

This transcribed message has been lightly edited and formatted for the Web site. No attempt has been made, however, to alter the basic extemporaneous delivery style, or to produce a grammatically accurate, publication-ready manuscript.

Teaching: Carlon Tschetter
Series: Proverbs: Living Wisely in a Fallen World
Message: Portrait of a Home

Transcribed Message
November 3, 2019

Family is a word that can evoke a full range of emotions and responses. Hopefully, you're like me and when you hear the word family you have wonderful memories. I had the privilege of having a godly father and mother and six siblings. We had a great family time together and still do on those rare occasions that we can all get together. It brings great memories. For others of you, and we hope the number is much fewer, maybe when you hear the word family you think of something rather sad. Maybe your upbringing and your experience was anything but happy. Maybe it was anything but glad. In fact, it may not only have been sad, it may have been bad in terms of some of the things that you experienced along the way. What are the factors that contribute to a family that can look back on memories with great joy and those that can look back only with a sense of sadness?

We turn again this morning to the book of Proverbs, this book of wisdom that God has given to us. We find within this whole range of discussions about the family, about marriage, about parenting, about children, we find what is probably the single largest topic in all of Proverbs. We know there are many individual topics over which Proverbs addresses, but if you put all of these into one pocket, there's a lot in Proverbs about the family, about marriage, about parenting, and about children. So much so that we're going to spend, Lord willing, about four Sundays looking at some of these things together. But this morning we want to do an overview of this topic. This is what we want to see. God's plan for the family largely is unchanged. It's based upon His truth. It's based upon His Word. What He has in mind is that this truth is going to be passed on from generation to generation within the context of the family. It really is, as someone has said, the home is where life makes up its mind.

Let's do that together. The home and the family today. I want to begin by speaking about the realities of family life today. I want to put before you three words and

just touch briefly on these three things. The first word that I would think of as we contemplate the family in today's environment might very well be the word "confusion". The word "confusion". To say that we're in the midst of a cultural crisis as it relates to the family, as it relates to the home and marriage and parenting and many of these topics, most of us would say that's a gross understatement to put it in those terms. I'm reminded of what David said in Psalm 11 verse 3: "If the foundations are being destroyed, what is it that the righteous can do?" If the foundations are being destroyed, what then can the righteous, what can the people of God do?

In a survey done by a Christian ministry not that long ago, the top 10 issues facing the Christian family were an anti-Christian culture, divorce, busyness, absent father figure, lack of discipline, financial pressures, lack of communication, negative media influence, the balancing of work and family, and materialism. I don't know if those are in order necessarily but those were the things that came out in this discussion about the pressures and the confusion that the family faces today. Then you go back to the opening statement that we made. This idea of taking this truth, this wisdom of Proverbs and making sure that the generation behind gets that baton passed and firmly has it in their hands. You look at any of those 10 things and that speaks to every one of them. If we are taking the truth of God's Word, the truth of Proverbs, and we're making sure the next generation gets it, then you can pick any of those that you want and it is going to be adequately addressed by the sufficiency of the Word of God. That is the promise that God gives to us.

The second word that I would put before you is the word "relativism". Honestly, the word "confusion" flows out of the word "relativism" because this moral code upon which our nation was founded, this Judeo-Christian heritage that we have taken for granted in some instances, is no longer being maintained. The idea that there is something that is right and something that is wrong has largely been abandoned by our culture. We live in a world of relativism. We were talking in our Friday morning measures about our young people going off to college and immediately facing the hostility of a secular culture against their Christian beliefs. Actually, back at the welcome booth this morning in our discerning the times article, there's an article called "My Teen is Questioning the Faith: Help Me." That is just simply the world we live in. We live in a

world that whatever is right for me may not be right for you. Whatever is wrong for me may not be wrong for you. Everything is relative. Everything is up for grabs. We end up looking a lot like the last verse of the book of Judges. In Judges 21:25 it says every person did what was right in their own eyes. Of course, we know the end result of that is disaster. We're living in a time when we are not only facing relativism, a part of that relativism is that we're redefining everything. We're redefining what is marriage. We're redefining what is it that constitutes a family. We're even redefining gender. You probably have watched and paid attention to that little seven-year-old boy down in Texas who is caught up in a custody battle between his mom and his dad. His mom wants to see him transition to being a little girl and his dad is saying no. It's in the courts and there is a controversy all over the place because we're redefining everything and everything is up for grabs.

The last word is the word "judgment". You might say well, that's a harsh word. I don't know what comes to mind when you hear the word judgment. Paul speaks of it quite freely in Romans chapter 1 beginning in verse 18 all the way to the end of the chapter. He brings before us a picture that is this world that I'm just describing of relativism and confusion. As Paul addresses that context and what's going on in our world, he reminds us that we are in a spiritual battle. We're in a spiritual contest for the hearts and souls of men and women and young people and children. We're participants in a cosmic battle between God and Satan. Every day that we get up, we're answering the question who is on the throne. Is God on the throne? Or is Satan going to have charge over our lives and over the things that are going on in our world? As Paul says that, he makes it clear that marriage and family is one of the key arenas in which this battle is being played out.

As he describes the moral chaos that we've already addressed in which good is now called evil and evil somehow is called good, he tells us that what we see in our world today in which we have a media that is totally consumed with sensuality and sexuality. We have moral chaos. We have open mocking of God. As Paul speaks to that, he says in verse 24 as a result of all of these things therefore God gave them up. God gave them over, he says in verse 24. Do you know what he says in verse 26? God gave them up. God gave them over. Do you know what he says in verse 28? They have

left the natural for the unnatural and as a consequence God gave them up. God gave them over.

We're living, my friends, with the sober reminder that God will not be mocked. God has put into place certain laws. These laws are functioning whether we are aware of them or not, whether we're paying any attention to them or not. There's certain things that God simply sets in motion and those things will play themselves out according to His will and His purpose. It is a sober reminder to us that once God puts these laws into motion, they go to their end as He has designed. But here's the good news. We're not left to just curse the darkness. We are called the children of God. As Paul says in Philippians 2, we're called to be light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. That's what he says. You live in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. You are to shine as lights in the middle of that. So we don't need to be on the negative side of everything. We don't need to be naysaying all the time. We don't need to be saying woe is me all the time. The people of God, the children of God, are to be a light in the midst of the darkness, a light to this world that is hell-bent on going against the ways and purposes of God. To do that we have to have strong families.

Let's look secondly at essentials for a strong family. Proverbs is going to help us out here. I want to put before you three things that Proverbs says to us about how it is that we can have a strong family. The first one is that we have to have a personal commitment on the part of each one of us to walk in wisdom. That takes us back to our opening lessons in chapter 1 verse: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. fools despise wisdom and instruction. Verse 33. "But whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease without dread of disaster." The fear of the Lord is to reverence God, but more than just saying it's to reverence God, there are actions that flow out of that behavior in which we do understand the awesomeness of our God. That is to recognize and to realize that we give priority to what He has said, which is to say we walk in obedience to this truth. That's the wisdom that he is talking about.

We said from the very beginning that wisdom is seeing life and seeing ourselves from God's perspective. If we are living life from God's perspective, if we're seeing life from God's perspective, then obviously we're seeing life through the lens of truth. That's what wisdom is. The confusion of our world is all the things that we just spoke to. God

wants us to do this life with His perspective in mind. The only way you can do that is you have to daily be immersing yourself in this truth. You can't get by with a meal at 9:30 on Sunday mornings. That's not going to work. You live in a world that 24/7 is telling you lies every time you turn around. They're telling you lies about the world that you live in. They're telling you lies about yourself. They're telling you lies about your family, about your marriage, everything. The only way you're going to recognize truth for what it is is if you know what that truth says to you. Here is this admonition that we are going to be transformed in our attitudes, viewpoints, perspective by the wisdom of God. How are you going to walk in wisdom if you don't even know what wisdom is? We have to have a commitment individually to impact the family to be strong.

Secondly, we need a personal commitment to a growing marriage. Remember chapter 5 verse 18: "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love." You look at that and there's a couple things that it seems are being emphasized. The first is the matter of permanence. Within this growing marriage, there has to be this commitment to permanence. Later Solomon is going to blow the whole thing away. He is going to follow the pattern of his dad, of David, and he is going to have multiple wives and concubines. The laws of God, just as we said, began to turn. Inexorably, they're going towards their designed goal if we stay the course. Solomon unfortunately doesn't heed his own counsel, but Proverbs consistently presents to us what a marriage looks like. It's a man and a woman who commit themselves to a permanent relationship. They're going to be together. He says the wife of your youth. So he is looking back and he is saying yes, this is the commitment that I made. This is the wife of my youth. Now I'm no longer in my youth, but I'm committed to this same relationship. You're in it for the long haul and there's no way out. If you're divorced, if you're single, the blessing of God is still available to you and God is anxious to see you walking in the same wisdom and in the same truth. He is going to come into your home and He's going to bless just as He would in any other home. There is always that provision of God's grace to us.

The other word that comes to mind is the word "investment". He's speaking about rejoicing. He is speaking about the gladness that is a part of this relationship. There's

this growing relationship. It is not just a matter of being in an enduring relationship. You're not just hanging on. You're not just grinning and bearing it. You're not just in some kind of peaceful coexistence with each other. This is a vibrant relationship. There's a growing and sharing of life. There is a purpose of God that is recognized within marriage that He's using this to build grace into my life. Marriage is the greatest sanctifier that God has provided for us. It's a great means of sanctification. It's a great means of showing to us how it is that we can live with another sinner and experience the blessing of God by being transformed by this wisdom and by this truth. We need a strong commitment personally to walk in wisdom. We need a commitment to a growing marriage.

Thirdly, we need a personal commitment to effective parenting. To effective parenting. Again go back to chapter 1 and remember that great statement in verse 8: "Hear, my son, your father's instruction and forsake not your mother's teaching for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck." Then 15:20 "A wise son makes a glad father but a foolish man despises his mother." So much of parenting is simply about balance. In this love relationship with our children, we're trying to find the balance between freedom, which they need as they grow, and limitations, which they need as they grow. The balance between encouragement and admonition, correction. The balance between counseling and talking truth into their life and simply listening and hearing what they have to say. The balance between intervening and watching and letting them learn some of the hard lessons of life through the school of hard knocks. Children who walk in wisdom, Solomon says, are a source of great joy. Just like John said in 2 John: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." We know that as parents that is a source of great joy. Children learn the incredible blessing. The older they get, the wiser you get as a parent because they're learning the value of having a godly father and a godly mother.

Let's look at Proverbs in specific now and see beyond these three commitments that we are going to make the kind of picture that Proverbs gives us of the home. There are some contrasting words that I want to put before you and I think the choices will be very clear as to which that we want. We'll have to make that commitment to strive after the one that we know is God's will and purpose for our lives. There are four terms in

Proverbs that are used to describe the home. Home, house, dwelling, tent. You have some 35 different references to the home in Proverbs and one of these four words is used in those passages. We're going to get to see that here in just a little bit. What you quickly discover as you look at these verses, if you went through all 35 of these, you would very quickly learn that the writer of Proverbs is not talking about a physical structure at all. He is not talking about a house physically. He is not talking about a dwelling place that you physically go to. He is not talking necessarily about a physical tent. He is talking about what's happening inside the home. His perspective always is to take us inside of the house, inside of the home, inside of the dwelling, inside of the tent. He wants to lay bare the behaviors, the attitudes, what's going on inside this house, what the relationships are like. It reminds us of what we read in the Scripture reading of Psalm 127 that unless the Lord is the one who's building this house, this home, this dwelling, this tent, we're simply laboring in vain to do it.

Here are three descriptions of the homes of Proverbs and we're going to develop this first one to the greatest extent and we'll look at the others too briefly. and again you'll pick very quickly which one you want for your home. The first one is Proverbs chapter 3 and verse 33 and it is a home will be either blessed or it will be cursed. "The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the dwelling of the righteous." Now I want to put before you a number of things about this matter of what it looks like when Solomon says that there's a house that could be under the curse of God. It sounds ominous obviously. We want to understand what he is saying.

First of all, in the Bible only God has the power to curse. I don't find any reference anywhere in my Bible to somebody other than God having the power to bring a curse. Now that's important to me because there are traditions and there are belief systems where there is almost a doctrine of curses that has been developed. I honestly don't see that in Scripture. Often it is attributed to Satan or to demonic influence. The word "curse" in the Bible has less to do with some kind of magical incantation or some kind of a spell as we might think of it. It has more to do with the moral reality of what God is saying about that home and about what He sees inside of that home. That's the picture that we want to have. It is God in the Bible who pronounces and places a curse. I want you to see that. I think it's important.

In Deuteronomy chapter 27, as the children of Israel have done their forty-year laps around and around and around, before they get to enter the Promised Land, God brings them back and He reminds them of all the things that He has told them. He says in the 9th verse “Then Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel. ‘Keep silence, O Israel. This day you have become the people of the Lord your God. You shall therefore obey the voice of the Lord your God, keeping His commandments and His statutes which I command you today.’” He goes on to say here is the pathway of blessing. Now listen. This is what he says beginning at verse 15 and all the way to the end of the chapter. Every verse to the end of the chapter begins with this statement “cursed be the man who...” Cursed be the man who... God lists out all of the things that could invite and bring the curse of God onto their home, on to their family. Unless you think that was a one-time deal, in Joshua chapter 8 and in verse 34 almost the same thing is said. “And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse according to all that is written in the book of the law.” God is reminding His children of some laws that He has put into place. Laws that are going to invite this curse and those that are going to bring blessings.

The second thing that I want you to see is the curse is simply the response of God to sin. The curse is the response of God to sin. It is in essence a part of God's discipline. I know we're operating on this topic under the Old Covenant and we don't have this language in the New Covenant in the New Testament. But we do have language of discipline. We do understand that disobedience, whether under the Old Covenant or under the New Covenant, invites God's discipline. That's what God is saying here. This is a matter of God bringing discipline into the lives of His children. I don't read this and see that this is fatalism. I don't read this and think this is arbitrary on the part of God. I don't read this and draw conclusions about generational curses. I don't read this and hear something that is irreversible and can't be undone. That isn't the language that we're seeing here. It is God's response of discipline to what He sees in terms of the character of what's going on inside the four walls of that home. God tells us that there is the opportunity either to experience blessing or discipline or curse. All of that is to simply say God is not passive about sin. We live in that kind of culture. That's part of what the truth and the wisdom of God's Word needs to transform our thinking

from. The world obviously mocks God, but God is not passive towards sin. So this is what He does. This is what He tells us. This is what He told the children of Israel in the Old Testament. This is what He tells us in the New Testament.

The word “curse”, if this helps, literally means to set up boundaries. It means to hem in. In that way, I think you can see this picture. In Deuteronomy chapter 28 and verse 20: “The Lord will send on you curses, confusion and frustration in all that you undertake to do until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me.” Now again, be mindful we’re operating in this context under the Old Covenant. This was a theocracy. God's people had committed themselves to do all of these things. They said we will obey all of the law. God said okay. We’ll enter into a covenant relationship, and if you obey me, I’m going to pour out blessings untold on your life. If you disobey me, I am going to hem you in. I am going to put boundaries all around you. I am going to frustrate you. I am going to cause untold misery to come your way. That is basically what He is saying here. So to paraphrase I would say it like this. The Lord is simply saying that He is going to make it very hard for His children, who determine of their own volition and choice not to walk in His wisdom, life is going to be hard. Isn’t that what Proverbs says? The way of the transgressor is hard. When God says this is the path, this is the wisdom, walk in it, and we say, I don’t want to walk that way. I want to go in my own way. God has given you that volitional choice to go your own way, but He has also promised you in advance that life is going to be hard. It is going to be difficult. So we have this picture of God's blessing or of God's discipline.

Who is this curse on? It's on the wicked. When we hear the word “wicked”, just like when we hear the word “curse”, we probably hear a whole different category. When we hear the word “wicked”, we think of something horrible, something evil, something terrible. And it is. But this same word is linked in the Old Testament to nearly every sin that is mentioned. So it isn’t a category that we put over here. I am so glad I'm not one of the wicked because they’re horrible, terrible people. Again, what we understand from Scripture is the wicked are those who actively or passively oppose the will of God. Those who actively or passively oppose the will of God. In the book of Proverbs alone, this word is used 40 times in contrast to the righteous. Those who are walking in

wisdom. We have a contrast between the fool and the wise. We have a contrast between those who are serving the Lord and those who don't, between those who obey and those who choose to disobey.

The good news is nobody has to remain in a place of discipline. If you wake up this morning and say man, my life is hard. I wonder if it's because I'm going my own way and doing my own thing and not paying any attention to the Word of God. And the Spirit of God brings you to that awakening. The good news is you don't have to stay there. You repent and turn from your sin. You confess and begin to walk in blessing. That's the promise of God.

Now I want you see in Proverbs 12:7 what this looks like. Look at Proverbs 12:7. We're going to look at a couple of verses before we go on to the next one. "The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand." What is that? It's a picture of stability or instability. Here is the one consistent thing that sin does always in our lives. The one consistent thing that sin does always in our homes. It disturbs. It unsettles. It frustrates. It causes division and conflict and strife and hardship. That's what sin does. The very nature of sin is destructive. This isn't anything more than saying to us here you can either pick to have a home that is stable and blessed. Or you can pick a home that experiences instability and turmoil. The righteous walk in wisdom and truth and harmony. The unrighteous, the wicked, walk in the other way.

Proverbs 14:11 says, "The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish." If you had to just pick out a couple of contrasting words, what would they be in that verse? The house of the wicked will be destroyed. The tent of the upright. You have a house of the wicked. You have a tent of the righteous. What would you want to live in? Do you want to live in a house or do you want to live in a tent? My camping experience is extremely limited so I'm going to pick a house. I want to live in a house. I don't particularly want to live in a tent. But he's contrasting here the fact that this blessing, the stability, doesn't have anything to do with material stuff. The unrighteous has the big house. The righteous has the tent. He's made the choice to follow God. There's no security in material things. Real security is in moral character.

See the word “flourish” at the end of that verse? That is the word for budding of a tree, blooming. Derek Kidner says of this verse “God blesses the righteous with multiple spring times.” What a great picture. Proverbs 15:25 says, “The Lord tears down the house of the proud, but He maintains the widow’s boundaries.” What is the attitude that is surefire guaranteed to tear down your home? An attitude of pride will do it every time. An attitude of pride, which is usually linked quite nicely with selfishness, self-centeredness. That attitude of pride and self-centeredness will not allow you to say I’m sorry. I was wrong. Will you forgive me? Can we start over? It won’t let you do that. It is the attitude of the proud that tears down, but it is blessing and stability that allows one to flourish because we’re walking in wisdom. We’re walking in truth. We’re walking in humility. Micah 6:8. There’s the first choice. We spent the most time with that one. Do you want God’s blessing in your life? Walk in wisdom. Do you want a hard life? Then walk in the foolish ways of the world and as a child of God experience the discipline of God coming into your life.

Second choice. Do you want order or disorder? Proverbs 11 and verse 29 “Whoever troubles his own household will inherit the wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise of heart.” The word “troubles” means to unsettle. You unsettle your home with your foolishness. What is it that you get for it? For all of your trouble, what do you get? You get nothing. You get the wind. You inherit the wind, which is to say you get nothing. Proverbs 15:27 – “Whoever is greedy for unjust gain troubles his own household, but he who hates bribes will live.” Again, it’s just a picture, dad and mom, that our attitudes are showing. Children are incredibly smart. They are incredibly perceptive. There’s very little that we get out in front to tell them that they are not already at least somewhat aware of even at a very young age. I assure you the condition, the atmosphere in your home is one of the things that they most certainly are aware of. They’re picking up on interactions that are taking place between dad and mom and between parents and children. They know what is important to us and they know what is of little importance to us.

Third choice. The last one. Prosperity or want. Proverbs 15:17 – “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it.” Here’s a conundrum. Vegetables or steak. Steak or vegetables. Here’s the one time I’m going to

against Proverbs. I won't do it any other time. No. We know this picture. A family that materially is blessed, has what they want, is eating a dinner of steak, but there's constant bickering and fighting and conflict going on. Nobody wants to be around that table because it's spoiling even the steak that's in front of you. But you have love and interactions of joy and sharing even if there's only vegetables. We know the outcome of the choice there for us.

The last one. This is a great couple of verses. Proverbs 24 verses 3 and 4: "By wisdom a house is built and by understanding it is established, by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches." This is a great encouragement, my friend. Just underline those three words – wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. What you have with wisdom is revelation. This is the revelation of God. That's wisdom. That's the revelation. Understanding is the application of it to life. and knowledge to me is a commitment to be growing in this revelation and in this application. You've got the three things that are going to build a strong home. The revelation of God, the application of that truth to life, and the commitment to continue to grow in that revelation and wisdom. He says to us by wisdom a house is built and by understanding it is established. By knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches. Who doesn't want that? That's going to be our pursuit for the weeks ahead of us. My friend, God's plan for the family has not changed. His desire and His heart for every one of us is wherever we are as parents, grandparents, single people, He wants us involved in taking this truth, this wisdom, making sure the generation coming up is securely getting it so they can carry on and do the same as well.

What do we take away? Let me encourage us this morning with the truth that there are no perfect families because there are no perfect people. Every family and every marriage and every person is a struggler. We're all struggling together. We're all trying to figure this out together. Every day we fail. Every day we fail each other. That's okay. We get up and we go on. It's not that the righteous don't have any problems. It is that the righteous, as Proverbs says, they fall seven times and they get back up every time. It's an acknowledgment that we all share in in the same issues of life but we are families that are determined to walk in the wisdom of God. The call of God on our life is that you and I would be that kind of family. and it can start today with a renewed

commitment to say I want to walk in the wisdom of God. I want to walk in the truth of God. I want to confess and acknowledge that I haven't been doing that. I want to receive God's grace and forgiveness. I want to plant the flag again and say that is what I want because I want my family to experience the blessing of God, the prosperity that He offers, and the order that is so much a part of His heart for us.

All of that, my friends, all of that comes from a Christ-centered home. A Christ-centered home is only possible if it's a gospel-centered home. A gospel-centered home is simply an acknowledgment that we need God every moment of every day. Apart from His grace and His mercy and His Spirit, we are not going to be able to walk in this wisdom and apply it to our life the way that He wants us to. So we walk in that wisdom, in that truth, in that gospel. and we are grateful.

Let's pray. Father God, we thank You again. Thank You for giving us this picture. Father, thank You for showing us with great clarity in Your Word the choices that are before us. I pray that we would, as the people of God, make those choices that allow for our homes to be passing on this baton of truth to the upcoming generation. Father, I pray for anybody here this morning who has not come to a place of trust in what Jesus did on the cross, they haven't fully realized that working their way to heaven is not what You ever intended. You fully intended for us to embrace Your gift and to trust that what Jesus did was all that needed to be done. So we ask that Your Spirit would work mightily in hearts this morning to bring that gospel, that truth, to anyone who has not yet trusted Christ. Lord, we love You. We thank You. We thank You for these homes that are represented at this church. We pray Your blessing on this day and this week that we would be a light in the midst of this wicked and perverse generation. In Jesus's name, amen.