgiving. Okay? That's your family. You get to make your decision this year. Um, they all wanted to get together and Grace and I want to go to Hawaii. We prayed about it. Um, don't judge. And so we've tried to go to Hawaii three times in our marriage. It's never worked. Uh, the nine 11 hit and then an earthquake hit as we were head to the airport, and then, uh, covid hit. And so I've got a little time off of work and Grace is like, do you want to go to Hawaii? Yes, I do with you. And, uh, I love my children with all my heart, but it's not the same. So they're not coming. Okay? I really like my wife. And, uh, and, and now that the kids are growing up, I get more of her. I'm cool with that. I I like her. She's still cute, she's still fun, she's still joyful. Uh, she's still there. So she has a high pain tolerance and low expectations. We got a real good thing going. So what I told the kids was actually this year for Thanksgiving, our family, it's gone. We're gone. So what they're like, can we do Thanksgiving dinner? Then a few days before Thanksgiving? I said, yeah, so this is what we agreed to where the four families are gonna get together for Thanksgiving a couple days before Thanksgiving. Then they can do whatever they want to do with their immediate or extended family. And then I'm gonna take my family grace, and we're going to Hawaii. Okay? We're gonna, we're gonna, we're gonna, well, yeah. So, um, every once in a while the Holy Spirit's like, now's a good time to stop. I'm like, okay, thank you sir. So, so here's how this, so these are your three options with a family system. We're still talking about one verse, two words leaving Cleve. So one version on the, uh, left is complete enmeshment and it's fusion. And that is there. You're not allowed to leave your mother and father and Cleve to your spouse. Um, let me tell you guys what this looks like. This looks like you marry a gal and she won't take your last name. Shots fired. Shots fired, because she's still more committed to her extended family than her new family. Enmeshment is, everyone has almost group think. And you're not allowed to be an individual or to differentiate or be different from your family. And there's a lot of pressure. Sometimes this happens when, um, let's say there are certain cult, uh, let's just do this since we've not, you know, been two events, if it's time to offend, are there any cultures where the family system just pushes toward enmeshment? We do everything together. We hang out together. We share our money, we share our kids, we share our holidays. We like, there's not boundaries between your family and my family. It's just one big family. Certain cultures function that way. It's enmeshment that is not leaving your mother and father. Um, and then on the other side is cutoff. Uh, this is full independence and cutoff. Is this,

I'm done. Okay. Sometimes cutoff, uh, can be a good thing. So let's say you've got a family. They're, they're drug cartel, they're mafia, they're into witchcraft. Uh, they abuse children. Um, they're swingers. You need to what? Cut off. Like, you know what? No, for the good to start, the bad must end. This is like Abraham being cold of God. To literally move, you know, to another country to get away from his pagan demonic father. It's just literally a full cutoff. There are rare times where you have to cut off, right? If the older men in your family abuse children, you gotta cut that. And America is a nation of cutoffs because most of our families moved here from another country. We're from county Cork, Southern Ireland. Uh, we were the o Driscolls. And so when my extended family moved here, we literally left our family. It was a, it was a cutoff. Uh, America is a nation of cutoffs. How many of you in your own family tree, there's whole branches that got cut off. You're like, I don't even know about that side of the family. Like, I've got relatives that I've heard stories about, but I've never met. I've got a cousin who was on the television show cops and he wasn't a cop. That's a true story. That's a true story. I wish I could say he was a cop. I'd be like, uh, no, it wasn't a cop. He was the other guy. There's a whole, there's a whole series of branches in every family tree. Like it got cut off. You're like, well, what happened? You're like, we don't talk about them. We don't deal with them. Okay? Sometimes though, um, cutoff happens, um, just by necessity of life, how many of you in Arizona moved here from somewhere else? Most of us did. That's a cutoff. And so there is this tension in our life between being a part of a group enmeshment and being an individual cutoff. There's a tension. We wanna be an individual, but we want to be in a group. The way that we even denote this, uh, sociologically in our day, you have a first and a last name. Your last name is what? Your group, your first name is your individuality. This tension exists where I wanna be an individual and I wanna be part of a group. What happens in many marriages, one person is more enmeshment, the other is more cutoff. So one is like, we gotta we gotta see my family. We can't, my mom's crying. We, you know, we, we, we just, we gotta, we gotta go. When we go to, you know, Christmas, we gotta go to their city and we need to stay in their house under their roof, in their system, by their rules. And if you're married, you're like, do they have alcohol? You know, I don't know how to endure this. Um, and then, and some of you, you're, you're married to someone who's more enmeshment. And, and what happens is, uh, lemme say this, you get jealous. Jealousy can be bad, but God gets jealous. So jealousy isn't always bad and jealousy is, I know you love your family, but I don't feel like a priority. I know that you care about them, but I don't feel like you're emotionally connected with me and the kids. I know you want to go see them, but I don't feel like you're excited to be with me and our family. I feel like you're, you have not been able to leave and cleave, that's enmeshment. Some of you are more cutoff. Cutoff is, I'm done. You move across the country, you change your phone number, you block 'em on social media and if they're really nasty, it's lawyers, guns, and money. That's how you deal with that extended family. And let me ask you this. When it comes to enmeshment too close cutoff, no contact. Which way do you think most moms lean enmeshment, where do most dads lean cutoff? So mom's like, that's my baby. Dad's like, he's 42, right? Stop putting beer in a sippy cup. He needs to launch it's time. Okay? And so part of the reason that we're getting young men who are failing to launch and leave is because they were over mothered and under fathered is you grew up in a home without a father. The gravitational force is to be enmeshed with your mother. She's going to see when a woman gives birth to a child, literally, biologically, neurologically, it re hardwires her body to make you a priority. So literally, when a woman has a baby, she's not even differentiated from the baby. The baby is in her and feeding off of her. And so a woman with her child starts completely enmeshed in a way that a man does not. Now the baby gets born, she

feeds and nurtures and caress and protects. But if sometime that child is gonna become an adult, they're gonna need to learn to leave so they can cleave. If you were a man raised by a single mother, you were probably over mothered. And your tendency is probably toward enmeshment because your mother loved you and you loved her. Your father wasn't there to take care of your mother. So you care for her and you have a hard time leaving her because she doesn't have a husband. And you feel like she'll be alone. This is one of the sociological reasons that an entire generation of young men is not launching. They have no father and fathers tend to push toward get going, right? Go find your own house, get off the payroll, right? You know, your mom is babysitting you and uh, I'm sick of it. It quits bringing your girlfriend over to my house. You know, go get your own house and get a wife, right? So a couple of dads are laughing. You could just tell that we're now, well, this is the point of the sermon where we've gone from teaching to meddling. Um, so put that one back up again. The what we're just looking at. So the tension is between enmeshment and cutoff. How many of you in your family you feel this tension? How many of you with extended family or your spouse's extended family feel attention? So the healthy, if you can get to it, is c is differentiation. That is, you're connected, but you're not codependent. That means you care about your family, but you're not carrying your family. You're not carrying your family. And so what this would mean is, um, you've got your own house, but sometimes you go to your in-laws and they come to your house. Um, this means that you have your own bank account and your in-laws don't get to tell you what to do with your money unless you ask them. This means you get to decide what you're going to do for school and work and life and raising of children and attending of church and differentiation means we do things how different, different. And we're not saying you're wrong. We're saying we're different. That's how you do it. This is how we do it. That's how you wanna live your life. This is how we want to live our life. It's different. And differentiation is saying, I love my family, but I'm also leaving my family to start my own new family. And my family will do things differently. And again, this is not condemning, attacking or judging their families. It's just leaving and cleaving to start your own family. Now, oh, lemme show one thing and let me verbal process one thing we'll call. Good. So this is, so when I sat down with each of our kids, when they went to get engaged, this is literally what I drew on a piece of paper. I said, okay, there's her extended family, there's his extended family. And now I even use this language. I tell the kids like, you're a family. I'm extended family. So I, I, I hope you guys know this, I dearly love my children. I'm a hundred percent committed to their wellbeing and we're a very close family. But, uh, at the end of the day, I want them to know that I am now extended family and their spouse is their family. And what I can't do is look at them and say, you need to take care of your family. No, no. 'cause their priorities have changed. Leave your mother and father, um, cleave to your spouse. The two become one flesh. Marriage is a covenant and it's a covenant. So like my son who just got married, uh, and I officiated his wedding, um, I am not part of their covenant. Their covenant is, um, it's the wife and the husband and the Lord. Okay? Think of it this way. Think of it as a triangle. The Lord is over, the husband and the wife. That's a covenant marriage. Guess where me and my wife are not in the covenant. That's why we didn't stand on stage and also take vows. That's why there's not a line for us on the wedding license. That's why Grace and I didn't sit between them in the car on their honeymoon, driving to their wedding night. Amen. Right? It's like, hey, we're, we're family. Like, no, we're not. You're extended family. You stay behind and clean up the reception. We're gonna go consummate this marriage. We got things to do. And so it's, but again, when people can't think of families and they only think of family, if all you think of is family, you're gonna ruin every family. If you think of families, you could actually bless

every family. So back to the graphic. So this is what I show my kids. I was like, you're starting your own new family. And you know what the overlap in the circles is? Christmas, Thanksgiving, vacations, birthdays. It's times when we get together. But then we need to discuss what works for your family. So I'll give you another example. Um, for Christmas we're like, okay, uh, part of my complication is I work on the holidays. So you guys are like, I love Easter. I get to go to church, I go to work. He goes, I love Christmas service. I'm working. So I work for the holidays, which means it's more complicated for me to get time with my immediate and extended family. So we got together and we talked, we're gonna have services on Christmas Eve. So I'm working all the other couples, the other three families. Guess what they said? We don't wanna see you. They didn't say it this way. They were very loving about it. But they said, uh, we don't want to get together on Christmas morning. We want to carve out that time for our family to have our traditions, our memories, and to have our own immediate family Christmas. That's sacred us. Is that good or bad? Good. That's really good. Oh, you're married and you like each other and you want to have more children. Yay. This is what I was shooting for, you know, my entire life was to launch you to be a reproducing functioning adult. So then it was like, okay, well when would all the families like to get together? They came to the conclusion, can we get together for like a, an early dinner and share gifts and all see each other and spend, uh, some time together on Christmas night? Answer. Great. Well, what I would never do is send out a group text saying, here's what you're all doing. 'cause I don't have the authority to command their family. I only have authority over my family as head of households, these other three young husbands, um, and two fathers, their head of household over their family. So if we're gonna talk about how to get the families together, guess what needs to happen? The families need to discuss it and the heads of families need to agree on it. This make sense? How many of you, it's not working like this? Uh, how many of you would lean more toward cutoff? I'm done. We're out. Okay, how many of you more enmeshment. I'm gonna put up with a lot of pain 'cause I do love my family and it's complicated. All of this is what we're going to get into in, uh, the family system series. This is just a verbal processing introduction, five sermons, full workbook for you and your spouse. I've got one minute, let hit one more thing. Sometimes what happens is you do differentiate and you've got pretty healthy boundaries and things are pretty good with your extended family. And then a crisis hits counselors will call this a nodal event. A nodal event is when someone leaves the family, there's a death or a divorce. Uh, someone joins the family, there's a birth or a wedding. Grandpa gets cancer. Mom and dad, um, separate. Um, Tommy decides he's transgender. Some catastrophic thing hits the family. That literally is like a tremor of an earthquake and it shakes the family. And it can actually have generational implications. When those nodal events happen, they say that it, it's an opportunity for good or bad to reset the family system. All of a sudden it's like, you know, we, we have good boundaries, but then boom, but got cancer and mom got Parkinson's. Now it's enmeshment. Now everybody drops everything. We're we gotta save them. We're gonna move them into our house. We gotta change our plans and our house and our fin. Now all of a sudden there's a rallying to save someone or to fix something in the family. And in those moments, oftentimes what happens is you make very short-term decisions that cause long-term pain to your own family. 'cause you're like, well, I, I, I did, I leave mother, I, here's what I did. Leave mother and father clea to my spouse. Uh, oh. Nodal event crisis. Leave my spouse clea to my mother and father. And what that causes is a lot of tension in those nodal event crises. 'cause it's the spouse is like, I want you to love your family and I care about them, but we can't save them by killing us. We can't sacrifice our family to save their family. We gotta figure out how to make this happen. And they say, when a nodal event occurs,

just four things and they'll close. Some people respond with fight. They escalate, they get angry, emotional, agitated. They kind of blow the whole thing up. When there's a nodal event in the family. Some people, um, have flight. They just disappear. This is the kid. Like, they just go to their room. Their headphones are always on. When they were 16, they ran away from home. When they go to college, they go to college halfway across the country, they don't come home, they just disappear. They ghost you. They don't return your calls, texts, emails. They just flight. They're gone. When a nodal event hits, some people just freeze. They don't know what to do. They're, I don't, they're just paralyzed. I don't know. They're kind of overwhelmed. I don't know what to say. I don't know what to do. They're just kind of overwhelmed. And then the fourth is care. And this I thought was really interesting in my research. When a nodal event hits the family, the caregiver is the one who's carrying everyone's emotions and burdens and how can I serve and how can I fix it? And what can I do and, and let, what can I? And so what happens is the caregiver starts emotionally carrying all the responsibility for everyone else in the family. We need to give them money. We need to go to their house. We need to spend time with our kids. We need to find them a counselor. We need to pick them up for church. We need to be praying for them. We need to have them over for dinner. We need to lend them our car. We need to let them move into our casita. You're like, whoa. We, we don't. Now we're doing enmeshment out of caregiving. And when there is a caregiver, a few things you need to know about the caregiver. Number one, they're usually the most physically, emotionally broken person in the family because they're always, it's like a firefighter or a nurse that's on 24 hours a day just trying to fix everything and save everybody. So they're, they're very emotionally immature and unwell. Number two, the caregiver never gets to launch because they're not allowed to think about their future. They're too busy consumed with everyone's present to think about differentiating, being a different person, carving a different path, leaving their mother and father cleaving to their spouse and starting a new family. I just feel like I'm inclined to say this in the spirit, and this will be my final statement. If your wife is a caregiver and her family is enmeshed, you love her very much, but you miss her very much. That's just what I feel inclined in the spirit to say. Does this make some sense? So this is the introduction. Will you join me for the series? Will you Bring Your Mother-in-Law? Okay. So, um, that's where we're going. Alright? Um, and I'll say this too. I'm certainly not doing this perfectly. I'm learning as I go. I'm trying to be a good father and grandfather and Father-in-Law. And these are things that I'm just trying to learn so that I can have a healthy relationship with my kids and with the grandkids and that we can have generations of health. And uh, and, and I love you guys very much and I want that for you and for us older men. I want us to learn this so we can put this grace on younger generations for you young men, I want you to have the authority to be head of household and with humility, lead and make decisions for you and your family. And so here's a few discussion questions in prayer. Uh, what was your biggest personal takeaway from the talk? Um, what changes would you need to make to have a healthy, immediate family? And sometimes we tolerate things from family members we would never tolerate from anyone else. And so my thing is, if you wouldn't allow that person in your life, why do you allow them in? Just because you share DNA, you should choose people on character. What actions and conversations would make the holidays better this year? And then how can we pray for you? Amen. Lord, I pray for the conversations here. And God, as we lean into this series after Thanksgiving, God, I pray that I'd be able to love and serve well. I thank you for, uh, my kids and my daughter-in-laws and my son-in-law and the grandchildren, God, none of us gets family right the first time. We're all figuring it out. I do pray, Lord, here at this church where we say, we open our Bibles to learn. We open our lives to love so

that lives and legacies are transformed. I pray God that this would really strengthen legacies for generations. In Jesus' name, amen. Love you guys. Thanks for letting me teach.