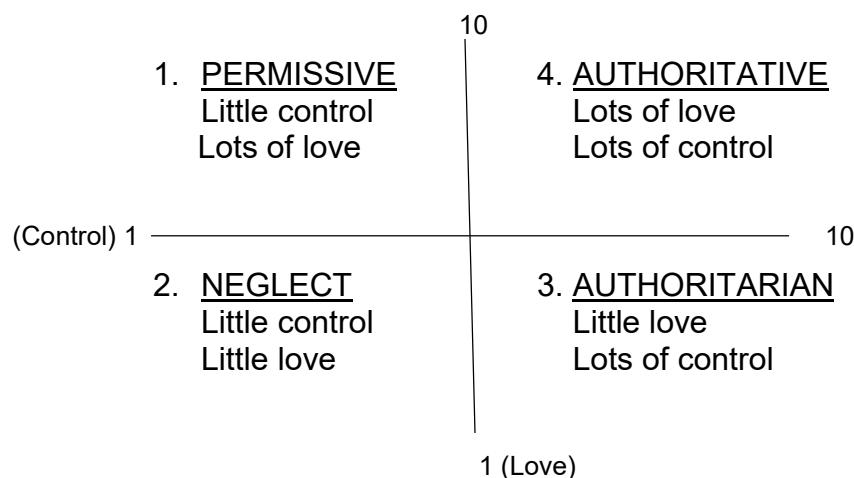


This transcribed message has been lightly edited and formatted for the Web site. No attempt has been made, however, to alter the basic extemporaneous delivery style, or to produce a grammatically accurate, publication-ready manuscript.

**Teaching: Carlon Tschetter**  
**Series: Proverbs: Living Wisely in a Fallen World**  
**Message: Discipline & Discipleship**

**Transcribed Message**  
**December 1, 2019**

You might remember that a number of years ago a group of sociologists did a study on family behavior, specifically in matters related to discipline and structure in homes. As a result of their study, they came up with a chart that looks like this. It has four different quadrants and quadrant number one they entitled permissive. The center line stands for love with one being a little love and 10 a lot of love. The horizontal line is this matter of control or discipline and again one is very little and 10 is a lot. They labeled that first quadrant permissive where there's very little control but there's a lot of love. The second quadrant was labeled neglect where there was little control and little love. The third quadrant was authoritarian where there was little love but there was a lot of control. And the fourth one was authoritative where there was a lot of love and a lot of control.



Their study concluded that children do best in quadrant number four where there's a lot of love, but there's also a lot of control, a lot of discipline, a lot of structure. As you can imagine, a study like this brings out all kinds of critics and those who would push back against their findings. Over the years, people have certainly done that. Some studies have arrived at the almost exact opposite and said that quadrant number one is

where children do best, where they have a lot of love but they just don't have much support or control. We're not going to get into the debate with sociologists over which of these quadrants is closest to reality and the truth, but I would suggest to you that it is likely to be number four because I think number four aligns itself most closely with not only the book of Proverbs that we've been studying but the general tenor of the Word of God. It seems to me that as parents as we study the Word of God and as we live out our life, some of the things that our children are asking us every day are do you love me and where are the boundaries. Do you love me? Where are the boundaries? As you think of your encounters as parents, grandparents, teachers, all the ways that we interact with children, I would suggest that those two questions press into the forefront so very many times.

So this morning we look at discipline and discipleship. I put those two words together because I think they are complementary. I think as we discipline, we're discipling. As we disciple, we're disciplining. What we want to see this morning is discipline is teaching obedience to God and to His Word with consistency, clarity and always in an atmosphere of love.

Let's start off by just looking briefly at three parenting myths that we are tempted to believe as we enter into those years of taking care of our children and maybe even our grandchildren. We dealt with myth number one last week. Myth number one says that the perfect environment will guarantee my children follow the Lord. The perfect environment will guarantee that my children follow the Lord. The reality says you can't control your children. The reality says that your children are free moral beings. They make free moral choices. What we do along the way is we teach them, we guide them, we plead with them, we pray for them and do all the things that we can do as parents that are within our control. At the end of the day, our children have been given this gift by God where they are free moral agents and they have the opportunity to make their own choices. There is not a perfect environment as we noted last week.

Second myth. The goal of my life is perfect Christian children. I don't know that very many parents state in any setting that's the goal of their life. This is why these myths sometimes hang out in the back of our heads a little bit. But it is likely that oftentimes we think that way even if we don't admit that's something that we would put

forward as a goal. We already said there are no perfect families a couple of weeks ago. We said a couple of weeks ago there are no perfect marriages. We noted last week there are no perfect parents. It is pretty hard to come up with perfect children in that setting. If there are no perfect families, no perfect parents, and no perfect marriages there certainly can't be perfect children. So the reality says to us that we need a new goal. That is idolatry. If the goal of your life is to have perfect children that reflect well on you, then you need a new goal. Someone has rightly pointed out that our heavenly Father is perfect and yet we as His children are far from perfect as we all know.

One of the things that is in keeping with that second myth that we need to keep before us is that living a child-centered life is not really God's call to parents. I think it's the call of our world and our culture very much today that homes and families seem to be so child-centric. You have to wonder at times who is in charge here, who's calling the shots, where are we going. Finding our identity in our children is always going to lead to disappointment on one level or another because that's not the goal that God has put before us. He has other things in mind for us. Our first priority as a follower of Christ is that we walk in obedience to Him. My number one priority as a parent, as a believer, is my walk with God. Then of course it is to my spouse. It is to my partner. We're growing closer to Christ and we're in effect growing closer to each other. Our children come in after that. When we keep that order in view, I believe that we have the goal that God has in mind for us as we parent our children.

Myth number three. It is all up to me. It's all up to me. The reality says that one of the best things that you can do for your family, one of the best things that you can do for your children is to get involved in a gospel-centered, gospel-living church. One of the great values of being a part of a body like this where people have committed themselves to this task and desire and goal of knowing God, is as we grow in our knowledge of God we naturally love each other. As we do that and live the gospel out in our lives, then we're really providing a context that is going to be of great value and great benefit to our children. When we came to Oklahoma in '91, I think our oldest daughter Mary was in fifth grade, Ben was fourth grade, Andy was kindergarten and Mark was in preschool. We will never be able to calculate as parents the impact of this body on our children. All of the different ways that God uses a family like this to

influence your children. That's why we consistently say that this is priority one in terms of our commitment to the body of Christ being together, sharing life together. Being able to encourage each other is so incredibly valuable and so important.

Let's let look then at this matter of reaching a child's heart. Reaching a child's heart. Some preliminary thoughts before we look at Proverbs. The first one has to do with the subject of discipline that we're focused on this morning. This subject of discipline needs to be taught within the context of the whole counsel of God. Of course, that's always true whatever we're studying. It's dangerous when you're studying any topic or issue or subject to go to one passage or to one idea and to pull it out of its context and make that the focal point of everything. That certainly is true as we think in terms of child-rearing. Proverbs, we've said, is like a handbook for living. It truly is a handbook for living. It touches on so many aspects of our life. We've looked at just a few of them, and there are so many more. One of those is in the area of family. One of those is in the area of marriage. One of those is in this realm of parenting. We have been given what is like a handbook for parenting. we take the breadth of Proverbs as we do that and we see all the different things that Proverbs says to us. We have to be careful that we don't just pull out one part of Proverbs: "spare the rod and spoil the child". Or "beat him with the rod, he won't die". We'll look at that little bit later but there's a whole lot more to parenting than discipline. There's a lot more to discipline than the rod. All of the children are grateful for that word of encouragement to you this morning.

Secondly, there is a difference between punishment and discipline. We could take a much larger period of time to look at this. We're going to just touch on it, but there's a difference between punishment and discipline. I think you can see that from Scripture in this matter of punishment. The purpose for punishment is really to inflict a penalty. When you think in terms of what Christ did in His death on the cross, God poured out the wrath of God, all of our sin onto Christ and He bore the penalty for us, so in that sense that's what Jesus did for us. The focus of punishment is on a past misdeed. If your goal is to punish a child, you're spending most of your time focusing on that past misdeed that they committed. The attitude of punishment is often one of frustration and anger. When your goal is punishment, it is often born out of frustration

and anger and the resulting emotion in our children is usually one of fear and guilt. One of fear and guilt.

But what if we view this as Proverbs brings it to us and as the Word of God brings it to us and as God deals with us? That's the whole point of Hebrews 5, Hebrews 12. Whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and that's God's work in our life. When that's the case, then the purpose of this discipline is to train and it's to correct. So we're looking at not inflicting the penalty, but we're looking at this matter of training. In discipline, the focus is on the future and correcting future behavior. In punishment, you're looking at the past. In discipline, you're bringing admonition with the idea of the future. The attitude is one of love and concern. It is not born out of frustration and anger. Our children are asking us those two questions every day: Do you love me? Where are the boundaries.? That provides security. Within that context of discipline as God deals with us, we see a wonderful model for how it is as parents we are to deal with our children.

Thirdly, there's a difference between willful disobedience and childish behavior. This whole point could be developed a lot more than we have time for but this is a really important issue for parents to come to grips with and understand. It takes real discernment to determine if this is childish behavior or willful disobedience. There's a reason why we have books with the title of *Parenting Isn't for Cowards*. Parenting is hard work. Parenting requires a lot of from us as parents. You can't be lazy and be a good parent. One of the reasons is because one of the things that we're called upon to do is to determine if this is willful disobedience versus just childish behavior. There's a big difference between those two things.

Childish behavior simply means children forget. You tell your child to do something, you tell them not to leave something outside because it's valuable and he/she forgets. That's not necessarily willful disobedience. That could be childish behavior. The ways that they act and the things that they do. Sometimes they break things. A lot of times they spill things. We went through a period of time with our children where we just brought towels to the table as we ate because we knew there was going to be mass quantities of stuff that was going to be spilled. Is that willful disobedience? Most of the time it's just foolishness that is bound up in the heart of a child that needs to

be discerned on the part of the parent. They act silly. They do silly things because they're children.

There's willful disobedience though too. There's willful disobedience in which there is challenge to our authority, in which they just simply are in a mindset of rebellion and are not going to do what they're told. They're refusing. They're resisting. Our authority is being called into question. As they're asking that question, where are the boundaries, they're willfully stepping over what they perceive to be that boundary and that is our responsibility as parents to make that discernment as to what that looks like in our children's life.

Let's look at the Biblical principles of parenting and primarily of discipline. Since seven is the perfect number, we're going to try to look at seven. Let's look at seven principles of discipline from Proverbs. The first one is that discipline and anger don't go together. Discipline and anger don't go together. We've already spent an entire Sunday looking at the topic of anger from Proverbs in a number of different settings. Proverbs is in its dealing with anger always calling us to not go there. This isn't Ephesians 4. Be angry and don't sin. We know there is an anger that is righteous. But most of the time, when parents find themselves frustrated and angry with their children, it is not positive at all. It is not a righteous indignation. It can be, but most of the time we find ourselves angry for the wrong reasons. So what we're saying is anger in that sense and in the way that Proverbs generally puts forward doesn't allow us to be effective parents if we're angry and frustrated. We're certainly not going to be effective in our discipline. Parents who discipline out of anger are in fact going down a path that they don't want to go.

I can remember very clearly. I'm not sure how old I was. I suppose it might've been Junior high. Two of my cousins were in town visiting us with their family. The three of us went out into the backyard. We lived in a neighborhood where there were driveways on either side of large two-story homes. Ours was a fairly small backyard. We went out because we loved to play baseball. We went out with a baseball and gloves and we were going to play catch. Before about an hour of time has passed, we had managed to break out four windows, one on either side of our neighbors' homes and two in our home. I have never been more thankful for out-of-town company in not having to face my dad as I was that day.

But the point of that story is simply to say that our children can do things that make us angry. How we respond to that is the key to what Proverbs has to say to us in this regard. We can't discipline out of anger even though our children may do things that move us towards anger. When we do that we're falling into what James one says we shouldn't do. James says that the anger of man cannot produce the righteousness of God. We want within our children the righteousness of God. If we're operating out of human anger, out of our fleshly anger then we can never achieve the very goal that we want. If we are as parents out-of-control, then we're seeking to correct the behavior of our children that is likely out-of-control. It comes off as a rather hypocritical thing for us to be out-of-control while we're trying to discipline our children who are out-of-control. Consider the fact that our heavenly Father disciplines us perfectly as we stated already. Our heavenly Father never screams at us. He doesn't yell at us. He doesn't belittle us. He doesn't do anything that comes off as treating us harshly. He doesn't name call. Do what you need to do as a parent. If you need to count to 10, count to 10. If you need to count to 100, count to 100. If you need to count to 1000, count to 1000. Just ask God in His grace and mercy to cause you to pause before you move towards your child to discipline in anger because they don't go together.

Second principle. Discipline may involve spanking. Discipline may involve spanking. Now stay with me here. Understand that we all agree that this matter of child abuse is an incredibly serious issue. It is one that thankfully our culture and our society is very much aware of – as it should be. But also understand this. When God the Spirit gave us the instruction that He did in the book of Proverbs, child abuse was no less an issue or problem in that time than it is today. Yet we still have what would appear to be in many passages in Proverbs, not a command to use corporal discipline, but certainly at the very least a consideration that a family needs to give to that.

I'm going to read a number of verses for you to consider. Proverbs 10:13 says, "On the lips of him who has understanding wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks sense." Proverbs 13:24 says, "Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him." Proverbs 22 and verse 15 says this: "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child but the rod of discipline drives it far from him." Proverbs 23 and verse 13 and 14 say this: "Do not withhold discipline from a child. If

you strike him with a rod he will not die. If you strike him with the rod you will save his soul from Sheol.” And the last one. Proverbs 29 and verse 15 says, “The rod and reproof give wisdom but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.” The Proverbs speak often of this matter of the application of corporal discipline. When you think just in terms of the practical use of that within your home, and obviously as a husband and wife you have to come together on this. You have to determine what it is that we’re going to do as we discipline our children at these points of willful disobedience, not childish behavior, so much as a challenging of our authority. As you just think practically about this and the use of this kind of discipline, then I think for me and for Bonnie it was always with regard to a very clear warning having been given, and then a very specific decision or choice to do the exact opposite of what they were asked or told to do. It seems to me there should be some leeway between what they are expected to do, what they’re told to do, a warning about the potential consequence, and then the enactment of that discipline.

Secondly, it should always be in private. It should always be in private. There's no embarrassment of a child in front of other children, in front of other people. You're not wanting at any point to humiliate this child. You're doing so in a way that is very personal and very private. It's you and that child. The application is made in the God-provided place – the *maximus bottomus*. It seems to me that God has provided the target zone for what we’re talking about here. In those times when it was most egregious, I simply would ask my sons (I don't remember if I ever had to do this with Mary. Maybe I did. She could probably remember) to reach over and grab a hold of those ankles and then we would follow through with the *maximus bottomus* and the discipline would be enacted. But never to the point of physical harm. There is clearly a line in this matter discipline.

Please guys, those of you that are old-school, don't come up and tell me how your dad beat the daylights out of you and how good it did for you. There is a line that I think old-school parenting crossed probably on more than one occasion. I can remember when I was in college running in a park just getting into shape. I remember a dad and I could see him coming. I'm going to guess this was a young teenage girl that had done something that she was not supposed to. I was jogging around this big park



area and I could see this dad coming. He had screamed at his daughter and he began to take his belt off as he began to walk towards her. She was standing by a piece of playground equipment. When he got to her, he had her grab a hold of that equipment and he began to whale on her back side with his belt and then they proceeded on. It makes you think. You feel terrible to know that those are the kinds of things that happen. Yet Proverbs isn't talking about anything like that. Proverbs is talking about an application of discipline in a way that is appropriate. The end of that process for us always ended in affirmation. It always ended in a conversation. It always ended in expressions of love and a reminder of what happened and what the consequence was. That is something obviously each family has to consider. Proverbs seems to indicate that that's in the parents' discipline toolbox if you will.

The third principle. Discipline is age-appropriate. Discipline is age-appropriate and you can add to that it is incident appropriate too. Again, there's this discernment between childish misbehavior and willful rebellion and disobedience. How you deal with a four-year-old and how you deal with a 10-year-old is going to be very different. It needs to be with that in mind that it is appropriate. There's a point at which spanking stops. I won't try to remember the exact age because I'll probably be corrected at lunch today if I say what age it stopped, but I think it was like 9 or 10 that we stopped with that aspect. A timeout. A loss of privileges. There's lots of things that parents can do. I suppose in this day and age the loss of screen time and the taking away of the phone probably would be equal to like a month of groundings back in our day.

Closely related to principle three is number four. Discipline should be child specific. It should be child specific. This really fits with our lesson last week. As you train up a child in the way that God has designed them, in the way that God has put them together and created them with these unique personalities and passions and desires of their hearts, you know how God has put that child together, and so discipline is specific to that. Our focus is always on the heart of the child. If the focus is on the heart of a child, how one child responds to discipline is going to be far different than how another child responds. The way God has wired one child is very different than the way He's wired and put together another. For some of your children, you can look at them in a stern way. They know that you're disappointed with them and they just melt and they're

done. They realize that they have failed at something that they should not have done. That might be all that is needed. A stern look and a strong word does it. For some children, it takes a stern look, a strong word, a couple swats in the right place and then you're still not sure if they got it. That's just the variance of how God has created our children. Just think of the fact that if the goal of our discipline is the changing of their heart, what we're asking God to do in the process of that discipline is to soften their heart. It is to mold them and disciple them. That's what we're doing in discipline. Each of our children is different and each of them responds differently to whatever it is that we believe is necessary at that point.

Number five. Discipline should be fair and it should be just. It should be fair and it should be just. In other words, it should fit the offense. That's why again go back to principle number one. Anger and discipline don't go together. You're ineffective as a parent if you're disciplining out of anger. Anger doesn't allow you to be fair. Anger doesn't allow you to be just. Anger doesn't allow you to relate to that child the way God wants you to that moment. There should be an inherent fairness in the discipline that we bring to that circumstance. We don't need to be overbearing. We don't need to be harsh. Proverbs 15 applies to parenting, doesn't it? A soft answer is oftentimes what is needed. A controlled heart and controlled spirit brings the appropriate response that we need. There's no allowance, there's no need for us to treat our children differently than we would anyone else. In fact, we should in our words and in our discipline to our children be not just fair and just, but it should be totally obvious to them that we love them.

That is point number six. Discipline is always in the context of a loving relationship. Hebrews 12. I've already mentioned it. It speaks specifically to this with regard to our heavenly Father. Our heavenly Father has told us that whom He loves He disciplines. That's the motivator that we have. We discipline our children because we love them. Proverbs 29 verse 17: "Discipline your son and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart." There is a lot in that verse. One of the things that is in that verse is as a parent we're disciplining out of love. We're first of all a parent. You'll have many years to be their best friend. If you do the things that God calls you to do now, you'll have many years to be a good friend to your adult children. You don't need to be

their buddy or friend now. Right now you need to be the person who answers the questions every day: How much do you love me? What are the boundaries? The best way to do that is to be a parent and then you'll enjoy all of the blessings of adulthood. This dynamic of this relationship is we see our children as being image bearers of God. They're image bearers of God. That goes back to what I said before. We shouldn't be speaking to them as we wouldn't speak to anybody else. We easily sometimes as parents slip into that mode when we're frustrated, angry, and upset. We say things to our children that we would never say to other people. I think God calls us to be mindful of that.

It reminds me of that story way back. I think of the story of Little Johnny who was a very active little boy. Very active. You get the picture. He was at school and he was out-of-control. The teacher grabbed him by the shoulders. Now, I know teachers don't do this anymore, but for the sake of the story we'll go there. She grabbed him by the shoulder and she gave him a little shaking, a little extra attention to get attention. She said, "Johnny, I think the devil has got a hold of you." He looked up at her and he said, "I think so too!" That's not what we want our children to think when we move to discipline them. We want them to know that we're disciplining out of love. We're careful how we talk to them. We admit to them when we fail.

Do you want to help your children understand the gospel at work in your life? When you have stepped across that line, and where do we start? There are no perfect families. There are no perfect marriages. There are no perfect parents. Every family in here has failed. Every marriage in here has struggled. Every parent in here has failed many times. But when your children get to see you say to them – I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have responded that way. Will you forgive me? If even in the context of that discipline, how powerful is that when they get to see you as a dad or mom respond in such a way that you recognize your need for forgiveness from them in that setting.

Last one. Discipline is concerned with the heart and the behavior. Proverbs chapter 4. We've looked at this proverb way back. Verse 18 is where I'm going to begin reading: "But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not

know over what they stumble. My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” We don't want our children to just simply obey because we've got some rules or some things that we want to see them do or not do. We want them to obey for the right reasons. We're asking God to be transforming their heart. We're asking God to take this truth and let it be a light to their path. We're interested not just in discipline. We're interested in discipleship. We're interested not just in outward behavior. We're interested in the transformation of the heart. There are a lot of kids that have been raised in quadrant number three where there was a whole lot of authority but not a lot of love. A lot of those kids did all the things that they were supposed to do in those years when they were under the authority of that home. When they moved out from that authority, their heart having not been transformed and changed because they never saw the gospel being lived out day to day in the lives of their parents, they made choices that obviously have taken them away from the Lord. Our goal is godliness in our own life. It is godliness as a lifestyle, not just because I'm asking you to do something today or when I see you, but because my hope in discipline is that your heart is transformed and your future behavior and choices is made real to you in a very personal way. Discipline is teaching obedience to our children. It is doing so with consistency and clarity, always in an atmosphere of love.

What do we take away? It seems to me that imparting discipline to our children allows us to display God's pattern for how it is that He deals with us, how it is that He disciplines us. Why do you suppose that in Hebrews 12 that the Spirit of God gave us this very clear, appropriate picture of the fact that God is answering the questions in our life every day: God, do You love me? God, what are the boundaries that You have established for my life? Every day as we ask those questions, the security of the answer from our heavenly Father is I absolutely love you. I love you with an unconditional love. Absolutely there are boundaries. That's why God has given to us a book like Proverbs that literally becomes a handbook for life that shows us how it is that we are to seek God, how it is that we're to see life, and how it is that we can live that life in such a way

that honors God. We have this wonderful example of our heavenly Father teaches us obedience through discipline.

Do you know what it does? It always points us to the gospel. It always points us to the greatest need that we have – that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. That gospel comes to us in the person of Jesus in His death on the cross. It is our response of faith and obedience and belief that enables us to receive this gift of eternal life. God allows us to see this gospel and to see our great need in this process of discipling our children.

Let's pray together. Father God, we are so very grateful for this unconditional love that You show to us every day. Father, we desire as parents, as influencers of children and all of the different ways that You allow us to put on display for them every day this glorious gospel that has saved us, that has delivered us, that has redeemed us, that has allowed us to be transferred from death to life, from darkness to light. Lord, to be in this circle of Your family by faith in Christ, we thank You for that. Father, I pray for anybody here this morning that doesn't understand the wonder of Your grace that Your Holy Spirit would open their eyes to see this truth this morning. You have provided for us a way to be in a relationship with You that does not depend on anything that we do, but depends completely on what You have done for us. We ask, Father, that this glorious gospel would be understood and believed by everyone this morning, that we could be the recipients of this amazing gift of eternal life, and that we could forever be in Your family by faith. Thank You. In Jesus's name, amen.