



WHAT IS DIFFERENTIATION?

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Okay, that was an emotionally awkward transition. I'll just acknowledge that publicly. Um, we went from Armageddon, the end of the world to welcome to the Jetsons. And, uh, uh, the good news is, uh, we're finishing a sermon series this weekend, uh, how to Leave in Cleave. And, uh, we just got done with the holidays. Don't raise your hand. This is a rhetorical question, but how many of you would like to improve relationships with family members? Okay, good. Uh, that being said, uh, that's exactly what we're talking about today. And we did just finish the holidays and for some of you, uh, it was a good season, but it could have been better for some of you. It was difficult and you wanna make it better next year. And so really, the timing is great. And as we begin the new year, I'm just gonna plug this, uh, family systems workbook that I wrote for you. It's 21 days. It's about 45,000 words, and you just need to do it and go through the process. And if you're married, go through it together. And if you're in-Laws act like outlaws, send them a copy to 'em. And, uh, and what I would say is, uh, if you're here and part of our church family, you can pick up a copy, uh, on the way out in the bookstore. You can scan the QR code in front of you, and we'll send you a free PDF copy. If you're watching online, they'll give you, uh, the assets so that you can go ahead and get that for yourself. That being said, we will conclude the family systems today. And so I'm gonna pray and then we're gonna get to work. Okay. You guys ready to go? Yeah. All right. Let's do this. Father, thanks for an opportunity to talk about family, something that is so crucial to your heart as father, we're here as a church family, inviting the Holy Spirit to help us to understand family in a way that is healthy and biblical, and that would follow the principles you give in your word. God, I pray against any bitterness or distraction or discouragement. And we invite you, holy Spirit, to help us to determine what your will is for our life, for our marriage, for our children, and our grandchildren. In Jesus' name, amen. Alright, so we're dealing with how to architect the family system. And the overarching reason is it's not just about you or your marriage or your children. There's a system that governs your family, how you interact and think. And that can have generational implications, implications. And if the system isn't rightly set, then the individuals and the marriages and the relationships within the context of the family system, they invariably suffer. We've established one sort of foundational scripture that we've built the entire series on, and I'll read it one last time. Genesis 2 24 and 25. And again, this is written before sin enters the world. This is God's perfect divine design. And Jesus quotes it in Matthew 19, four through six, and Mark 10, five through nine. And then Paul quotes it in Ephesians 5 31. So if the Holy Spirit says it through Moses, Jesus, and Paul, we should pay attention here. Here we go. Therefore, shall a man, a man shall leave his mother. And father, this is important. It doesn't talk about the daughter. It says in the scriptures that daughters are given in marriage and that men take a wife. So to prepare to take a wife, a man must leave his father and mother cleave to his wife, and they shall be one flesh that's consummation of the marital covenant. They were both naked or feared from Texas, naked, the man and his wife. And they were not ashamed. There's our foundational scripture. And in saying this, um, this is the bedrock for marriage and family. And, uh, what we've also done is I put together a simple chart for you. These are kind of the leaving Cleve options. We started with enmeshment. This is where you don't leave your mother and father, you don't differentiate. You don't become an adult. You don't launch your two emotionally, financially, practically connected to your parents or your siblings, that you can't become a differentiated adult. On the other side is cutoff. This is where either your family cuts you off or you cut a member or members of your family off. All of our families have some branches that have been sawn off, uh, of the family tree. In the middle, there is always some form of tension. And oftentimes in a marriage, it can be between the husband and wife. So when we got married, grace leaned toward in Mesman, I leaned toward cutoff. The goal is to get

to differentiation. Each of these was a sermon. Today, we'll deal with differentiation. This is where you love your mother and father, but you leave your father and mother. You're connected to your family, but you're not codependent with your family. You care about your family, but you're not carrying your family. That being said, when we're getting into this issue of differentiation, and that is our word, this is a foundational crucial concept. And if you don't understand this, you're not going to have a good marriage. You're not going to have healthy children, and you're not going to have a great family for generations. In the workbook, I explain differentiation this way. Differentiation is the process where a person goes from being a child who is a member of a family to an adult who's ready to have their own family. And the Bible uses this language of leave and cleave and we've established that when you're growing up, your attachment and connection is to your parents and your siblings and your biological family. You begin the differentiation process, which we'll talk about today, and then eventually you leave your mother and father so that you can cleave or pursue and prioritize your marriage and a new family. And now what we have is not a family, but two families. That's what we've established. That being said, this is such a major concept that even non-Christian counselors have coined the term cornerstone concept. This is foundational and generations get built on this cornerstone concept. Uh, in addition, I just wanna say a few things about differentiation. Uh, it is a process. You don't go from a child to an adult in an instant. It's a process. And let me say, it's a process for the parents and the children. If you're a child and you're in the differentiation process, it'll take some years. And you've never gone through this before. So it's new for the child, but I'll just say this as a parent and now grandparent, it's also a process for the parents and the grandparents. Like as soon as we had our first daughter and I held her, my first thought was, I don't know what I'm doing. Okay? Now, many years later, holding her grandchild, I would still say, I still don't know what I'm doing. But you know, you, it's a process where you learn as you go. And so there needs to be a lot of grace and a lot of conversation. And there needs to be an understanding that mistakes will be made. Sometimes feelings will be hurt, but if you love each other, you work it through. Uh, I'll give you some examples, um, in the differentiation process where different children will differentiate in different ways, and all differentiation means is this, you're different. You growing up in a family and all of a sudden you realize, I'm not like my sister. I'm not like my brother. You get married, you're like, our marriage isn't exactly like our parents. You have children. Like, I'm not gonna raise my kids exactly like my parents did. And let me say this, that's not because you judge them or you reject them or you criticize them, you're just different. It doesn't mean that they're always bad or wrong, just means you're different. Give you some examples. Um, I, my wife Grace went to college. She's got a bachelor's degree. I got a bachelor's degree and a master's degree. One of our children decided to go to college and get a bachelor's degree. Another child decided to go to college and get a master's degree. Another child decided to go to college for a semester. That's different. Um, they came home and they're like, uh, my first economics class, they handed me Carl Marks and forgot to tell us that he was a mass murderer. And I'm tired of arguing over pronouns. I'm not doing this anymore. Like, okay, well, that's different. That's different. And so, yeah, you, well, I don't know, you're, you're clapping, but does that mean that my other children were wicked to go to college is something to think about. So, right, because you didn't clap for them. So, but just different children are different. Um, and, and sometimes we as parents, we need to understand that the, the child is in the process of differentiating. I'll give you two more examples. Some years ago, um, our daughter came and said, uh, hey, I prayed about it and I feel like after graduation, I want to take a gap semester, go to another country for, I don't know what it was, six months or something. And I wanna go to a

Spanish speaking Bible college where they don't have internet access and you've never been and can't come. And I was like, well, surely this is not the will of the Lord. You're eight, you're 18. Okay, she's differentiating and I'm dying. That's what's happening. So I pray about it and I'm like, okay, Lord, do you want our daughter to go? And the Lord was like, yeah, she, she needs to go. Uh, okay, she's 18. Uh, she's going to another country that I've never been to, and, and I'm not going with her. They speak a different language and her phone doesn't work very often, so I can't check in. That's differentiating. That's differentiating. Had another son, uh, this last summer, he is 17. He is like, I wanna go to another state, get a job on a construction crew. I wanna learn how to build stuff and work with my hands. And I was like, you're 17, man. You can't rent a car. You can't rent a hotel. You're 17. He is like, yeah, and I'm going. I was like, okay, uh, praise the Lord. You know? So, uh, okay, so he went, you know, and the truth is we did go visit him. Just make sure he is, you know, living indoors. And, um, and he's figured this out. But it was his way of saying, I, I just wanna get myself up. I wanna go to work. I wanna swing a hammer, and I wanna take responsibility for myself. That's differentiating. When it comes to differentiating, it means that the child becomes different than the other members of the family. This may mean that they move out and they have a different residence. They are no longer taking money from their parents. They have a different income. Praise the Lord. Uh, this also means, uh, that, uh, they drive in a different car when they're little, they're driving in your car. And, uh, and when you put them in a car and they drive for themselves, there can be some anxiety for the parent. 'cause now it's a different driver, one that doesn't know what they're doing and doesn't drive well. And techs on their driving. Okay? And, and then eventually they get their own car. Now it's not just a different driver, it's a different car. And then the child comes to the point where they may come up with some different ideas. Maybe you're a Christian and they're a Christian, but they're reading the Bible and they're coming to some different conclusion on some issues. Uh, some people have asked me, they're like, does everybody in your family agree? No, not everybody in my marriage agrees. Uh, we are a, my wife is cracking up. We have very strong opinions. So pray for her. There's a handful of things she's wrong about it needs to grow. And no, but we do disagree, uh, because we come to some different conclusions. And what this means is when they get married, they're gonna have some different ideas about how to do their marriage, right? And if you open your mouth, they say, well, your mom and I, they're like, that's, that's exactly what I'm not doing. Um, and, and when they have kids, they have a different idea of how to raise those kids, right? You're, you're, how many of you, this has been the case. You got very quiet. It was fun for a moment, and we just solved that problem. Um, and what, and, and let me just say this. As a parent, sometimes when the children have a different idea, they're wrong. Really no response. Um, okay. And as parents, you're like, that's not a good idea. But sometimes you need to give your children the differentiating opportunity to go ahead and field test their idea, and then realize it's a bad idea. And as a parent, this can be frustrating. Like, they don't listen. You're like, well, you remember when you were their age, you were differentiating and you had to learn some things through trial and error. That's part of the differentiating process. Now, what differentiation allows it allows an option other than enmeshment, right? And cutoff and many family systems. These are like the only two options you've got. You do everything we tell you to do. We do everything together. Holidays, vacations, there's not good boundaries between the families, or we're gonna cut you off. We're not gonna talk to you. Uh, you're cut out of the family will and inheritance. You're not invited over for the holidays. What differentiation allows is, uh, there to be healthy people, which enmeshment doesn't allow, that are relationally connected, which cutoff doesn't allow. And I'll give you some examples, um, from my own life.

But I'll, I'll say as I'm teaching this series and it's getting some traction online by God's grace, uh, people are wondering, you know, so what? You can't spend time with your family. You can't do life with your family. Well, here's the question. How's your family? How, how's your family? I, I've seen healthy individuals with good boundaries and a healthy family system that have allowed leave and Cleve differentiation. I've seen them share land and build a family homestead. I've seen them work together in a family business. I've seen them serve together in a church or ministry. I've seen them do holidays and vacations together. The question is not what do we get to do? The question is, are we healthy in a healthy relationship with a healthy system? Good. Now, that being said, um, I'll give you an example from our own life. So we've got five kids. And when we first got married, grace and I, she gravitated toward differentiation and I gravitated toward frustration. And so we, uh, we, we worked this out and then we got into a healthy balance and rhythm with our extended families who loved us. And what this allowed growing up for our kids was a, a really beautiful relationship with their grandparents. And so I wanna publicly honor Grace's parents who daddy's in heaven, my parents who were probably watching and growing up. Um, every Friday for example, our parents took turns watching the five kids so we could get a date night. It was awesome. We could absolutely depend on on them. They made it the priority in their schedule. And then we would do holidays together. Sometimes we'd do vacations together. And also, uh, as the kids got older, the boys got into baseball. And, uh, it was amazing and wonderful. And I, I missed going to baseball games. But one year I tallied it up, the three boys playing league and club Ball had more games than a major league team. Three boys. Problem is none of them can drive. And they're all having games at the same time in different places. Grace and I were like, okay, what do we do? So what the grandparents started doing, and this went for years, they'd say, just give us the schedule. One side of the grandparents would take one of the boys to their tournament. The other grandparents would take the boy to their tournament. Uh, we'd take one of the boys to their tournament and we'd rotate. And what this allowed was lots of time with the grandparents, and they were very loving and present. Afterward, they would take 'em out to dinner or lunch or go get ice cream. Sometimes the tournaments were out of state and the grandparents would literally take the grandson and go outta state and invest in them. And, and we have a healthy relationship. My folks were just in town, my mom and dad. And, uh, it was great to see them. They stayed at our house and it was wonderful to get time with them. We love them. They love the Lord. They're good to us. They, they bless us. Um, as well as I've traveled internationally over the years, we actually brought, um, the grandparents. I'll give you a couple examples. We went to Greece, Israel, and Turkey, and we brought both sides, Grace's mom and my mom and dad. And we went to the places where Jesus taught. And we looked at the land of the Bible with our kids, and the grandparents got to learn the Bible as we're doing a tour with the grandkids, which is awesome. We, I got to see, I got to baptize my mom and dad in the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized. And we got to baptize my son Calvin at the time as well. Lifelong sacred memories. You know why we could do that? 'cause our parents love us and we can talk it through, we can work it out. They respect us, they support us, and it is mutual. And there are times that we've traveled internationally. When I'd have, uh, speaking engagements internationally and go on tour, we brought my mother-in-Law. Uh, she went to Scotland with us for weeks. She went to Australia with us for a month. And some people were like, are you saying you have to take your mother with you on international trips? Am I, it depends on your relationship. She's godly, she's loving, she treats me like a son. We get along great. I'm like, I'd love to have her. She's super helpful with the kids and she honors our marriage and family. So what I'm not, some of you will hear some of this, she'll

be like, Mark's trying to break apart the family. No. Mark wants the family to be healthy before it breaks apart. Amen. Just wants to be healthy. That's all. Yeah. Alright, both of you like that. Um, so I, I could sense some. I'm losing here. I'm losing. Uh, so, so now I'll start talking about Jesus. Uh, so, um, so then the question is, and some of you would think like, okay, we're talking about counseling and principles. Uh, what does the Bible have to say? Well, okay, let's just go to Jesus. Okay? When all else fails, go to Jesus. That's what I'm telling you. And before all else fails, get to Jesus. And so Jesus is our God. He entered into human history and a family. We talked about this in the last sermon, and he never sinned. So how he interacted with his family, well, that'd be really something helpful for us to examine. Yeah. So Jesus began differentiating at the age of 12. I'll prove it to you. Uh, Luke says this, we'll read a little scripture, uh, 21, or excuse me, 41 through 51. Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem, the big city every year at the Feast of Passover, when he was 12 years old, they went, when the feast was ended, as they were returning the boy, Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group. They went a day's journey. But then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances. And when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. After three days, they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. All who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him, his mother said to him, son, why have you treated us? So he gave me a heart attack. Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress. And he said to them, why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my father's house? And then he went down with them, came to Nazareth, was submissive to them. And his mother treasured all these things in her heart. Here's the story. Big holiday, everybody gets together. Big caravan and journey, going to Jerusalem for the holiday. So you've got neighbors and family and friends and relatives, they all go together. Now it's over time to go home. Mary and Joseph are headed home and she's like, have you seen Jesus? Nope, I haven't seen him either. Or is he, they lost Jesus. Okay, lemme say this. Like, this is a major potential issue. Amen. Like God's like, Hey, I need you to raise my son. They're like, oh, you lost him. Okay. Um, they lost Jesus. Okay? Just say, and if you hear this and you're thinking, I can't believe that, lemme just tell you something, you've never had a child. That's what I know. 'cause here's what I'm telling you. This is, I'm not prophesying this and I'm not endorsing this, but if you have a child, at some point, you're going to lose that child. I'm just telling you. That's how it works. Amen. Amen. Okay, now we hope you find them, you know, uh, but you're gonna lose them. They lose Jesus, right? So now they're frantic, they're like, okay, we can't find, they go back to town. Can you imagine the conversation? I'm like, oh, if we lose him, like what happens? Like, like, I don't know. We gotta find him. You know? So, so they find Jesus and his mom is just anxious. Can you sense this in mom? She's like, what in the world were you doing? He's like, well, you wanted to go home. And I didn't, uh, what we wanted was different. This is differentiation. She's like, I didn't want to go home. I wanted to sit here and argue the Bible with all the scholars, even though I'm 12. 'cause I'm ready. They're like, no, no, no. We wanted you to go home with us. Okay? So, uh, let me read a, a clinical textbook on family systems. When one member of a family can calmly state his own convictions and beliefs and take actions on his own convictions without criticism of the beliefs of others, and without becoming involved in emotional debate, then other family members will start the same process of becoming more sure of self and more accepting of others. That's exactly what Jesus is doing. Did he get emotional? No. Was he disrespectful? No. He's like, you wanted to go home? I didn't. We're different. Okay. Oh, the moms are giving me the stink eye. Um, I think you see where this is going. Okay. Um,

did Jesus ever sin? No. No. In this moment, did he disagree with his parents? Yes. Yes. Just because a child is disagreeing doesn't mean they're sinning, right? There's a big difference between differentiating and sinning. Jesus is here, not sinning, but he is differentiating. You see that? And he's beginning, he's in this differentiation process. He's 12. Now, was Jesus dishonoring? No. Uh, was he submissive to his parents? Yes. At the very end it says he went home with them and he submitted to his parents' authority. So he's not sinning, but he is differentiating. As children are growing up, there is something in a, the spirit of a religious parent that says, unless you agree with me, you're in sin. Well, there is a sin. Uh, there is the issue in category of sin, but there is also the category of differentiating. They're not sinning. They're just different than you. They're coming to some different conclusions. They have some different desires. And so here's what I want you to note. Two things that will hinder differentiation is over-parenting. And under parenting over-parenting is enmeshment. And enmeshment does not allow the child to differentiate, to grow up, to become an individual and an adult. Um, usually as we've established, uh, over-parenting occurs, let me ask you by the mother or father by the mother, because she is the caregiver when the child is little. But as the child gets bigger, she needs to stop caregiving so much and let them start to carry some of their own responsibility. That's where sometimes there's a tension in child raising where mom's like, that's my baby. And dad's like, that's a grown man. Okay? And I can't get into all of this just for time's sake, but if you do the family systems workbook, you really need to pay attention to chapter 16, um, called the Satanic Six. And it's the six ways that Satan is destroying young men in our culture. And then chapter 17, which is Making men and how to raise a boy to be a man. Um, and these concepts are, it's kind of interesting. Uh, they're really getting some traction. I've talked about this for years, but even this week, I wanna thank him publicly. Ben Shapiro gave me a shout out and liked some of these things that I'm sharing. I'm like, great. And I love you Ben, and you need Jesus. So anyways, um, like we love a Jewish guy, you gotta meet him. He's amazing. Uh, he'll change your life. And so, and we love you too. So we'd love you to meet Jesus. But nonetheless, um, what this looks like in our culture where it's over-parenting and enmeshment that doesn't allow differentiation. I'll, I'll, I'll share it briefly. Uh, I saw a guy at the grocery store recently with his mom. He was like mid to late twenties. Um, he just woke up at like the crack of noon. You could tell 'cause he had bedhead. He was wearing his pajamas at the store and a mask, okay? And he was with his mother and she drove him to the store and he was asking her if he could get various snacks to put in her cart that she could pay with, with her money to put in her car to drive to her house, uh, to feed her worthless son. So they were having this time together. And I thought to myself, you know what? You need to put pants on and take the mask off. It's time to differentiate. It's time to differentiate. Okay? All the moms are yelling. All the guys are like, it's comfortable. Okay? Anyways, um, yeah. The other way that we harm differentiation is under parenting or cutoff. Sometimes this happens when the child is growing up and the parents are not present and active. You're like, you didn't tell 'em anything. You didn't prepare 'em. How many of you, you go to dinner and there's a little kid watching a screen, they've got a screen in front of them and the parents aren't even interacting with them. It's like they need a parent, not a good wifi connection, right? And so sometimes there's under parenting, and then when the child gets older, they're not ready to differentiate and launch 'cause they haven't been trained, right? The other stupid thing that we do, and we do a lot of stupid things in our culture, but one of the stupid things that we do is we, uh, we cut kids off at 18. Yeah. Okay, parents, lemme just ask you on their 18th birthdate, do they become a full functioning, mature adult? No. If you're 17, you're like, yes, we do. You're adorable. Okay? No, you don't. And it, it's fine to say at this age, you can

drive at this age, you can vote at this age, you can buy alcohol. But just because someone is of a certain age doesn't mean they're of a certain maturity. I've seen immature, 46-year-old men, and I've seen mature 16-year-old young men. And so what we do at 18, we're like, well, you're an adult now. No, they're not fully cooked, right? They need more time in the microwave, right? They're, they're not cooked yet. And what this means is that 18, you don't stop parenting, but you're parenting someone who's in the process of differentiating to become an adult. So you parent them a little differently. Um, I'll give you an example. Uh, some years ago I was in Colorado and I was talking to a pastor. This was many years ago. Nice guy, loved Jesus, loved his family, loved the scriptures. And I just asked him, I said, is there anything I can pray for you about? Anything I can pray for you about? And he's like, uh, yeah. Came out of him. He's like, pray for my daughter. She's 18. She's in a relationship. I don't like the guy. I don't like where it's going. My wife and I are really worried. You know, this is, this is concerning for us. So I asked him, I said, well, when you've talked to her about it, what does she say? He said, well, we haven't directly talked to about it. We've kind of hinted about it. I said, why? He said, she's 18. She's an adult. She gets to make her own decisions. I was like, whoa. So first of all, if you don't say anything, she probably assumes that you're supportive, right? In addition, she's never been married, so she doesn't exactly know what the best choice is for marriage. And just because she's 18 doesn't mean you can't still be her dad. And that can't be her mom. And you can't have a conversation with her. He's like, you think so? He's like, no, I know. So, because the most important decision you make is who you worship. The second most important decision is who you marry. If they make that mistake that will cause pain for the rest of their life and for multiple generations, you'll have a broken system. I said, just 'cause she's 18 doesn't mean that you don't have a voice. You don't have a a, a way of speaking into her life and her future decision making. Uh, let me proceed. Uh, Jesus differentiated and he had to differentiate to lead. We're still on our theme of differentiation. Um, let me read the scripture to you. Uh, mark chapter 3 21, and then 31 through 35, Jesus family heard it. So Jesus is saying, I'm God, I came down from heaven. I'm without sin. I'm gonna rise from the dead and I'm gonna go to heaven, and I'm gonna open heaven. They went out to seize him for they were saying what He's out of his mind like, Jesus needs mental help. He needs mental health immediately. And his mother and his brothers, his father is absent. Many think he probably died somehow before this time. And Jesus here is a grown man in his thirties standing outside. They sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him and they said to him, your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you. And he answered, who are my mother and brothers? And looking at those who sat around him, he said, here are my mother and brothers for whoever does the will of God. He is my speaking spiritually. Brother and sister and mother. So here's what happens. Jesus is publicly saying, I'm God. And his family thinks he's lost his mind. So the family has a meeting. We gotta go get Jesus to shut down his ministry. He thinks he's God, he's lost it. So then the enmeshed family all comes together. This is an intervention. And now there are one of two choices. Jesus follows his family or the family follows Jesus. Those are the options. And the question is, is Jesus going to be enmeshed with his family? I don't want conflict or tension or separation. So I'm just gonna go home and be with my family and shut down my ministry so that I can be enmeshed with my family. Or am I going to differentiate? Am I gonna do things differently than what my family wants? 'cause I'm a grown man in an adult in my thirties, and Jesus is here establishing himself as a leader. And he started this early in his ministry by telling people, come follow me. Jesus doesn't follow, he leads and people follow him. That's a leader. So in this instance, Jesus is differentiating and he's saying, I love my family, but I'm not going to be enmeshed with my

family. My family thinks some things and I'm different. I think some different things. They want me to shut my ministry down and I plan on going global. They're different. He's differentiated. Um, let me say this. You cannot be a leader unless you're differentiated. You can't be. If you're fully enmeshed in a group, there is no leader. There's no one that has a different idea or a different plan or a different perspective. And it's groupthink and it's fear of man and it's unhealth and dysfunction and sometimes rises to the level of codependence. And what happens when you have enmeshment? They don't allow a leader to differentiate. And if they do, there's a lot of pressure to be enmeshed and come back into the group. Hey, don't, don't think different. Don't act different. Don't do different. Just, just remain, uh, connected with us. And there's this powerful force that is at work trying to pull us into, uh, relationships that may not be the healthiest for us. Even in nature, you've got prides and swarms and flocks and schools. And it is that even in the animal kingdom, they'll stick together for safety and security. There's something in us that wants that same thing. And to differentiate is to separate. And you risk being cut off. Well, what if the group or the family, what if they cut me off? What if my choices are enmeshment or cutoff? And most people will go back to enmeshment because they don't want to endure cutoff. This is where the leaders have the courage, the the nerve, the stamina, the the fortitude, the pain tolerance to say, I love you, but I'm differentiating and I'm gonna do some things different and I'm forging a different path. You are welcome to follow me, but I'm not following you. That's a leader. Had Jesus not differentiated here with his family, the church of Jesus Christ would not exist. Salvation would not exist. The fulfillment of the scriptures would not exist. If Jesus' family is right, he should have went home, but they were wrong. So he moved on. In addition, this explains why we are as a culture lacking leadership at every level. We are lacking leadership in business, we're lacking leadership in politics. We're lacking leadership in church because the family systems in our culture are broken. And we either have enmeshment or cutoff. We don't have family systems that allow the next generation to differentiate. And as a result, we're not getting any leaders. And so this is a generational crisis. If you don't allow your children to differentiate, none of them will become leaders and your family will not be healthy. What happens in an amesh family system? And family can include a work group, a ministry group, a friend group, a business association, or whatever the case may be. This can get all the way to denominations and networks and whole collectives of Christians. But what happens is if it's an enmeshed group, then the least healthy person decides what happens because they're the most emotional and they're the most hurt and they're the most triggered and they're the most vulnerable. So, so they're the most emotional and they're the most vocal. And if you allow the least healthy person in an ESH group to make the decisions, all you're doing is slowly bringing about the demise and the death of the group. That's where a differentiated leader gets out and says, this isn't working. We're gonna do some things different. We could use this in politics to false. Like give me, give me an option, please. Like, could we use this in business? Some differentiated leaders that were pioneering some new ideas and willing to take some risks? A hundred percent. Could we use this in ministry? People who are saying, you know what, I'm willing to say what the Bible says, even if I'm criticized by the mob and the majority, I'll call the shots, take the shots. You can cut me off and cancel me, but I'm gonna be faithful to Christ. This is differentiation. Um, and, and let me say this, uh, to our church family, um, we must allow differentiation, but not rebellion. Okay? Differentiation and rebellion are, they're different. Rebellion is sin, differentiation is maturing. It's part of the process. So when you come into our church, if you're here at Trinity or you're joining us online, I like to say we have closed handed issues and open-ended issues. The closed handed issues are what cause us, uh, to be God's

children and part of his family. The Bible is God's word. Uh, there's one God, three persons, father, son, and spirit. Jesus is fully God, fully man, born of a virgin, lived without sin, died on the cross, rose from the dead. He's the way, the truth in life. And no one gets to the father, but by him. Okay, closed handed. Okay? And then differentiation is there's some open-handed issues. And in the family, ah, you can disagree on these things, but you're still family. We don't cut you off over these issues. If you deny these things, you're a heretic. You're apostate, you start a culture, another religion, we have to cut you off. There's a difference between sinning and differentiating. So in our church, some people think that the earth is old and some think that it's young, and it's definitely probably one of those, you know? Um, and, and, and in our, well, this is even true in our marriage. And so, um, and so, but even some people, they say, I like this translation of the Bible. Others say, I like that translation of the Bible. Okay, that's great. Some people have strong opinions about how and when and where Jesus will return. And others are like, I don't know. Uh, I'm on the welcome committee, not the planning committee. I don't know. You know. Uh, and, and so as a church, what allows us to remain together as a family is a core set of unchanging convictions. And then what allows us to be a growing learning, thinking, maturing church family, a differentiating church family is having open-handed issues. They're like, oh, we came to a different conclusion, but I love you. Let's talk about it and see if we can't learn from each other. In addition, as a church family, we have to allow in our church family what we are hopefully exercising in our biological extended family, the differentiation of the next generation, just like raising kids, you're like, well, they're differentiating in the church. As next generation rises up, they have to be given permission to differentiate. They gotta figure out their own faith, they gotta come to their own convictions. Maybe they wanna do worship differently. Maybe the way they wanna do their sermon prep and teaching is different. Maybe their service order is different, maybe their songs are different. And that's not rebellion that's maturing, right? Okay. And so as a church family, we, and for those of us who are older, now that I'm grandpa, when you look at generations that are younger, if you are mature, you should be more flexible. Yes, that's good. Okay? Because for example, like, uh, I've got grandsons. What I don't expect them to do is accommodate me because they're a few months old. So instead I have to accommodate them. If I looked at them and I was like, alright, here's what I need you to do, then they would just throw up and not do that. That's what would happen. So if you're older in a family or a church family, the older you get, the more flexible you should become on things that are matters of differentiation, but not sinning, preach. Okay? And sometimes I I, I just feel inclined in the spirit. This isn't my notes, but sometimes you gotta decide, uh, do we want our traditions or do we want our children? And many churches choose their traditions and lose their children, okay? No. We wanna be a growing, maturing, flexible church family that allows differentiation so that all those kids in kids' ministry and student ministry and young adults and emerging generations, they can come into leadership and give the gospel of Jesus Christ a future. That being said, um, Jesus taught differentiation. I'll read you the verse that, uh, that most people just really don't like, okay? And there, there's others, but, but this is one of them. What I don't want you to do is weaponize this verse. If you're bitter or have unforgiveness, you're gonna read this verse and be like, that's my new life verse. I hate my family. Uh, okay. And I want you to do that. And here's, uh, here's where Jesus taught differentiation. I'll explain it. Uh, Matthew 10 34 through 37, do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. That's prophetic. That has happened. Um, and a person's enemies will be those of his own household. And here's his interpretation.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Here's what Jesus is saying. Um, you have to maintain your God-given priorities. Okay? So for example, um, my first priority is my relationship with God. That's my first priority. Prayer, Bible, reading, listening to the Holy Spirit, being aware of God's presence and leading in my life. My relationship with God is my first priority. Lemme say this, if I'm not right with God, I'm not helpful to anybody. Uh, it's like if I don't give with the Lord, then he doesn't pour into me what I can then pour out to help other members of my family. My next priority is my wife, grace. Uh, she was there before the children. And right, honey, you're gonna be there after they leave. So, um, so you know, amen. Okay, good. I was a little nervous. Glad we got that cleared up and on film. And so, um, and then the next priority is our five kids. And now that they're married, uh, three of them are their marriages and their families and their spouses. But now what we have is four families and, uh, as well as our, our our children that are yet unmarried. And then after that, my next priority relationally is our, our our grandsons. And then after that, it's our church family and our extended family. And if I take any of these God-given assigned priorities, and I invert them, what I'm creating is a broken system that's gonna hurt generations. Like, you need to know this. Like, I love you and I love being your pastor, and I love teaching you the Bible, but you're not in my top few priorities, okay? Like at the end of the day, if it's like, mark, you need to shipwreck your marriage so that you can grow the church. Nope. Because I believe if I focus on my priorities that God gave me, that God could multiply the ministry that he's called me to, right? And so at the end of the day, what Jesus is talking about is, are you living by your God-given priorities? Um, and what happens then is as you maintain your God-given priorities, what you're setting is a pattern of health. So that as your kids and grandkids grow up, they're seeing, okay, this isn't a perfect family system, but it's healthy and it honors God's priorities, and then it gives them a pattern for marriage and family. This is where our whole culture's broken. They don't say anything about marriage, parenting, family and family systems. You can get all the way through graduation and know nothing about what to do with the rest of your life. That being said, uh, I've got a little bit of time just here, uh, at the end, and I wanna make this as practical as I can. So I, in the few moments I've got remaining, um, I just wanna share some very practical things for parents and children to just consider. Um, there's a big difference between secrecy and privacy. And this is part of the differentiation process. When your children are really little, do they have any privacy? No. You strip them naked. Um, just whenever you want. You're like, as a general rule, you can't do this to other people. Um, and then you put them in a bathtub and then you rub them and you don't ask them like, are you good with this? Okay, okay. They don't have any privacy. Okay, let me say this. If you're watching and you have a child in their twenties and this is happening, call 9 1 1 and can cancel the live stream at this point, okay? As a child get. And, and so a child doesn't have a lot of privacy, so now they're growing up and you monitor their technology and their friend group and where they go. But when they differentiate and become adults, they get a lot of privacy. Secrecy is, I'm hiding something that's bad. Privacy is, it's not your business. True or false. When a child differentiates and becomes an adult, let's say, gets married and starts their own family, are there certain things that they just don't need to tell their parents? Yes. Like, how's your sex life? Oh, well, I'll tell you. Uh, it's none of your business. And if you ask again, um, we will do a timeout, okay? Sometimes the parents, they want to know information. It's like, that's not your business, right? Right. That's not your business. If we want you to know, we'll tell you and we don't. Here's another one. Uh, there's a big difference in parenting between control and influence. When a child is little, you have a lot of control, right?

You literally take the child, you pick them up, you decide where they go. You put 'em in a sling, you lock 'em in a car seat, boom. You, you're, you're now, they're not in control. As a child gets older, do you start to lose control? Yeah, a hundred percent. Now, what happens then is some parents double down on control. If they do, they're only allowing their child two options. Enmeshment, do what we say or cut off leave and don't have a relationship with us. Differentiation says, as the child gets older, you're moving from control to influence to influence. And influence has to be in the context of relationship. You're an adult. We're gonna talk about this, we're gonna pray about this. We're gonna be in the process together and put some grace on it. Um, what happens when you have, uh, controlling parents, they will control through emotion. Somebody will create a lot of emotion and then it causes anxiety. And everybody in the family's like just do what they want. So they stop being so emotional. It's manipulation. Sometimes they will do so through triangles. They'll get somebody involved so that they can control and triangulate the relationships to get what they want. Sometimes, uh, people will, uh, seek to exercise control by threatening cutoff. You better do this. You're out. You can't, you can't be part of the family anymore. Uh, in addition, sometimes control comes in the form of hyper spirituality, right? The Lord told us really well, tell 'em to give me a call. You know, I'm listening. You know why I, you know, this is what you need to do. 'cause I'm now your mediator between you and God. And sometimes the way that controlling parents operate is through money and finances or possessions and wealth. They're like, I will give money if I get to be in control. I'll give you money. If you buy a house where I want you to buy a house, I'll give you money. If you put your kids in the school, I want them to go to, I will give you money if you go to the college that I've chosen for you. And all of a sudden what happens then is the money becomes the controlling factor. Where the older generation then controls the younger generation. Here's what I would say. If you're a parent, if you don't trust them, don't fund them. If you don't trust them, don't fund them. And if you're, uh, a child or an adult child of a controlling parent, if the money comes with any strings, don't take the money because they'll become the marionette and you'll become the puppet. Another one, um, a good way to have differentiation is you're talking about boundaries. And your property has a boundary and your family needs to have some boundaries. So, you know, you've got your house, you're like, there's a fence usually between you and the neighbor. They say, good neighbors have good fences, make good neighbors. It's like, well, that's your property. This is my property. So you can't just come over here and I can't come over there. Just like you have boundaries for your property, you need to have boundaries for your family. That's your family. This is our family. We're different. That's your house. This is our house. We're different. This is our car. That's your car. We're different. This is our money. That's your money. You're, we're different. And the boundaries then help the families to be independent and then interconnected where they agree to what happens. Um, let me explain how this works in our, our extended family. So, um, our kids all have a key to our house. We don't have a key to their houses. If we're not home, they need something, uh, let yourself in, but I'm not going to your house and taking stuff in addition. Um, the kids can come over anytime they want. They don't have to announce it. We don't show up at their house unless we're invited or it's agreed upon. 'cause that's their house. And it's weird if they come home and I'm in their house, amen. It's weird. And if I just walk into their house, I'm like, oh, I can't unsee what's happening. You know? So I don't wanna I don't wanna be involved boundary. I'll be home. Text me if you wanna see me and I'll show up late just to be safe, right? I just, and so a couple of other things too. Um, like in a family group, text, prayer requests, good news, funny stories. But let's say you, you're having conflict. The last thing you want to do, the la zero family conflicts have been

resolved through lengthy text wars. Zero. Okay? How many of you, when you get the family group text, like, ah, Jesus, come back now. Right now, get me outta this. And what that is, is you've gotta, you've gotta have a boundary and say, no, no, no. What our technology is used for blessing, prayer requests, sharing news, not disagreeing and fighting and attacking. And I'll say this as well, I've said it, but I'll repeat it. Any family member who takes a private matter and posts it on the internet is sinning. And they're violating the Bible's commands of gossiping and busy bodying. 'cause now they're inviting the universe into the family conflict. It's treacherous behavior. And I would say a few things as well on this issue of boundaries in a relationship. The parents and the children should pursue each other, especially as you get older. But I, this is what I've told our children, that the primary responsibility is the parents to pursue the children, especially the adult children. A lot of times parents are like, you never call, you don't pursue me. Like I'm a differentiated person trying to launch and live my life and start my career and start my family. And if you want to get lunch, say, Hey, I want to get lunch and pursue the child, right? And a lot of times parents have unspoken expectations that go unmet and then they get hurt and offended. And what they instead need to do is take initiative and to pursue the child. Hey, let's do lunch. Let's do coffee. When's a good time for you? Hey, let's go. I'll buy tickets. Let's hang out at the game. And let me say this to the older folks, the parents, you pay for it. If you want time with them, make it cheap and easy. When works for you, I'll pay. I'm just telling these two things. Increase your odds. I'll just tell you that's what I've experienced. When works for you, I'll pay. And it's pursuing your own, uh, your own child for relationship. Uh, in addition, this one will be, uh, controversial. Um, so there's a proverb that says A wise man leaves an inheritance for his children's children. My encouragement. Now, some people love the Lord and they're poor Jesus parents were poor. I'm not, I'm not making any economic statement, but I'm saying as parents, we wanna leave an inheritance that that inheritance is spiritual and it's also financial, spiritual, it should be wisdom. But financial, usually there's an inheritance of some sort or kind that comes to the next generation. My encouragement to the parents would be get the inheritance to your children earlier rather than later. So like, I'm, I'm 53. I know I don't look a day over 70, but I'm 53. And, uh, and so let's say I've got 30 years left. Well, in 30 years, my kids who are in their twenties, they don't need the money unless they really make some bad life decisions. Instead, when is most helpful? Let me ask the young people. When is it most helpful to get an economic jumpstart? You get married when you get married. Yes. Front row, very loud and clear. Amen, brother. Um, okay, and so, um, here's what I always told the kids, like, you know, don't go into credit card debt. Don't go into card debt. Don't go into college debt. That's the beast. The false prophet of the antichrist. Don't do that. Um, and then when you get married, own a home as early as possible so that you can start to build equity. And the first domino begins to fall for multi-generational wealth. So if you're an older parent, it's like, well, let's help them here so that they can make momentum throughout the course of life economically. And so these are the kind of things that you can think about. Tools, not rules, but for a family system, what are the priorities and what are the decisions and what are, what are the ways that we're architecting? I'll give you a few more. Can we do a few more? A few more. Are you good with that? I mean, it's, it's just so you know, I'm now over time or as I like to call it, right on time. And so I'll give you two more. I I say this a lot, uh, when not my news to tell in a family where there's differentiation and boundaries. Sometimes there are people that don't have information that they want to have about other members of the family, right? And so what they do, they triangle. They go, well, do you know what's going on with them? And here's what I like to say. That's not my news to tell. If you wanna know about them, guess what? Ask them. Ask them. And if they want you to know,

they'll tell you. And if they don't tell you, you're not gonna know. But you can pray. Because even when you don't know what is happening, God does. And even when you feel like it's out of your hands, it's in his hand. And this is where the older your children get, the more you learn to pray. But it's not my news to tell. Lastly, um, a couple of things that I would say are very healthy to allow differentiation and a healthy family system. Number one is a weekly calendar meeting with your spouse, right? Grace and I Monday, we have our weekly calendar meeting. Because if you're going to maintain your God-given priorities and have a healthy family system, that has to be done intentionally, right? We've got, I've got real faith, I've got Trinity Church, two full-time jobs. Uh, I've got a wife, five kids, three of whom are married, a couple of grandkids. You know, if I don't intentionally architect my life, it's a disaster. And so, just like you need to have a budget, you also need to have a schedule. And both of those need to reflect your God-given priorities. So Grace and I meet every Monday, and we do our schedule. What's going on? You know, how do we open space for the kids? You know, what, what do we got going on? Holidays, vacations, all these kind of things. In addition, we do an annual vision retreat. This is in the workbook and the, the link is there for Pastor Jimmy Evans annual Vision Retreat. And our kids who are married tend to do this as well. It's like, okay, for this year, what do we want for our family? Praying and listening, Lord, what do you want for our family this year? And then architecting the schedule and budget. And then thirdly, when the families wanna do something together. 'cause now our extended family is for families. We get together and have family meeting. Like, what do you guys wanna do for Christmas? Let's talk about this. What do you guys wanna do for Thanksgiving? You're gonna be outta town. Okay, great. You know, Hey, what do you guys want to, we're gonna take this trip. Does anybody want to go? And it, it's a lot of conversation. An invitation. The worst thing that can happen is one person who is a controlling, uh, influence in the family just tells all the other families what we're doing. No. 'cause at that point, you're only allowing enmeshment or cutoff, not differentiation. Like, uh, I think I got a different idea for Christmas. Can we talk about that? I got a different idea for Thanksgiving. Can we talk about that? I have, I have a different idea for the wedding that's coming up, or I have a different idea, uh, for what the children need in the next generation. Lemme bring the band up and close with this. Uh, let me ask one question. Uh, do you know Jesus Christ? Okay? 'cause the first thing is, if you're hearing all this on family, you're like, where do I start? Start by joining God's family. Okay? Once you join God's family, then he's gonna help you figure out how to do family. So if you're not someone who belongs to Jesus Christ and believes in Jesus Christ, he is the son of God. He came down, lived without sin. He died for our sin. He rose from the grave to defeat sin and death. He's alive and well right now. His ears and heart are open in heaven. He'll forgive your sin and adopt you into God's family. Okay? That's, that's where we start. Um, number two, for those of you who are children, start with forgiveness and gratefulness. Your parents didn't do it right and you won't either. You want your family system for generations to be one. That starts with gratitude. Here's the things I'm thankful for, and forgiveness. Here are the things that I'm not going to choose bitterness regarding. And put some grace on your parents. Uh, the older I get, the more aware of the ways I have failed. And if a parent has a functioning conscience, they understand this. In addition, if you're a parent, here's what you can do. I'm sorry. You can just own it. Yep, I'm sorry. Now knowing what I know, I would've done it differently when I was raising you. Now, the person that I've become is a better version. And I wish you would've had that as your father or mother in those formative years. And it can unlock healing and the flow of the Holy Spirit for generations if you just own the things as apparent that were wrong. And then God can bring grace so that the

relationship can be made right. I'll, I'll just close with this and I'm gonna ask as we go into a time of worship, and I'll pray for you and we'll release the live stream. Um, this is where I need you to meet with the Lord. We're gonna invite the Holy Spirit. What is he saying to you? What is he convicting you of? What do you need to repent of? Who do you need to forgive? What broken system do you need to correct? What change is God stirring in you so that there can be a better future for you and your family? I want you to hear from Him and me with him. Now, holy Spirit, we invite you, uh, we invite you to everyone who is giving me the honor of teaching them the Word of God today. Uh, Lord, we know that you love family, and we know that Satan hates family. We know that you try to build family and he tries to break family. So we pray against the enemy of servants, their works and the facts. We pray against the generational curses and strongholds. We invite you, holy Spirit, to bring renewing and healing, repentance, forgiveness, hope, vision. God, we're on the threshold of a new year and nothing changes unless you change us and our perspective. Holy Spirit, we just invite you right now. What would you have to say to each person? What would you have to give or impart to each person? And we invite your presence in ministry now. In Jesus' name, amen. Thanks for letting me teach the series.