



How to Leave & Cleave

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All right, you ready to go? We're gonna have a great time. Welcome to the first sermon in our brand new series. Uh, happily Never After. Question mark, how to leave in Cleve. We're gonna deal with family systems, and before we jump in, I've got two resources for you. One, uh, my wife Grace, and I've got a marriage podcast. It'll come out, uh, midweek after each sermon. And we're dealing with the same themes as our sermon series, and we're dealing with how do you deal with extended family, have those hard conversations, set healthy boundaries, enjoy life and family, you can tune into that. And then also the Leave and Cleve workbook. For those who are here in our church family, we've got a copy for you. For those who are joining us online, it's a 45,000, uh, word workbook that I wrote. It includes, uh, Bible reading, it includes a bit of a teaching, and then time to meet with the Holy Spirit and prayer. And if you're married, do this, and then do it separate from your spouse. Then come together and talk about what to do with your in-laws. Um, and that would include the prayer section. So this is gonna be super helpful for you, and I love you, and I wanna help. So this sermon series, just so you know, I'm gonna wear the dad hat. Sometimes I get up and prophesy and hit issues. Other times I get up and teach this sermon series. I'm gonna put on the dad hat. I'm gonna tell you the same things that I tell our five children, three of whom are married. And so as we're dealing with family, I know it's very emotional for many people, positive and negative. I want you to think about your family. Who is your family? And I'll introduce you quickly and briefly to ours. So my wife, grace and I, uh, that's us on the left. Uh, we met at age 17, married at 21. We've been together more than 35 years. We've been married for 31 years. And then on the right, uh, that is also us. And, uh, I always say that women age like wine and men age like milk. So that's kind of what we're dealing with at our house. And so we've been faithfully married for 31 years. And then fast forward, here's where we're at today. We've got five kids, three boys, two, uh, girls, and three of the kids are married. Two have kids. So we've got two grandsons. So that's where our family is at today. And two things I want you to know. Number one, we started wrong and we did it wrong, and then we had to make a lot of corrections. So as we're in this sermon series on family systems, if you're thinking our marriage or our family system is not set up quite right, you're in good company. Almost everyone does it wrong until they figure out how to do it right. Number two, and God's been very gracious to us, and he's healed our family, and we want to help your family. In addition, we are still learning as we go. Grace and I have never parented adult kids. We're grandparents for the first time. Like every couple, we're figuring it out as we go. And so a lot of what I wanna share with you is the result of my study, just trying to love and lead my, my family and our extended family. Uh, lastly, I just want you to know, this sermon series is not motivated by bitterness. Uh, this is very important when you're talking about family. Uh, my parents have been faithfully married for more than 50 years. They're Christians. They love Jesus. We have a great relationship with them. They're actually, quite frankly, very easy to get along with Grace's. Mom and dad were married for more than 50 years till her dad passed away a few years ago. And, uh, her mother moved to Arizona. And as part of our church family and part of our family, and I love her very much, I, I hit the Grand Slam with Mother-in-Law. We get along great. We love and respect each other. We have a close, warm relationship. And so for us, we do enjoy now at this church, four generations of healthy, loving, not perfect, but figuring it out as we go, family. That being said, think about your family. And then I wanna look at what God says about family. And this scripture will be the thesis and theme for our five weeks together. And it's Genesis 2 24 and the good old school King James version. And here's what it says. Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be one flesh. That's the big idea that we'll be unpacking in all of our time together. And, uh, I think I'll start

with a story. So sit down, story time. Um, here we go. So let me tell you a story about, uh, how this, uh, sermon series really came to be, but also one story that sort of illustrates the big idea. So some years ago, we needed some woodwork done at our house. So we, we hired a contractor who was, uh, a woodworking specialist. And as he was doing the work, we started visiting. And, uh, he asked, he said, what do you do for a living? And I said, well, I'm a preacher. I'm a, and, and he didn't, you know, leave. And so I thought, we're off to a good start. So I'm a preacher. And he said, uh, he said, well, how did you become a preacher? He didn't know who I was. So I told him, I said, well, how did you become a woodworker? And he said, it's a long story. I was like, I got nothing else to do. Tell me the story. So he told the story. He said that he was a Christian. And when he was in his twenties, he went to church and he met a very sweet, godly, kind young woman, just fell in love with her and started to get to know her and pursue her, and got to know her parents. And he said, when we started seeing one another, he said, her parents started becoming a problem. He said they were very controlling, very overbearing. They had a lot of attitudes and opinions, and they were very, very religious. They would always quote verses and say, God told me. And, uh, he said, you know, I thought that maybe once we got married, things would get a little better. So they went through premarital and they got married. And he said, as soon as they got married, then all of these demands started coming from her parents. You need to move to be closer to us. You're in the wrong church. You should come to our church. Our church does things the right way. Uh, you've got a job and it pays the bills, but you should come to work for your father-in-Law, and you should work for him. He said they wanted us to literally work for them, live near them, go under their church leadership and control us entirely. He said, when I was around them, they were so controlling that it created a lot of anxiety for my wife and I. He said, then we kept telling them, no, we're not gonna sell our house. We're not gonna change our job. We're not gonna change our church. We love you. We're gonna do things our way. He said, then we had, uh, the blessing of becoming pregnant with a daughter. And he said everything then went to level 10. He said, as soon as they heard we were pregnant, well, you need to move. You need to be close enough. They need to go to this school. They need to go to this church. You need to baptize 'em as a baby in our church. He's like, we don't believe in baby baptism. That's not our church. We're not leaving our house. He said, then the child was born. And it was very constant pressure, especially through the Mother-in-law, making a series of demands. Well, this creates a lot of anxiety for his wife, because now she's dealing with pressure from her parents and disagreement from her husband. The child is born and they start berating the husband and father in front of the little girl. And he finally pulls them aside with his wife and says, you can't berate me and attack and criticize us in front of our little girl. And what escalated it was, they were at grandparents' house, and the grandparents started attacking dad. And the little girl started crying. And they said, we, we don't want to go to grandma and grandpa's house and have our daughter in tears. Don't put the child in the middle. If we have an issue, let's talk privately, not in front of the child. He thought that that fixed it. The child, the daughter was a few years later, a bit older, and now she could speak and she could understand a little more of what was happening, not just absorbing the anxiety, but understanding the conversations. She came home, she said, dad, how come grandma and grandpa hate you? He says, what do you mean? He said, well, she said, when when you're not there, they talk about all the things that you do wrong. You go to the wrong church, you have the wrong job, and you don't lead your family the right way. So he grabbed his wife, went over to their house, said, okay, no more. We're creating a hard boundary unless you can promise that you're not going to put the granddaughter in the middle of the hostage negotiation. You can only see her with supervised

visits. And if that isn't respected, you may not see her for a while. We're not going to tolerate this. He came home from work. A few days later, his wife and daughter were gone. And there was a note from his wife saying, we've moved back in with my parents. He called, she didn't answer. He drove to her parents' home, knocked on the door. Not surprisingly, mom and dad answered the door, and he was gonna literally have to get through them to talk to his own wife. And he said, what's going on? And they said, quote, when you got married, you joined our family. And if you're not going to join our family, we're taking our daughter back. And his daughter was, uh, the, the daughter, rather his wife was behind the mother and father. And she's crying. And there's the little girl also crying. He says, honey, please come here. So she comes out on the porch and he looks at her, he is like, sweetheart, you need to come home with me. We need to talk about this. We need to figure out what we're going to do. And she said, quote, I can't abandon my family. And he said, we are a family now. Literally, this woman has her parents behind her. And then she is standing there with her daughter and there is her husband. She's literally in the middle of a hostage negotiation with a little girl. And he said, well, honey, I'm gonna go home. I want you to come with me. Then the mother-in-Law stepped in and said, and I quote, from now on, all communication will go through her attorney and handed him a card for the lawyer that they had hired. He ended up getting divorced, didn't want a divorce, didn't file for divorce, contested the divorce, healed up, stayed in his church. Some years later, met another really sweet, godly young woman, started seeing her, met with the pastor. They went through premarital counseling. They got married. She was a single mom, had a few kids that he adopted and became the dad to, and had shared custody with his first daughter. Um, and I, and I, so he tells the story. And so I asked him, I said, so how did you start woodworking? I mean, that was the like, like, you know, like, this is quite a story, you know? And, uh, he said, oh, he said, uh, my father-in-law was a wood. My second father-in-Law was a woodworker. He's a master craftsman. He has a company that he does woodworking. And he said, one day, my father-in-Law invited me over to his shop to teach me woodworking. And I went and he said, lo and behold, I love it. And he said, I love my father-in-Law. He's probably my best friend. My father-in-law taught me woodworking. And we just hung out in the shop and did woodworking together. He said, so one day my father-in-law complimented me and said, you're really good at woodworking. And he said, I was half joking, and said, well, am I good enough to do it, uh, professionally? And his father-in-law said, yeah. And he said, I was joking. And I said, why don't you, you hire me? And his father-in-Law, said, okay. He said, that's how I got into woodworking. He said, now I work with my father-in-Law. We're very close friends, and he's teaching me the business. And when he retires, I'm taking over his company. He, and he, he, it dawned on him, he said, you know what's also really weird? We go to the same church. I said, how did that work? He said, well, they had a good church and we had a good church. But when there was a baby dedication or Christmas or whatever, because we have the grandkids, they would attend church with us to see their grandkids. And eventually we liked having them around. And when they would come to church with us, we'd go out to brunch. So we finally said, do you guys want to come to our church? And they said, sure. So now they attend church with us. They said, in some weekends after church, we go out to brunch. Other weekends we don't. Some weekends they take the kids and we have a full date day. Well, they take the kids to brunch and feed 'em dinner at their house. And he said, it's really weird. Sometimes we do vacations and holidays together is why. He said, now that I think about it, I'm doing everything that the first in-laws demanded. And he said, I said, why? He said, because I like the new in-laws. They're loving, they're gracious, they're open-handed. They're not religious controlling or domineering,

and they don't make us do things. So we enjoy doing those things with them. We're very, very close. The moral of the story is, are you a healthy person? And what's it like to have a relationship with you? And oftentimes when it comes to family and family systems talks that I'm gonna give, I oftentimes have people say, how do you make your kids, uh, have a relationship with you? How do you make your kids serve Jesus? How do you make your kids get along? I'll just tell you a secret about adults. You don't make them do anything. You try to be a healthy person and set up a healthy environment that they want to be in and that they wanna make healthy decisions out of. Here was his quote, the greatest burden in my first marriage was my wife's parents. They broke our family. The greatest blessing in my second marriage is my wife's parents. Her family makes our family better. Okay? So I had the honor of officiating the wedding of our three married children. We've also got one in high school and one in college. And before the kids got married, I told 'em something that I thought everyone knew. It seemed obvious to me. And then I set it in a sermon and they took the clip out and they posted it on the internet and it went crazy. Um, and then they found other times that I said something similar. And altogether those clips had been viewed about 80 million times me saying the same thing. And that is when you get married, he doesn't join her family. She doesn't join his family, they start a new family. Okay? And, and if that sounds controversial, um, welcome to the sermon series that you desperately need. And so And so here's how it works, I'll show it to you. Um, so when a couple gets married, we'll call them the new family, her family becomes extended family, his family becomes extended family. It's not one family, it's now three families. And those interlocking points of the circles, those would be like vacations and holidays and birthdays. If you're gonna do things together, the families need to discuss and agree on, this is what we're going to do. Um, the reason why this is so important is because if you don't have a healthy system with your extended family, you're going to break your immediate family. Here's a study that was released by Forbes, uh, advisor, and they actually looked at the reasons why people got divorced. Number one, 43% lack of family support. The point is this, your extended family can't make you, but they can break you. Okay? Uh, infidelity doesn't even rank as high or lack of compatibility or intimacy or arguing or finances or commitment or parenting. You hear all the time. Well, the two most important things in marriage are money and communication. No, it's actually not. It's if the in-laws are acting like outlaws, that's the big issue. You can nervously laugh, it's okay. So as we get into this, let me give you five, uh, foundational family facts, and this is to establish kind of the systems theory that I'll be working on. Number one, people are not just individuals, but also in emotional and relational systems. Part of the problem that we have in our culture is we look at people exclusively individually. We do this with things like personality tests, the disc, the Myers-Briggs, uh, the Taylor Johnson. This could also be like the Enneagram, which are you? Well, that's looking at you as an individual. You're not just an individual. You're in relationships and have emotional connections with other human beings. And so to really understand a person is not just to examine them, but to examine the relationships that they have and the emotions that they share. Number two, there's a tension between part of, between being part of a group called enmeshment and being an individual. I'll say it again. There's a tension between being part of a group enmeshment and an individual or cutoff. I'll show it to you. Um, I've got a little chart for you. I took all my reading on family systems, a decade of journals, dozens of books, and literally, I boiled it down to this one chart. And we will do a sermon on enmeshment, a sermon on cutoff, a sermon on differentiation. We'll hit all of these in detail. But on the left, the first option, option A, is enmeshment or fusion. This is where you are an adult, but you are too entangled with your immediate or extended family, that with your parents or your siblings or your relatives, it's too

much. There's not good boundaries, right? This is group think, it's inmeshment. Uh, the result can be that some people cut off altogether. They're like, well, if it's all or nothing, I'll take nothing. Now, let me say this. The United States of America is a nation of cutoffs. We weren't born here pretty much all our relatives moved here at some point. I come from county Cork, Southern Ireland. My family cutoff from Ireland during a famine, got on a boat, a couple of men did, and came to America. We left all of the family behind. Arizona is a state of cutoffs. Hardly any of you were born here. And I, my, my venture to say would be, some of you may be two or three, but not eight or 10 generations were born in Arizona. You've all moved here from somewhere else. And so there is enmeshment too much, too close cutoff. That relationship is severed. This as well is something that we all experience in our family dynamics. How many of you have whole branches in your family tree that have been cut off? You're like, I don't even know those relatives. Some of you're like, I've never even heard of them. I've never met them, because at some point something happened and they were cut off. And this tension between being an individual and being in a group, this denotes why we have a first and a last name. Your first name denotes you as an individual. Your last name denotes you as part of a group or family. Uh, back to the slide. Within this, there's tension. How many of you feel this tension with your, with your family? How many of you, this is a tension in your marriage? Uh, we'll get into this further, grace. When we got married, she leaned toward enmeshment. I lean toward cutoff. We lean toward tension, eh? And so what we're gonna talk about is differentiation. How do you leave your mother and father and cleave to your wife? That's where you're connected to your birth family, but you're not codependent. You care for one another, but you don't carry them. They carry themselves. Uh, number three, the closer the relationship, the deeper the emotion. This is why when we're talking about family, the emotions can run high. This is why the holiday seasons also come with a lot of anxiety and tension, because the emotions run deep. Number four, the addition or loss of a family member is a major event for good or bad. So if you add a family member, it's a big deal, a birth, an adoption or a wedding, big deal. That's why we celebrate those. And the family comes together. The loss of a family member is also a major event, a death, a miscarriage, or a divorce. If someone enters or exits the family, think of it like a spider web where, um, it's all interconnected. And if you add a strand or snip a strand, the entire web sort of responds. The relational emotional network of a family is affected like that. And so, for example, in our family, when Grace and I got married, there were two lines of communication. Now with our kids, their spouses and grandkids, we have 132 lines of communication. If they have as many children as they're prophesying, we will have around a thousand lines of communication. That means a thousand ways that there could be miscommunication and possibly hurt feelings. So a big family is a beautiful family, but it's also a complicated family. Number five, this is crucial. Major life events clinicians will call these nodal events are like an earthquake that can create aftershocks for generations. You're not just an individual, you're part of an emotional, relational family system. And things that happen to members of the family, even before you were born affect you. Back to my story, a famine hits in Ireland. So I live in Arizona. I didn't choose to live in the United States of America. My family did long before I was born. And so major nodal events, and I like this concept better than trauma. There is such a thing as trauma, but trauma is a negative thing. A nodal event can be a good or a bad thing. Our family moving to Arizona was a nodal event, but it was a good nodal event, but it was still a nodal event. And what happens with a nodal event, it's like a tremor can happen for generations. Those who live through the Great Depression, true or false, they were marked by their experience through the Great Depression. In addition, if your family immigrated here from

another country, that's a nodal event. If your family relocates to another state, that's a nodal event. If someone in your family is killed or murdered, that's a nodal event. If an older man in the family abuses the children in the family, that's a nodal event. If there's a bitter acrimonious divorce, that's a nodal event. And these nodal events, they affect families for generations. One of the ways you know that you've experienced a nodal event is when you have a positive or negative anniversary. A positive anniversary is, this is our wedding. This is the day I got saved. This is the day I got baptized. This is the day we found out we were pregnant. This is the day that the baby was born. This is the day that, you know, we bought our first house negative anniversaries. That's the day we got divorced. That's the day that we miscarried. That's the day that grandpa died. And what happens is when there's nodal events, we tend to have these positive and negative anniversaries, which is an indicator that there's been a generational nodal event. What happens when there's a nodal event? It'll either pull the family together or it'll push the family apart. I'll give you an example. Let's say there is a young couple, gets married, has a few kids, and uh, let's say the husband runs off with another woman and abandons the family nodal event. Now what happens is the family is pulled together. How are we going to help these children? So maybe someone in the family is, you need to move in with us. We're gonna watch the kids. We're gonna adjust our schedule so that we can save these children. Similarly, let's say for example, that grandma is the emotional center of the family. That the relationships in the family are strained. But the one thing everybody agrees on. Grandma's awesome, we love grandma. So when Christmas comes or Thanksgiving comes or a holiday comes, guess what happens? Everybody sets aside their differences and goes to grandma's house. Grandma dies, nodal event. The family no longer gets together because the loss of grandma has pushed the family apart. She was the gravitational center for multi-generations of the family. Nodal events are big events in a family that either pull you together or push you apart. Number six, there is a difference between your immediate and your extended family. This is really crucial. Um, I'll show it to you. Uh, this is what I showed our children. I'll call this newly married mental strain. So you've got the wife's extended family, her mom, dad, siblings, maybe cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents. You've got the husband's extended family. Now they get married and they are a newly married, new family. Her family sometimes not even out of malice, but just love. They're pulling. You guys need to go on vacation with us. You need to spend the holidays with us. You need to be at our house for Thanksgiving. You need to be at our house for Christmas. Guess what? The husband's family's doing the exact same thing. Guess what? The newly married couple is feeling a lot of strain and pressure and tension. And this can lead to conflict in the family. She's like, we need to go to my parents' house. He's like, no, we need to go to my parents' house. So I'll, I'll share along the way a few stories. Here's one, when we first got married, this ended up four years with us eating two Thanksgiving dinners, which is at least one too many. Grace is like, I gotta go to my family is like, I gotta go to my family. Next thing you're like, that's a lot Turkey. And, and then we started having kids and the kids are like, they're just dying, right? I can't eat anymore pie. I'm a diabetic. I'm three. I need a nap. We gotta go. And both our families loved us, but we felt pulled and and the result was we didn't get to think about, okay, what do we wanna do for Thanksgiving for our family? We'll get into this further in the series. Um, and let me say this. Now, in our family, we don't have one family. We've got four. Uh, grace and I and our unmarried children are a family. My daughter is married with a child that's a family. My son is married, um, with a child. That's another family. And then our other son just got married. He's got a wife. So that's a family. We've got four families. So what that means is we need to talk about if we're gonna do things together, what is gonna work for all the families.

What I can't do is send a group text. Here's what your families are doing. 'cause I'm not the head of those households, okay? So I'll give you an example. Recently we had Thanksgiving and, uh, the four families, we all got together for dinner, you know, hanging out. We love each other. It's like, Hey, what do you guys wanna do for Thanksgiving? So, uh, we had Thanksgiving early, and then, uh, one of the couples took, their kid went outta state on a vacation. The other couple took, their kid went outta state on vacation. Uh, the other couples stayed in state, went on vacation. Uh, the two single kids went bitterly, had Thanksgiving with her friends. And Grace and I went to Hawaii for 10 days. That's what we did, okay? And, uh, and we love our kids, but it was like, this is what we're doing for th we've never done that before for Thanksgiving. But we tried. And so on Thanksgiving, we were sitting on the beach drinking ma ties, okay? And if, if that bothers you, you're religious and you need, you need the repent of your attitude, it's judgy. So, so for us it was, okay, four families, how does this work? And what I didn't wanna do is come in with a demand, but a conversation, uh, as well, there are, uh, three levels of health. These are personal, relational, and the family system. Lemme explain this. Personal health is, are you an emotionally mature, healthy person relationship? How do you get along with other members of the immediate or extended family? Overall, these people in relationships is a system. Usually we don't question the system because we're born into it. We assume it's normative. And that other families are just like ours. You live under that myth until you get married. Then you think their family's crazy and then they think that your family's crazy. And you're both right. Your families are crazy. And so over when you, and so what happens is a lot of times people are like, I'm trying to be healthier, have healthy relationships. That's impossible in an unhealthy system, okay? And so sometimes you need to fix the system to heal the relationships and mature the people. I'll give you two examples. Let's say there's a family system where grandpa is a non-relational, domineering, overbearing, angry, sort of gruff man, always just belligerent yelling about the Pope and the government. Okay? Some of you're like, that's my grandpa. Okay? Um, so, and let's say that the family system is nobody corrects Grandpa Grandpa's the boss. Grandpa gets to sit in the chair and say, and do whatever he wants and he gets to criticize people and create an anxious environment. And the kids feel odd going to grandpa's house. Everybody, 'cause grandpa's like a grenade with a pin pulled. It's like, well, just don't set grandpa off. Now you've created a family system where the person who should be setting the culture should be the most healthy person. And now you've allowed the least healthy person to set the culture just because they're the oldest. The question is not are you young or old? The question is, are you mature or immature? And if you're immature, you shouldn't be setting the culture the healthy person should. And also what you're doing now, you're teaching future generations how to do family 'cause your kids are watching and as soon as grandpa dies, there's gonna be a little version of Lord of the Flies. And all the men are gonna fight over who gets to be the new grumpy king in chief. Similarly, let's say that grandma grew up and had a lot of trauma. She had some very difficult things that everybody knows about and they have compassion and sympathy and empathy for grandma, but she didn't get help and she didn't heal up. So she's become a very fearful person, which makes her a very controlling person, which makes her a very religious person. And so now she's constantly speaking fear over everyone and everything and it's out of love, but it's out of unhealed, hurt and trauma. And let's say grandma's religious. So she's always quoting Bible verses out of context and she's weaponizing the Bible to be in control of the family. And she's saying, well, I prayed about it, or I fasted about it, or the Lord told me. And everyone knows grandma's not very healthy, but we let her set the system because we feel bad for grandma love grandma. But grandma needs to get some help. And unless grandma's healthy,

what you're allowing is the least healthy person to determine the culture of the family. And let me say this, if you don't correct it, it will continue in your children and grandchildren and you will take a broken family member and you'll turn it into a generational curse because your children will think if you don't correct it, that this is normal in how we do family. Next one. Um, it is impossible to be a healthy person or have healthy relationships without the Holy Spirit. So if you're dealing with non-Christian family members, love them, pray for them. Do your best. But ultimately people need Jesus. And people with Jesus have the Holy Spirit. And without the Holy Spirit, good luck having health. I'll read from Galatians five, uh, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear. Tell me if any of this sounds like your family, immediate or extended sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties and other sins like these goes on to say. But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. The point is this, you're not just an individual or an individual in relationships. You're individual, you're, you're rather an individual in relationships in the midst of an emotional, relational system. And that system is either going to be heaven down or hell up. If it's hell up, it's going to be in the flesh. Some of you grew up in families. When the family got together, it was a culture of the flesh. The hope and prayer would be to have your family live in the culture of heaven, not hell. Uh, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth starting at our family as it is in heaven. And when your family comes together and there is an environment that is of the spirit and not of the flesh, what happens is it's a healthy environment for healthy relationships and maturing people. One of the ways that you know that you're in an unhealthy fleshly family system is there's anxiety. There's heightened anxiety. You're nervous, you're stressed, you're uncomfortable. You don't want to be there. You sort of dread going into it. When the phone rings and it's a relative, you're like, ah, I don't want to answer it, but I know they're gonna leave a voicemail. They send a group text, you're like, I don't even know what to do with that. They're like, Hey, when are you coming over for Christmas? You're like, ah, I'm just praying for the rapture. You know, I just, I just, I just want out, you know, anxiety, you know that you're living in a culture of the spirit when it's a culture and environment and a system of joy. Again, the fruit of the spirit includes joy. It includes joy. And one of the ways I was reading a lot of the clinicians that you know that you have an anxious family environment instead of a joyful family environment. There's a lack of playfulness. Nobody's laughing, you can't tell a joke. Everything's serious, everybody's very quiet, or they're very serious. That's anxiety. Religious people come to this church and they think that the reason that I tell jokes is that I'm irreverent. It's not because I'm joyful and I want us to laugh and be a church family and have fun and do life together and take God seriously, but, but not ourselves. And when your family comes together, it should not feel anxious, it should feel joyful. And if it feels anxious, you've gotta fix the system. Okay, that being said, let me define family briefly. Um, and I've got a couple of clinical and and biblical definitions in the workbook, but for starters, our God is a family. So we're here at Trinity Church Doctrine of the Trinity. There's one God, three persons, father, son, and Spirit. They're fully unified, but they're differentiated. And differentiation is this, we're different now. We love each other, but we're different. So like a differentiated couple. For example, let me back up and explain this. So a differentiated couple would be like, well, that's what you do. This is what we do. That's where you go to church. This is where we go to church. That's how you spend your money. This is how we spend our money.

That's what you're doing for Christmas. This is what we're doing for Christmas. We're different. The father, son, and spirit are differentiated. They're three persons but they're completely united, loving and do everything together like a family. Even the language of father and son is language of family over 700 times in the English translation of the Bible, the Bible uses the word family over 2000 times. The Bible uses the word house or household, which is everyone who lives in a house together as a family. The Bible is from beginning to end all about family, marriage and family from beginning to end. It's about marriage and family. So my functional definition for our time together is a family is an emotional unit of multiple generations. It's not necessarily biological. Like I've got daughter-in-laws. Some of you have got adopted kids or foster kids. They're part of your family. It's an emotional unit of multiple generations. And here's what makes a family a family bonds together by spending time together. The more time you spend together, the more emotional bonding you experience. And part of this is something called attachment theory. The more you're together, the more you're bonded and attached. This is why families should do meals together and spend time together and make memories together so that they can attach and bond as a family unit. And what happens then is family members live to quote the clinicians, they live under the same emotional skin. You know, you're in a family when you share emotions. This can be good emotions. They're pregnant, yay, we're getting another baby and it's gonna be a new member of the family. We're all excited or grandma got cancer. Now we all have anxiety and perhaps the emotion that travels most quickly in a family system is anxiousness or anxiety. Worried about members of the family. We're gonna get into this in the future sermon, how people respond. But let me say this, what triggers anxiety through a family system quicker than anything? Is a child, are they sick? Are they failing? Are they questioning their gender? Are they are? Are they hurting themselves? As soon as there is potential danger for a child, the family shares anxiety. We're all talking about it, we're all carrying it, we're all feeling it. This is why family sometimes can be the most exhausting. There's such a desire in our DNA hardwired literally by God, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, that everybody wants a family. And there are negative manifestations of this. This is why like drug cartels and gangs and criminal organizations and the mafia, they actually use the word family. There's a positive connotation to this. This could be a healthy, immediate and extended family. This also could be a friend group that you all love Jesus and you're like brothers and sisters to use the language of the Bible. This also can be in a positive case, a church family. Just so you guys know this, you're a church family, you're a church family. And so we wanna, we wanna live like an extended family. And just so you know, my heart in all of this, um, I feel like a dad. Grace feels like a mom. Our kids, you know, or our kids. And so we have our immediate family, we have our extended family, and then we have our church family. And we wanna serve your family. And we want your family to be a healthy, joyful family. And that's why we planted this church. It's the whole reason we're here, that we open our bibles to learn. We open our lives to love so that lives and legacies are transformed. It's about God's word, relationship, personal maturity, generational maturity. That's what it's all about. That being said, uh, two things I wanna say and then we'll jump right back into the scriptures. Number one, God loves family. Number two, Satan hates family. So if you're going to try and do family God's way, you'll experience a lot of spiritual warfare. So God has a family in heaven of angels and Satan attacks and divides that family. Satan then comes down to the earth and he doesn't even attack Adam and Eve until after they're married. I always say after the wedding comes the war. He could have attacked Adam as a single man. He waited for him to get married 'cause he hates family. And then they have two sons, Cain and Abel. What does Kain do? He murders his brother. We're only four pages into the Bible and

we've got a murder in a family among two brothers because God loves family. Hayden sat. Satan hates family. God makes family. Satan breaks family. Okay, so let me come back to the scriptures. What I wanna look at now are four significant family scriptures. Part of the problem that always happens in Bible study, you quote a verse, but not all the verses. The key is to quote all the verses. These are the four most significant scriptures on family. Number one, Ephesians six, one, children, what's the word? Obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Okay, now the word therefore children is little child, not grown. Adult religious people don't know this. Religious mother-in-laws and father-in-laws, they're like the Bible says to obey me. It's like I am like me. I'm 53. If my dad called, my dad would never do this. I love my dad. We get along great, but my dad calls, he's like, Marky, I got some stuff I'm gonna tell you to do. I'd be like, sorry dad. Weeks signal. You know, um, call back, never, you know, um, 'cause I don't take orders. I'm a grown man. I make decisions for myself. Now I know my dad loves the Lord and he prays for me every day. So if my dad says, Hey Mark, I wanna talk to you about something, guess what dad? My ears are open to hear your wisdom, but not to obey your orders. Okay? And so in this, what happens is when a child is little, the parents literally are the voice of God to the child. If you've got a six month old child, you're not like, well, what is the Lord revealed? Do you? They're not. So you're the voice of the Lord to the child. But as the child gets older, the goal is to teach the Lord. Say this, you don't teach the Lord anything. Um, this is what happens in the first one. Um, the goal is as the child grows to teach them to hear from the Lord for themselves. That's the key. To have a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. I'll give you a couple examples. And uh, there's, there's a kid named Samuel in the Old Testament. God actually talks to him as a little boy and he listens. Uh, there's a young man named Timothy in the New Testament. And Paul says of Timothy, he said, from infancy, you have known the scriptures which have made you wise since he was a little boy. Timothy apparently was really able to comprehend the scriptures. It's possible for a child to hear directly from the Lord or to hear from the Lord, particularly through the word of God. The goal is not to always tell your child what to do. And lemme say this, parents, if you're always bossing your child around, it doesn't work. Especially when they leave home. They'll either be fools who don't know how to make decisions or it'll set them up to be in abusive relationships with domineering people who push them around. This is why sometimes this is just a little rant. This is why sometimes, uh, let's say a girl will grow up in a Christian home and the parents are always just telling her exactly what to do. And she leaves and she ends up with a really bad boyfriend who's taking advantage of her because all she's ever been told to do is do what you're told not to think for herself and obey the Lord. And so this is what a religious, uh, parenting triangle looks like. We'll get in triangles later in the sermon series. There's God speaking to the father and mother, and then the mother and father speaking to the child. Like I said, obeying your mother and father is when you're a little kid. This no longer applies as you become an adult. It does not the next point, uh, or next scripture, I should say. Genesis 2 24, we looked at it. A man shall leave his father and mother hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. This is the differentiation process. When you grow up, you're enmeshed as part of your family. And then the differentiation process is the process of leaving your father and mother. It starts, let's say preteen. All of a sudden you're like, our kids got their own opinions and style and attitude. Yeah. And then you hit the teen years, they're differentiating. They're trying to figure out who are you and who am I? And then they leave home. Maybe they move out or go to college. Now they've got their own house and they've got their own job and they've got their own income and they've got their own responsibilities. And the goal is that eventually you would raise a child that they would differentiate and leave.

And as a result, you would allow them to have their own identity, their own decisions, their own income, their own church, their own political opinions, their own theological convictions. And to function as an adult making decisions. And if you think they're making foolish or evil decisions, the goal is not to boss them around or control them, but to have a relationship with them where they'll open their ears to hear from you so that you can be wise counsel to them, but you're not controlling them. Those two things come to an end, obeying your mother and father comes to an end. And then there's a day when you leave your mother and father. Number three, Exodus chapter 20, verse 12, honor your mother and father. This is one of the 10 commandments. It's commandment number five. Ever since the 1960s, we have taught generational rebellion, hatred of God and parents and all authority. And it is catastrophic question. Um, if you only obey your mother and father when you're little, when you leave your mother and father as you differentiate as an adult, is there ever a time that you no longer should honor your mother and father? No. That command is for your whole life. It doesn't mean you obey them, but you honor them, which means even if you disagree with them, you disagree in an agreeable and respectful way. Number four, this is the verse that religious controlling parents never quote. Lemme just say this, religious controlling parents, they love thee obey your father and mother. They love that one. It's probably somewhere above the mantle in your house, right? Every time they just point at it, ah, they never put this verse above the mantle. Luke six, uh, 1426. So Luke 1426, Jesus says, if anyone comes to me and does not, what's the word? Hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, the whole family. Yes. Even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. I have never seen a mother-in-law that chose that as her life verse. Never seen that. I love that verse where it says, hate your mom. Um, and so what does this mean? Well, the word there originally in hate, not to get super nerdy, it doesn't carry all the negative emotion. It's about preference and priority. Elsewhere. If memory serves me correct from when I taught Romans where it says Jacob, I love de saw, I hated means that I preferred, I preferred Jacob over Esau. Jesus says the same thing with a little softer tone in Matthew 10 37. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. What he's saying is, if you're a Christian, your relationship with God is your highest priority. And your mom, your dad, your husband, your wife, your son, your daughter, your grandson, your granddaughter, they're not the highest priority. That God is your highest priority. That's exactly what it means. So I'll give you an example. Um, your first priority should be with God. Your next priority should be your spouse. Don't say your family. You had a spouse before you have kids. And once your kids leave, we'd like you to still be married. And what grace and I see at our age, lots of people, they went God, family, which meant children, which meant once the children left, the marriage imploded because the children were the only thing holding the marriage together. Yeah, God, spouse, children, grandchildren, extended family and church family, those are your priorities. We're gonna get into this a little further, but you know, you've violated the law of priority when you trigger jealousy. Jealousy is not always a bad thing. God, he says, is a jealous God. And what jealousy is, Hey, you're in my place. Like if, let's say for example, newly married couple and every night, rather than the wife sitting down talking to her husband, debriefing for the day, she's on the phone with her mom every night he's feeling jealous. Hey, that's my place. We're supposed to talk about our day. If it's the holidays and like, Hey, we need to make some plans for our family. It's like, no, we're gonna go to my extended family and they're gonna control our entire schedule for all the holidays. You feel jealous. Hey, what about us? What about our memories? What about our traditions? So lemme explain how this works, uh, very practically. Um, priorities change once you get married and they change

again. Once you have children, uh, I'll give you an example from a father's perspective. So my oldest daughter or oldest daughter, she's married. I love being a dad and being a dad to daughters is like the most transformative experience a man could possibly have After salvation. Nothing changes. A man like a daughter for the good. I loved how I, I've got two daughters. One's where I love being dead. I love talking to men. I love holding hands. I love piggyback rides. I love daddy dates. I love tea. I I love all of it. So for my daughter's whole life, I was in the first position. I was the main man in her life. Guess what? I like that. I like that a lot. And then one day she fell in love and she wanted to get married. Two, good man. We love him. He's great. Tell you a story too funny, weird story just comes to mind. Years ago, um, it, the first time it ever hit me that my daughter was gonna get married. 'cause how many of you have got a little girl and you're dad? How many of you're like, I'm not emotionally ready to process the honeymoon. Like said, I'm not there, right? Like I, you gotta give me about 50 or 60 years to think about this and emotionally prepare. First time it hit me that my daughter was gonna get married. Uh, we were out of town and it was late at night and, uh, her brother was little and sh there was a pool at the hotel and she's like, daddy, can we go swimming? I was like, well, it's late. Yeah. So, um, I'm the fun dad. So we go swimming and I'm throw her in the air and we're playing in the pool and it's way past bedtime. We come back and I stood her up on the bed of the hotel and I got the white towel and she had long, thick hair and I'm drying her hair and she grabbed the towel, she pulled it over herself like a veil. She looked at me, she said, dad, will you marry me? I said, no, honey. I said, daddy can't marry you. I love you with all my heart. I said, someday you're gonna get married to a man who loves you with his whole heart. She said, how will I know who he is? I said, I will tell you. So it's a true story. So fast forward, my daughter gets married. Guess what? I'm not the priority. I'm not the priority. This is what happens in a Christian ceremony. Who walks the daughter down the aisle, the father, the father. And then they ask, who gives this woman to be married, the father? And he says, her mother and I, meaning, we agree, we bless this marriage. And as head of household, I'm representing my wife and I to put a blessing over this daughter. And then what happens is what? The husband comes forward and the dad kisses his daughter and he hands her to her husband. And then they go up on the altar together. Question, do any relatives join them? No. Are there vow for the, are the relatives involved in the vows or the first kiss or the honeymoon? If you said, yes, you need therapy. Okay, you need therapy. And at that moment, they're leaving their mother and father and they're cleaving to one another. And then they're gonna consummate their covenant to become one flesh obeying Genesis two. So in that moment where my daughter got married, I, I got a demotion. I went from first position to second position. Now she's got a baby boy. He's awesome. I love him with all my heart. I got demoted. I'm in third position. My goal is to keep getting demoted so that she can have her God-given priorities. Her husband and her son are now the most important two men in her life. And I'm in third position. My hope is to help the son and the son-in-law, love her. For those of you who are younger, you can get frustrated. Be like, why can't my parents let me go? 'cause they love you. Oh yeah. And they miss you. And be grateful. 'cause not all parents feel that way, but I don't want my daughter just to be loved for my whole life. I want my daughter to be loved for her whole life. I don't like to think about this, but I am going to die before my children. And I don't want my daughter to be lonely. I want her to be loved by her husband and her children. And so we all love her and all love her as long as I have. But I'm not the first priority. And, and anyone who doesn't embrace this, what you're doing, you're putting so much pressure on a young married couple that you're forcing them either toward enmeshment that they have a bad marriage or cutoff, they don't have a relationship with you. Love loss. Let me hit my

final section. Maybe Genesis 2 24 and 25. This is the thesis for marriage. It's quoted by Jesus in Matthew 19, in Mark eight. It's quoted by Paul in Ephesians five. This is God's divine design. Let me say this about marriage and relationship and parenting and family. Our God rules the universe through laws. Those laws exist whether or not you believe in them. God writes his laws in his word. For example, gravity is real, you could say. But I went to college and I took a deconstructing gravity class. And this person with confusing pronouns told me there's no such thing as gravity. And I wrote a paper about being a post gravity person and I got an A. Well jump off a building. Gravity's real despite what they told you at college, okay? God puts laws in his word for life, marriage, parenting, and family. If you disobey or disregard those laws, you hurt your family for generations. That's what we're doing right now in our country. We're violating God's laws and we are damaging generations. That being said, if God says this is marriage and family, Genesis two, before sin enters the world, that means it's perfect. And if Jesus quotes it, and Paul quotes it. You should agree with it. You can't look at the scripture, say, well, that's just the opinion of Moses and Jesus and Paul. You should agree with them. And here's God's laws for marriage and family. Therefore, again, back to our signature verse, A man shall leave his father and mother cleave to his wife. That shall be one flesh. They were both naked. The man and his wife. Were not ashamed. It's gonna hit this briefly if you wanna study this in depth. Pastor Jimmy Evans book, the Four Laws of Love summarizes this perfectly and he'll be here again to preach in March. Number one, the law of priority. A man shall leave his mother and father. So the way the Bible gives this language is a man leaves his mother and father and takes a wife and a daughter is given in marriage. It's different. A man needs to prove that he's independent, differentiated self-sufficient, can pay his own bills and take care of himself before he gets a wife and before they have kids. That's right. Okay. And a daughter is given in marriage. And again, we show this in the Christian marriage ceremony, the father gives the bride, but let me say this, a father doesn't give the groom. Wouldn't that be the weirdest wedding ever? Like me walking my son down the aisle? Who gives this weird son? Well, me and his failed mother, you know. Um, so the Christian ceremony, it echoes the teachings of scripture. Um, number two, the law of pursuit. Hold faster. Cleave. This word cleave is, it's kind of complicated, but here's what it means to pursue with passion. So here's a big idea. You can't cleave to your spouse unless you leave your family. Yes. If you're like, I am holding onto my mom and dad and our dysfunctional family system, your spouse is over there going, Hey, what about us? And a lot of people are like, okay, how about, how about we, we all come together? Right? And your spouse is miserable. Miserable. And you are stressed because you're trying to cleave to your family that now became your extended family and your family, which is your new family. So you need to leave your family and they become your extended family so you can cleave to your spouse and start a new family. And this language of Cleve, have you ever seen those videos where let's say a soldier's been at war and he comes home and his wife's waiting at the airport and he runs and she runs and they're crying and she jumps in his arms and they don't let go of each other. That's what the word means. If your family's taking all your time and energy, they're stealing it from your spouse. Number three, the live priority, they'll become one. It's not which one, but a new one. It's not like, well, is the husband gonna win or is the wife gonna win? It's like, no, no, the husband wife are gonna come together as a new one. And so this means that to be one, you need to agree. Jesus says A divided house falls apart. Division is two visions. The only way to stick together is to be one. This is why you sleep in one bed. This is why you have one last name, A hyphenated last name is not a leave in Cleve marriage. And if the husband takes the wife's last name, he's the wife offensive. But true, 52 weeks a year. This is why you have one bank account. This is why

you worship one God. This is why you go to one church. This is why you have Christmas together and you don't go to your families. You figure out how to be a family. You become one. You become one. And then, um, and lemme say this too. Strength is never a problem. Independence is always a problem. Amen. My wife, grace and I were very strong personalities and opinions. Our five children have very strong personalities and they grew up under my preaching from the womb. They have opinions about everything. We're a highly opinionated family. Does that shock you? No. So strength is not a problem. Independence is, see, if you're both pulling together, that's great. If it's a tug of war, that's not. And so some of you women will hear so like, oh, the Bible just wants us to be weak. No, no. Actually, it's really great to have a strong wife providing she's on your team. Yes. Okay. And that's being one. And then lastly, the law of purity. Naked without shame. So a marriage is physical and spiritual. Spiritual, it's a covenant physical. It's a consummated covenant. So God wants men to grow up to marry a woman, and then they create a healthy system in which children are born so that they can grow to be mature. People who love and follow God. That's God's divine design. A couple of things in closing, unless you leave, you cannot cleave. Unless you leave and cleave, you cannot be one. Number two, how you live is how you disciple future generations. Your children will grow up thinking that whatever you're tolerating is the will of God. And if your family is a broken system, why would you want to multiply it for generations and take the pain of your parents and put it on your children and grandchildren? Number three, for good to start, bad must end. And number four, for your kids and grandkids, you should seek to be the floor, not the ceiling. Every generation should seek to accumulate wealth and wisdom and pass it on and multiply it. Grace and I, I was a brand new Christian. We did our best. Hopefully our kids learn some things from what we did right and wrong, and they do better. And hopefully they have better marriages and their better parents, and that our grandkids actually have better marriages and are better parents than all of us. Praise me to God. That's exactly what we would like, and we want that for your family. My closing two questions to you. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you about your relationship with God? As we're having this conversation, what about you and God? Number two, what is God saying to you about your relationship with your immediate or extended family? I love you. I'm praying for you. We want you to enjoy your life and family, and we want it to be healthy, and we want this to be a healthy church family for generations. But it doesn't happen accidentally. It only happens with intentionality. If you pursue what God says in his word, we'll release the live stream at this point. Thank you for joining us on Live.