

Megan

So HBO Max has released a new docu series called The Way Down, and it's about a church which many would call a cult. Located in Nashville called the Remnant Fellowship. This evangelical church -cult was founded by a woman named Gwen Shamblin Lara, who became famous by writing a book called The Weigh Down Diet, which advertises itself as a faith based permanent solution to weight loss. The premise of the book, which turned into a whole ministry conglomerate, is that the only solution to permanent weight loss is through prayer and following God's rules for eating. And the god she's referencing in the book is the God in the Christian Bible. So that's a little background on what the docu series is about. We'll be putting out recap episodes for each episode of The docu series every week or so. And we'll be interviewing someone that attended the Remnant Fellowship once on a later episode.

So today, we are discussing Midnight Mass. I'm sorry, just kidding. We're discussing the third episode of The Way Down called Seen and Not Heard.

Kendra

Maybe we should be talking about Midnight Mass.

Kaiti

I haven't seen Midnight Mass either, so

Megan

Well, they're not unrelated.

Kendra

They're not unrelated. They're not unrelated. It's y'all gotta go watch Midnight Mass.

Megan

Yeah. Who, huh? So But seriously, we're on episode three of The Way dDown on HBO, Max called Seen and Not Heard. We've already like, kind of talked about how this was maybe the most upsetting episode to watch.

Kaiti

Definitely the heaviest.

Kendra

For sure. For sure. Like for real? If the last episode. If any of that was like triggering to you? I might tell you not to watch this one.

Megan

Yeah, same`, yeah, and maybe don't listen to this episode. We're the only podcast that actively tells its listeners to stop listening,

Kendra

listening. I mean, we're gonna be we discussed this kind of how we're going to talk about this, obviously, and we're gonna be gentle with details. And we're not gonna get too in the weeds of things.

Megan

I guess we should introduce ourselves. My name is Megan.

Kendra

I'm Kendra.

Kaiti

I'm Katie.

Megan

We're glad you're here with us. When we were discussing how to organize our thoughts around this episode, we thought about organizing it into the big systems of oppression that we saw at play. And the first one that we noticed was adultism, which is sometimes called adult centrism. And that is, literally the power adults have over children. more narrowly, adultism is defined as prejudice and accompanying systematic discrimination against young people on a more philosophical basis, the term has also been defined as bias towards adults. So bias against children bias towards adults. And how we see that show up in our culture is, obviously adults dictate pretty much everything that children do. And also, their children's emotions aren't taken seriously. Oftentimes, spaces aren't accessible to children. So it really shows up in a lot of ways.

Kendra

I mean, right out the gate, I realized, like she talks about the about how there was no children's church, and the kids were just like, with the grownups, and look how great that is for them.

Kaiti

And expected to understand the same language and the same concepts and everything. Which is I think adultism is kind of a hard thing, because adults are responsible for raising their children and like making sure that they are like, their needs are met in those kinds of things. So there's a fine line between, like, a parent raising a child and like an adult, like, disregarding the needs of a child.

Megan

I think it's a good point, because I think there is a lot of nuance there.

Kaiti

That's why they get away with it. Yeah, yeah.

Megan

Yeah, exactly.

Kendra

That is why they get away with it. And we talk about this, like the importance of learning and listening to the wisdom of the body. And as a child, you're just taught in this system, you're just talking totally negated. How could you know? How could you possibly you're a child, how could you possibly know what you need or what you want? Or what's good for you? Yeah, wild.

Megan

One of the things that Gwen says, and this is in an actual video, so she can't even deny this, or she couldn't deny this. But if you don't obey your parents for the first time, not the second or third time, but the first time if you're slow to obey, you are being your own God. You won't go to heaven. You won't live on earth. You won't live long on Earth. And you'll have a terrible afterlife.

Kendra

Parents listening is that just not exactly what you want your children to learn?

Megan

It's so authoritarian too

Kendra

it's horrifying to think that like that's, that's the method that you're going to take to get your kids to, like, do what you want them to do. Instead of like, just talking to them and explaining things thoroughly and communicating well, it's fear. And it's, it's like you're saying, Megan, it's authoritarian.

I think you're exactly right. Kaiti, it is fear based, a parent wanting to operate like that with their children. That I mean, it is fear based and it's being instilled in them by what does she call herself? Gwesus?

Yeah. And it's an it's reinforced by the physical abuse they're trying to tell the parents in, in the congregation that the the only way they can get their kids to obey is through spanking and physical abuse.

And they talk about this, like your kid wiggles. I'm forgetting who it was it talked about this, but getting changed.

Megan

They're talking about an infant wiggling during a changing of the diaper. Yeah. If your infant isn't wiggling during the changing of a diaper, that's probably a sign of trauma. I'm not even kidding.

Kendra

Yeah. Yeah. No, yeah, exactly. I got a little kick out of like talking about three year olds being still, because I'm not even an adult that can be still so. And I was certainly not a three year old that could be still but it reminded me of a story. When I was younger. When I was three, the church I grew up at had like a mother daughter, luncheon. And so like all of us toddlers, I mean, we weren't all that young, but like I was at a table with other three year olds, like my friends, family, parents, mothers. And they thought that three year olds were gonna sit through not just like eating, but like a 45 minute talk from the woman, whoever it was that they brought in, for the moms in the room. And my mom knew better. And so about, I probably like two minutes after there was nothing left to do at the table. She took me out in the lobby and just ran around. And some woman, not the speaker, but the woman with the speaker. Thought that afterwards, she had the she had the audacity to come up to my mother and say, if you don't take the rod to that child, she's going to end up in jail or on the wrong path.

Megan
Oh,

Kendra
I said, Why did you do? My mom went nothing, I just smile and walked away from her. I knew she didn't know what she's talking about. Just walked away.

My parents still today when they see, you know, kids families out in public and the kid is quote, unquote, misbehaving or just being a kid being loud being rambunctious. They'll say something like, oh, that kid needs to be spanked or something like that. And for the longest time, because I'm I haven't even have I'm in no position right now to be thinking about starting a family anytime soon. So for the longest time, I didn't really know what to think about that. I was kind of feeling weird. But then someone explained to me someone who was getting ready to have a baby and explained to me that, you know, why would if you're trying to raise a child to be a good adult, human, which is the goal, I guess, of having kids? Why would you teach them that the way to deal with conflict is violence.

Megan
100%

Kaiti
and, and why is that the way that you're going to teach them how to resolve an issue, someone's doing something that you don't like, are you going to hit them? Like, are you gonna beat them? Like, that doesn't make sense. And so I think having that in the back of my mind watching them talk about, you know, the Joseph Smith case. And even just the smaller examples of them talking about how are you going to discipline a kid, and Gwen is recommending a glue stick it like my stomach is getting like physically upset, just thinking about it right now,

Megan

I can appreciate that there are some gray areas around discipline and the differences between discipline and physical violence. But evidence shows us that violence begets violence, right? And just like you said, Kaiti, if you are physically punishing your child, then what are they going to do when conflict comes up in their lives, because they have not been given the opportunity to practice regulating their own mood, or to practice how to make some other kind of choice, or just just slow down, which is what is usually needed in those moments. And this is just another way that children are a marginalized group. Because they are treated differently, we would not hit our friends, when we're when they've done something we don't like. We wouldn't In fact, there are a lot of ways that we wouldn't treat our friends when they do something we would like. Like, we really wouldn't try to punish them, probably, we would try to, you know, which like, and there are age appropriate ways to do that with children.

Kendra

Right. And it's like, they're like, parents are meant to be friends. Like they're, that's not the role. But that's what they're learning how to treat their friends.

Megan

Yes.

Kendra

And we haven't even really touched on how it was not only is it like a adults, but if you're older than somebody, then you have the responsibility the right to correct them or to punish them. So the you know, they say, so you could be nine and be able to punish a five year old in the way that they're being taught through violence. So not only are you inflicting this violence and teaching that but then you're allowing them to go ahead and begin the practice.

Megan

This is when we meet Tedd Anger. I'm just saying maybe we start paying attention to people's last names. Sham, Shamblin, anger Tedd Anger.

Kendra

Didn't he change it?

"Ahn-zhay" But what's what I thought was kind of made me laugh to myself. My phone I was like typing notes in my phone while I was watching and my phone autocorrected Tedd Anger to Tedd Danger. And I thought that was also very fitting.

Megan

Your phone is very wise. Yeah. He just he's abusive. Yeah. And he's one of the one of the highest leaders in the church under under Gwen but

Kendra

well, but they would never admit. Which that whole thing is still kind of being a church of Christ. Women not speaking women not praying out loud. Like, it's a very submissive

denomination. And so even that Gwen really being the one in charge, Gwen being in charge anyone forget that there whether or not there are four people over Gwen. Four dudes over Gwen than her and everyone else like that is just right. Wild.

Megan

It's like using the tools of oppression. Except not for me. Hmm.

Kendra

Which white women like to do a lot. I'm speaking about us too. I mean,

Megan

yeah, we're not exempt. Gwen And Tedd, talk about this idea of like, you shouldn't be thinking about yourself, children shouldn't be thinking about themselves, as if thinking about yourself is selfishness. And, you know, when we're raising our next generations, I want them to be reflective. I want them to critically think about themselves, and about the world. And then go forward. Because otherwise, what the fuck are we doing?

Kendra

Yeah.

Megan

And, you know, introspection is not selfish.

Kendra

I thought it was I mean, and this theme shows up later, with, like mental health stigma. But these kids who have been abused by their parents under the direction of Gwen and the leadership of the church are dealing with really significant mental health ramifications and they're depressed. And at one point, they talk about one of the kids who OD'd. And they're all having like, depressed suicidal thoughts. And they're not able to talk to anyone, because who are they going to talk to? That's one of the direct quotes is who are they going to talk to? Because there's no one, they can go to anywhere. They can't talk to anyone. Because otherwise, it's going to be turned up the ladder, the leadership ladder, and they'll be called in for counseling and put through more trauma, more trauma.

Megan

Yeah, all those symptoms that they talked about are all PTSD symptoms. Yeah. So we hear a little bit about the story about Joseph Smith, we're not going to get into the specifics about that, because it's pretty upsetting, but basically just know that his parents were following what Gwen told them to do. And Joseph Smith is murdered. And he's a child. And he may not be the only child that this happened to in this family, we're not sure. And so the charges are brought against the parents. And they're brought to court. They whoever was working on it tried to implicate Gwen and the church. But that wouldn't stick. But it showed a little video clip of them in court. And like you said, Kendra, there's there's Gwen and her team. And then you find out that she's paying for their whole defense, and paid their bail.

Kendra

And when they're found guilty, it they create all these websites saying that they're innocent.

Megan

Yes, yeah.

Kendra

and are continuing to try and clear their name because to them, it's a stain on the Remnant Fellowship, right? Even though they're it's like the dichotomy of it, even though they're trying to continually distance themselves and say that they're part of our church, but they didn't learn this from us. But we're going to support them and stand up for them. And we're going to even after they're found guilty, we're still going to say they aren't that they're innocent. And yet, but also, they didn't learn that behavior from us.

Megan

It's fucked up.

Kendra

It's fucked up.

Megan

So Gwen draws this diagram. Take us there, Kendra,

Kendra

She draws a triangle, which I just I keep coming back to the whole Trinity and how that's like, not a thing to them or whatever. And, and yet, here we are drawing a triangle. But of course, God is the peak of that triangle. And then it's you and what you want are the other two pieces of that triangle. I'm like, that doesn't even make any sense. But anyway, yeah. Like, that's how you get to God is between you and what you want, when that be a disconnect, based on what they're really trying to say, theologically anyway.

Megan

What if you want food, what if you're hungry?

Kendra

and then she draws a line, like under kind of God, not a direct correlation, but under over to a new side of the page and puts Jesus on it.

Kaiti

That's where Jesus is.

Kendra

Jesus, like they're not connected, a little lower. I mean, visually, this is like how she shows Yeah. And then she begins to write a list. And I'm like, where's this going? Where is this list going? So I mean, I grew up in a world where they very much were like, it's God, Jesus, Trinity, whatever, then it's your pastor, then it's the dad of the home, then it's the mom of the home, then it's the children. Like, this is the patriarchal, this is how this goes, okay. And that's I grew up into that. So I was kind of like, is that where this is going? And like, kind of, that's where this went, except she starts to write this list. Under Jesus is your boss, in case anybody was wondering.

Megan

Hey, capitalism, boss,

Kendra

and then it's your church leaders. She said, You know, the leadership of your church. Careful not to say like me, and then the others, just church leadership. And then she says, spouse, but she means father. Yeah. And then she kind of moves on, and they kind of jump forward. But some of the other words are like, your teacher. And I mean, what else? It was your teacher, siblings, oh, your sibling, your back to that back to that age thing. And then her statement at the end is like, how do you get to Jesus and God, from you and what you want, it's through all of these things. All of these relationships, she doesn't use the word relationships, I don't think but that's how you get to Jesus. And I was like, so what were praying to us, like, when you say it's through, I mean, she's meaning obedience. It's what she's claiming as obedience to all of these people is the only way and I'm like, have you read the New Testament? Where it literally says, I am the way Jesus says I am the way there is no one else scripturally that's, you know, if you're looking at it from a Christian context, it's like, that doesn't even equate to what your like there is, I don't even know how there's something in scripture that you take to then create this list of No, you go through all these people, and these relationships, including your boss, I just can't get over the boss. And in order to get to Jesus,

Megan

it's also like authority does not mean having authority does not mean that you are aligned with good values, that you aren't abusive, that you aren't actually harming people, because oftentimes, authority and power corrupt people. So those are the people that are inflicting abuse. And it's just ludicrous to say that just because someone has a title over you, or is older than you, or has, you know, external male sex organs, that they should have any say in your life,

Kendra

never once does she talk about, like, exactly what you're saying, Megan of like, and if you are in one of these positions of power, your responsibility is tenfold, to whatever. Never, it's like no, if you're under anything, the end, there's never any conversation about the rest.

I think it also kind of like thinking about inverting that a little bit. It sets up a dangerous, like transactional precedent for how the relationships are supposed to work. So if I want something because that's over here, and that's, like I'm on par with, like what I want, I have to appease all of these people above me and just pacify them basically, to get whatever it is that I want. And

also thinking that as long as I am obedient, I'll get what I want. And that kind of like, is I'm just thinking about all of the like diet culture things at play here, too. Like if what you want is to be in a smaller body, if I'm obedient. And that is like, it kind of plays out in the next like, theme of this episode, too. If I'm obedient to my husband, and I can ask him for permission to have a Starbucks drink, then I'll be thinner, more like pure in the eyes of God, and all is right with the world. But that's not exactly how that plays out in this episode, as we know.

Megan

Yeah. Yeah. So then come sexism. System of oppression number two.

Kendra

Is anybody surprised?

Megan

I don't know. I just didn't see this one coming into play y'all.

Kendra

I mean, it is a woman leading.

Right, a woman's in charge. So how could there be sexism if a woman's in charge?

Megan

Oh, but what if a woman has internalized sexism?

Kendra

Well, the other side of that, what I mean to finish that example, so this woman who, whose identity was totally like, hidden, she was totally anonymous in this. But she was describing an incident where she was running a 5k, I think. And she ended up being hospitalized because of, I think it was an electrolyte issue, like she didn't have enough electrolytes. And they found out that it was because she, I don't know if it was the same day, but basically, she had been restricting her eating to the point where she had asked her husband if she could get a Starbucks drink. And he responded, saying, Well, do you want this? Or do you want dinner? And no wonder she was in the hospital after that. Because if that's the pattern that you're going with, it's inevitable.

Megan

Yeah, and the reason she was having an electrolyte deficiency was because she was severely restricting her food and over exercising

Kendra

The, she was also at the same time talking about how she was the smallest she had ever been. So I'm sure in the eyes of the church, she was successful in her journey with God. So she was doing everything right.

And we see that play out all over the place, right? Like, we talk about that a lot, just in a general context of, well, if you're thin you must be doing something, right, you must be you must be healthy. All of these moral values that we give in our society to things that should have no moral value.

Megan

Then we meet Rachel Phillips, who we've seen in some other episodes.

Kendra

Yes, Rachel and she has shaved her head.

Megan

And they asked her why. Yeah, and she says is just like a to symbolize freedom from the abuse

Kendra

to symbolize freedom.

Megan

Mm hmm. Who else does that make anybody think of? Cuz I'm thinking about Britney Spears. I mean, yeah, shaved her head because she was she had no freedom.

Kendra

And I think about the, how we have so often equated like long hair, you know, below your ear hair as like feminine. Yes. Which would have been acquainted to your role in this church. Quote, unquote, church, this cult? And I just think about like, the symbol. I mean, obviously, Rachel thought about it too. But the symbolism of what it means to shave your head coming out of a place like that, with that kind of control over your, your femininity, your womanhood, your personhood,

I think too, I mean, hair, in some ways, is kind of like, rings on a tree trunk, like it's grows so that like, the piece, at the very end, was growing at a time like, this is gonna get very convoluted metaphor, like. So like, think for her, she said it in not so many words, but like shaving her head was sort of like freeing herself from that trauma. Right. And kind of shedding that layer and leaving it in the past.

Yeah. She was the one who talked about Tedd Anger. Tedd, right.

Megan

Yeah.

Kendra

And how was she the one who was saying, like, we think Gwen is bad. But Tedd, which is like, there's the one you really got to watch out for? You know?

Megan

Yeah, because basically, she'd had she was married, she'd had, I think, like three kids at that point, too, at that point. And that after she had children, she was kind of forced to be a childcare provider for the church. So she was taking care of her own kids. She was in a clearly submissive marriage where she was having to be submissive to her husband, and then her husband would come home and want to have sex with her. And she didn't want to have sex with him because she was exhausted, which, by the way, even if she didn't have all of that proof of the reasons why she didn't have sex, end of sentence, she didn't want to have sex with him. Period.

Kendra

There was no enthusiastic consent.

Megan

Right. And so he goes to Tedd and Candice and Candice is she's not really referenced again, but about how he's disappointed that his wife doesn't want to have sex with him. And they encouraged, they met with Rachel, they brought Rachel in for hours of counsel, which she described as mental torture. And they encouraged her to allow for that sex to happen.

Kendra

Well, and they also told her to drink,

Megan

Yeah, they told her one to two glasses of wine

Kendra

so she'd want to have sex.

I mean, not just that, but they encouraged her to go off her birth control, because they thought that was impacting her libido. Maybe if you go off your birth control that will make you enjoy it more and make you want it more. And then what happens? She gets pregnant. And then she's basically criticized for getting pregnant. When I that just the logic there is...

Megan

by the same person that encouraged her to get off of birth control

Kendra

and told her she was going to have any more children. What told her that she Oh, no, I don't think you're going to have any more children. So I think you're fine to go off your birth control. And then he was the one who was angry. Anger, Tedd Anger.

Megan

Right, Anger. Ahn-zhay was angry.

Kendra
y'all. Yeah, man.

Megan
There was just a pattern of husbands telling their wives that they needed to be more feminine, that they needed to lose weight that they needed to be more submissive. And they would threaten to turn them in if they disobeyed.

Kendra
But it was also like, I'm going to talk to Ted about how you're talking to me. I'm going to turn you in when it's the wife expressing frustration, at the very least about the husband's addictions or infidelity or like very serious relationship issues that the wife is trying to, like raise concerns about. And the husband is that hold a thread over their head about, you know, I'm gonna go to Tedd, I'm going to tell Tedd this is happening. And it becomes this pattern of, you know, it was another woman, I believe, who was describing an instance where she basically kicked her husband out, because he was cheating on her, I believe is what she alluded to. And she tells Tedd, what's going on, asks him to send her husband to a hotel, so that she doesn't have to sleep under the same roof as him for one night. And Tedd comes back and says, you know, you can't work things out if you're not under the same roof, you know, do it as a personal favor to me. And of course, at that point, when there's so much, you know, authoritarianism fear baked into it, you're not going to say no to Tedd. So you let them back in and then the next day, you just pretend that everything's fine.

Megan
Meanwhile, do you think they're calling these men in who are habitually cheating on their wives for counsel? Because they didn't mention that?

Kendra
Well, obviously not because Ted is literally like with the husband, no girly comeback. It's like, obviously, he's not.

They talked about it being a good old boys club, which that phrase alone is just like, I know exactly what like, what the structure was like, or the the dynamic was like, just with that alone.

Megan
Mm hmm. So there are women that are being encouraged to go back into abusive marriages, or stay or stay. And then this one woman who it doesn't really, I don't know if it really talks about her relationship status. But she talks about being on antidepressants. And Gwen told her that she needed to get off of them. Yeah, so she stopped. And that brings us to mental health stigma. Our third system of oppression that we see come up in this episode, Gwen also called mental health struggles, demons, and that's not the first time I've heard that before.

Kendra
That is not an uncommon teaching in the church.

Megan

I don't know if we need to specifically spell out why that's fucking problematic, but it's fucking problematic. Like, people that deal with mental health struggles are already discriminated against in so many ways. And to add a spiritual layer that like there's a demon inside you, is bad.

Kendra

It is. And even even the places that don't say that, specifically, that your mental health stuff is demons, do demonize medication, and say you should pray more. Or you should just get over it, just get over it. Or you should do X, Y and Z. You don't need that. You know, you don't need to be reliant on that. You know what we don't say that about people who need blood pressure medicine, people who need cholesterol medicine, like antibiotics, we don't say that about those things.

Megan

Well, Gwen probably would say that about blood pressure. And the other thing because she would tie it to weight.

Kendra

she probably was

Kaiti

the quote that sticks out about this part from Gwen and saying, like, when you're sick of your suffering, when you're sick of taking antidepressants, when you're too big for your pants, you'll quit. Like, you'll just when you're when you're sick of it, you'll quit. And it's there's so many layers to that, like,

Kendra

let's unpack them, Kaiti.

Let's pull the first layer.

Kaiti

Not just that, but when you're struggling with thoughts of depression, you know, she'll say like, well, you call us at the office, but you don't call us because you want to talk about us. You just call us because you want to talk about yourself, because that's the same theme that we mentioned earlier about, you know, if you're thinking about yourself, then that's that's the problem.

Kendra

And that's a cult thing. That it you should be worrying about us, not us worrying about you. Right as the leadership.

Megan

So this one member, is she said, after a month of getting off her antidepressants, she's okay for about a month because it's still in her system for a while. And then it gets so bad that she's having to leave services because she's having full on panic attacks. And she's so scared about how to deal with her mental health because of how she's been treated thus far. So she finds a hospital in a different county because she's so worried that someone's going to find out from the church that she's gone there. And her husband tells her that Tedd Anger has found out about it. I guess her husband tells Tedd about it. And Tedd says that she deserves hell on earth for being disobedient. And the disobedience that he's talking about is seeking mental health support and taking antidepressants.

Kendra

Yeah. So they ended up they take her to an institution to I guess on a I'm not, I don't know what the codes are, but on a hold of some kind

Megan

like a suicide watch

Kendra

Yeah. And she calls her husband to say, call Gwen because it's so bad, because she says the person they've put her with, like, it's just so bad. She's like, I can't be here. And she calls her husband to say, you call Gwen right now and tell her to get her lawyers on this and get me out of here. And that's when instead of that, not that I think any of us are naive to think that's what would have happened if Gwen had been called. But Tedd is called. And then yeah, he makes this claim. No, you leave her right there. That's exactly where she should be.

Megan

So her husband comes. And she says that it took her social work therapist 45 minutes to convince her husband that she needed antidepressants because she had clinical depression.

Kendra

that it wasn't demons. Can you imagine that conversation?

Kaiti

And then not just that, but says, antidepressants that she's prescribed says you can take them as long as I don't see you take them. So when I'm asked about it, I can have plausible deniability and say, I don't know, I don't know anything about it.

Megan

Yeah, that's what her husband says.

Kaiti

And so then she's taking the antidepressants. And when she goes back to the church, everyone's saying, See, you didn't need that. You didn't need those antidepressants. You're fine.

Kendra

Yeah, God, healed you of the demons.

Kaiti

While she's taking them while she's taking everything that goes unsaid, but she's taking them and that's what they say.

Kendra

You Dum Dum Dum Dums? Yeah, she's just fine. Are you kidding? She was in a hospital. They put her back on her meds, Delaney, right. We need to

Megan

Yes. Let's talk about Delaney

Kendra

talk about Delaney. I found it really interesting that so the story has kind of been a thread through all three of these episodes. Just to catch up, she Delaney met, a guy in high school his name is Jackson, he's part of the fellowship. He ends up she ends up running away from home, kind of becoming indoctrinated alienated from her family. And now they're engaged to get married. And in the last episode, we learned that they are planning to get married in that building. And with Gwen officiating. And at this point, we learn from Delaney's dad, that they've been having that Delaney actually wanted to have a conversation with him, and said, We're no longer getting married at the church at the building. And Gwen will more than likely not even be there. Like she's not officiating or anything. Which to me is like, a sliver of hope for what could be? I don't know, right?

Megan

Because she did that because her parents were saying we're not going to go,

Kendra

right. Yes, exactly. Right. And, and so that, to me, felt a little bit like, there's something still, you know, as much as she's not talking to them, as much as she's like, in this world. Maybe there are things she's starting to see. And she wants to make sure she does have a tether to the outside world. The other real I thought, kind of beautiful thing about what they before we get to the end of Delaney, which is that she talks about her I'm sorry, he talks about her dad, that we want people to know, because we're hearing some rumblings that there might be people who want help getting out of Remnant that we're here, for those who are willing. We're sad it's not our daughter at the moment who's willing, but we're willing to make that space available for people who are. I was like, Oh, well, there's some compassion and humility and like, in the midst of their pain, saying, well, we want to help others. I mean, that's that pretty powerful. So

they're having this outdoor wedding. And her dad walks her down the aisle and he like apparently, he says, he looks at her right at the very last minute and says last chance. She's and she says, Let's go, you know, which I can't imagine how difficult that would have been for him to do. I mean, and then he says, I kind of can't believe it happened that the wedding still happened considering what happened the morning of the wedding, which is

Kaiti

the plane lands in the middle of Percy priest that is carrying Joe Lara, because they think he was the pilot, Gwen Shamblin, two of the leaders of the church and their wives. And they everyone on the plane is presumed dead. After taking off from Smyrna, I believe and headed to Florida and they land in Percy priest.

Megan

They were going to a MAGA rally

Kaiti

Were they really?

Kendra

They sure were. You know, I did not know that information that they thought that Joe was the pilot.

Megan

I didn't either.

Kendra

Which is very interesting to me, considering.

Kaiti

Okay, so this is where my like, conspiracy like tinfoil hat comes out. Because when they were talking about Delaney thing, oh, we don't know if Gwen is gonna officiate it paired with the fact that Joe is the pilot. How much of this do we think was planned?

Megan

Well, I mean, a deep dive, I followed this train of thought of conspiracy conspiracy. I think I think about the Delaney was just that they had plans to go to this rally.

Kaiti

So okay, when there was a conflict.

Megan

However, that text that we see a little bit of from from Gwen's daughter, Elizabeth, that she sends out to the church members does seem weird. A strange tone that she has hit in this text message that just seems like maybe not as distressed as one might be after.

Kaiti

Which I mean, when she has lost a child and been forced to keep all of her grief, internalized right to say what the appropriate, like message is, for someone like that.

Megan

Like the way she was like, Don't worry, God is in control. God still has a plan kind of stuff

Kaiti

Yeah, is it coded, quite question mark.

Megan

Question mark.

Kendra

I don't know. She just lost her mother and her husband. And in my mind, I was like, and she didn't take the opportunity to get the hell out of there. Like how, like how indoctrinated is she has been carrying this? Well, yes. But I mean, even I was like, really shocked at her presence on stage that they show at the very end. Like, where is that gust of whatever coming from? Because she's clearly it's very visible that there's other things going on? I don't know. That's how I want to say that. You, you could see the the trauma in her eyes, I think often, but in this like prior post, losing her child, you could kind of see that continual showing up. And in this there was like, it was something different in this. Like, I'm either I'm going to rise to the occasion to take over or I'm going to lead us in a new direct I don't know, it was just like a different control thing. It felt like that was fascinating. When you when in when you're in I'm like how are they explaining this? How are they explaining it? Right, because they're so focused on like, the prosperity stuff. You know? What if all those people were thin enough? I mean,

Megan

right? How do you know who's who's disobedience is this on? them? Yeah, they have their their the they put it off on other members in the past, so I'm sure that's the plan.

Kaiti

I mean, I could see them villainizing Joe, I could see them like pinning it on anyone other than her because she can do no wrong.

Kendra

Is this gonna like immortalize her? I mean, in some ways, I think it was like what happen and people double down on it like

Megan

True. True. Yeah. Is she now the martyr like is she Jesus 2.0 now with this stuff? Okay, now we're going to talk about some just general cult things, who is drawn to being a cult leader who was drawn to being a cult member. So some typical traits that we find in cult leaders are

grandiose idea of who they are and what they can achieve, demanding blind unquestioned obedience, requiring excessive admiration, having a sense of entitlement, being exploitative of others and putting others at risk frequently lacking in empathy and authoritarianism. Which we saw examples of every single one of those with her. Pretty sure. Also, those symptoms or personality traits overlap with narcissistic personality disorder in a big way. So what kind of people are drawn to be members of cults?

Kendra

Well, I mean, people that have low self esteem, people that are highly agreeable, I mean, I would say people are susceptible to be followers, as opposed to having like critical thought. I mean, and I think there's a lot of people and I think this is true of a lot of people in the world that absolute answers, maybe in some ways, all of us that absolute answers are easier.

Yeah, they make us comfortable,

you know, definitely that black and white thinking kind of comes into play here.

Kaiti

This is right, this is wrong. This is good. This is bad.

Kendra

And the vulnerability goes out the window in that, right, yeah, you don't have to be vulnerable, ever.

Megan

True. And there's such arrogance in that of like, I know this for certain I cannot be swayed. Like for the leaders I mean, who are who are recruiting people in to say, I just like anybody that's like, no, got it all figured out. I'm just like, very skeptical of,

Kendra

because like do you? how?

Megan

Yeah, right, right. And when we think about populations of people that have low self esteem, these are people with body image issues, there are people with clinical depression. There are people that are women like the I saw a study that says women make up 70% of cult members. So all of those groups are marginalized, already. So you might be like us and sitting here wondering like how can a rational human being fall under the spell of these cult leaders, and we've already talked about that a little bit, maybe their self esteem, which like, I'm not moralizing, self esteem, I have low self esteem, that I have worked very hard on. But there are lots of facets and tactics that are used in cult leadership, that are very manipulative, and persuasive. And one of those is called love bombing. Have y'all heard about this?

Kendra

Mm hmm.

Kaiti

I haven't heard about it in the context of a cult I've just heard about it, of like a, like a romantic relationship

Megan

same Katie, like of how narcissists are in relationships. So this is the idea that like, once you either start in a relationship or become a member of cult, leadership will flatter you and compliment you and often, like, do these grand gestures. So that you associate the cult with love and acceptance. And that's kind of what we all want is love and acceptance. So if you can play on that vulnerability in people, you've got them. And these other facets of mind control include public humiliation, we saw that with Gwen, like, they would call people in and call them out when things were going on and self incrimination another thing that they did with those hours of counseling, also, Scientology does that a lot too because they require you to list all of your sins basically. Brainwashing, and then paranoia. So you know, the belief that no one else will keep you safe. No one else will have your best interest at heart. Everyone, it's an us versus them mentality. So you, it just fosters a lot of distrust of anyone outside of the cult. will like I'm just thinking about Delaney. You know, it was her, her caregivers, her parents, someone that she has very strong ties to.

Kaiti

They were telling her that they had darkness in her home. Right. And that, that she could not trust her parents to do what is in her best interest.

Megan

Yeah. So that gives a little background on like, how this happens.

Kendra

Yeah, and it's the perpetual. We love you. We love you. We love you. But we would love you more. If Yeah, yeah. And then you do the thing, or you don't do the thing. And that changes your acceptance in the group one way or the other. So it's a constant push and pull, you know, to constant belittling, and then building it back up and then belittling and then building it back up. Yeah. Until they realize you're done. And then it's nothing but hell. Yeah,

Megan

lots of shame. Shame is weaponized in a big way. Yeah, so this was our last recap episode for awhile now for now, to be continued.

Kaiti

when I was on my trip with my sisters this weekend. We talked about this just a little bit. And one of my sisters who has seen the docu series was surprised to learn that this church is still very much up and going and has, like, I can drive to Brentwood right now and knock on their

door and say, Hi, I would like to become a member of your church, which probably not based on like who I am, but

Megan

please don't, Kaiti! Is that your takeaway?

Kaiti

But also what if I was like a double agent, you know, what if I'm like, trying to like, be part of like Mayday and Handmaid's Tale?

Kendra

Oh my gosh, well, it'll be interesting to see what happens in those two episodes. But we also have, we will be having another episode between now and then with our special guest, who has gone to Remnant is going to report how that was.

Megan

Yeah, she was. She is our double agent. She was that was not her intention. But she will act as our double agent. And also, I'm just going to put my future therapist hat on for a second and say that if you have watched this episode, and you feel a type of way about it, and you feel it in your body, especially, I want to encourage you to discharge that by shaking it out, screaming it out, dancing it out, running it out something that gets your heart rate up just a little bit to metabolize that trauma, because that's some heavy shit. And we don't want you to be left with another thing in today's world to weigh heavily on your soul.

Kendra

And the DMS are open. Yeah.

Megan

And the what?

Kendra

The DMS are open. Yeah. So

Kaiti

thank you for that. Megan. I'm gonna go do something. I don't know. Because I just watched this episode today. And it's already still up in my background. But yeah, I'm gonna go get that out. Because I was saying I'm, I was like, physically nauseous just watching.

Kendra

Yeah. So make sure you're paying attention to whatever feed you follow us in, whether it's on Instagram, or if you're listening to us on Spotify, Apple podcast, wherever you're listening. We will be releasing that episode with Haley, you know, at some point for the TBD. So just make sure you're watching out. And of course, our upcoming season, just the rest of our season, as we continue to release good, good content and good episodes. I before we go, realize that we

have this wonderful intro music and outro music that we have not talked about and this would be the work of intern Eric, he took. He kind of parodied the podcast Serial in the song is called Cereal as in a bowl of so we're just always grateful for intern intern Eric's really dedicated coffee runs and what else are interns in charge of?

Kaiti

Dog coralling

Kendra

dog corralling and cheerleading audio tech help audio tech, just you know, the things that interns do? And for this wonderful, perfect podcast music for our miniseries. Alright, we'll see you next time. We'll not see you. This is a podcast.

Megan

Okay, yeah. We'll talk to you next time. Bye,

Kendra

everyone.

Megan

Bye.