

**THE
BON AIR
PULPIT**

Rev James Pardue, Pastor

May 14, 2000

Scripture Reading: **Proverbs 22:6,15**
Sermon: **A Call to Discipline**

Every Mother's Day I take the opportunity to speak on some aspect of family. Every year to speak publicly on the aspect of family becomes more and more difficult. In America today 24% of families are husband, wife, and kids. So you understand to speak of family, you speak with all different kinds of circumstances. There are people in the room today who are not married, some who are divorced, some who are widowed, and young people. So it becomes more and more difficult to bring a message on Mother's Day. But I hope that today what we have to say, you will recognize will be helpful to many who are present, and that you will take what is said today and understand that part of coming to church and worship and hearing what I am going to say will help to set a climate that you have the opportunity to help other people to understand what the Bible has to say.

John Gresner has written a wonderful little book entitled, "*Seven Things Children Need.*" Then in parenthesis he puts, "*(and everybody else)*" The seven things children need. When I list six of them you will regularly agree the one that I am going to wait until the end, you will wonder why it is on the list. He said children need significance. They need security, acceptance, love, praise, God. All of us would agree. But the one that I left out we wonder why it is on the list. He said one of the things that every child needs is discipline. It is remarkable that one of the great things that Jesus Christ has done for families is that He has given a new command and a new appreciation to parents to discipline their children. You see, before Jesus, children were just non-entities. Parents didn't have to do anything. They could push them out of the house. They didn't have to care for them at all. One of the things that Christ has done is that He has come to make the home the real training ground for all people, so we have come today to recognize what the Bible has to say.

What I wanted to do is read for you some passages out of the Book of Proverbs. You will see time and time again what the Bible has to say. One of them is talking about a man whose life went astray. This is what he said: "At the end of his life he will groan. His flesh and his body will be spent, and he will say how I hated discipline, how my heart spurned correction." Proverbs 5:23: "People will die for lack of discipline. They will be led astray to great folly." Proverbs 10:17: "He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whosoever ignores correction will lead other people astray." Proverbs 13:18: "He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whosoever heeds correction is honored. He who spares the rod hates his child. He who loves him is careful to discipline him." Proverbs 15:5: "A fool spurns fathers discipline, but whosoever heeds correction shows that he is a wise person." Proverbs 15:32: "He who ignores discipline despises himself. Whosoever heeds correction gains understanding." Proverbs 19:18: "Discipline your child for in that there is hope. If you do not, you will be a party to his death". Number one that all of you know---"Train or discipline the children in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it."

Dr. William Glassier is one of America's most renown child psychologists. He said that every person, preferably when they are young, needs somebody to care about them, to love them and to discipline them, or else they will never learn responsibility and that will haunt them all of their life. God gave to you the child to discipline, and He is trying to help you to say to them, I care enough about you to do all that I can to help you to become all that God meant you to be. You see, for Christians discipline goes far more than just teaching manners and learning how to obey. It means that you are trying to help that child to become all that God meant for it to be. So your desire and goal is far greater than just the average person. The Bible says that the reason God has put you in that child's life is to enable you to do it.

One of the problems that so many of us have when we hear the word discipline is that we always think it is negative. We always think of discipline as correction. But in the Bible discipline means having the opportunity to invest totally in the child's life to help them to become all that they can be. Most discipline is positive. It is helping the child by encouragement and by praise and by adoration. Sometimes it means that you have to set restrictions, and that you have to issue punishment. But most of the time it comes in a positive way. The Bible says that how much God then means that, that would happen in every person's life.

Listen to the passage of scripture I read. He says if you don't practice discipline, that child will lead other people astray. It will lead to their own death, spiritual death. It will lead them to poverty and shame. It will make them have a breakdown with their parents. It will lead to their own self-hatred. It will lead them into foolish acts. Now it is interesting to me that when I read through again recently the Book of Proverbs, there are three times as much about discipline as there is about prayer; four times about discipline than there is about giving. All the way through it, the word comes again that one of the challenges that we have is to practice discipline within our homes.

One of the reasons that I felt the need to talk about this today is that we live in a culture where there is a tremendous breakdown of discipline within the family. Part of this is due to the rapid rate of the life in which we live; that is, we don't have time on occasions to even spend the time with our own kids. One of the men's organizations of which many of you are aware is called Promise Keepers. Promise Keepers gets its name in that men are challenged to make certain promises. One of them is to make a promise to their family, to be the best husband, to be the best dad they can be. In their little book called *The Seven Promises for Men*, there is an illustration in there from Dr. James Dobson, who is one of the best known family leaders in America. He said fathers were asked how much time do you spend individually every day with your child. Most of the men said between 20 and 30 minutes a day. So they put little recorders on them, and keep the recorders on for 3 months. At the time of the 3 months, they gave the men the time they had spent. The average was 17 seconds a day. That is in a culture where the average child watches television 30 hours a week. Then you begin to understand why it is hard at times for parents to be able to practice discipline to their own children.

Many of you in this room have children where husband and wife both work. That means it is even more difficult. It is nothing wrong to do that. It is a greater challenge to do it. That means that whatever time you have, you have to dedicate then to be the very best you can be for your child. I think that means that if you have to work long hours, if the wife works outside of the home, that simply means that you have to limit what you can do socially. You are going to have to limit how many times you can go play golf. That means you are going to have to use the time that you have to make the best impression upon the children that God has given you. Part of the reason that it is not being practiced as it ought, is really kind of a philosophical reason. For many years people had what they called patriarchal societies. That is when men ruled. Sometimes they have been matriarchal societies, where females have ruled. Unfortunately, many times in America we have the situation where children rule. That simply means that I have been in countless situations where families are in trouble, and the reason is because the 6, 7, and 8 year old has been given the responsibility to make major decisions for the family. I want to say to you that to put major responsibilities on the 6 year old to determine what is best for the family is giving them too much responsibility. But we have grown up in that culture. That is the reason this whole series of Home Alone movies, what is it, 1, 2, 3, 4, how many more? What do you get when you walk out of a movie like that? Adults are absolutely stupid. Kids are absolutely brilliant. In movie after movie kids outsmart policemen, who are always presented as dummies. Have you ever noticed in movies how many times they run their cars into each other? And they always have this ability to outsmart everybody. We have been raised in a culture where we somehow think children are like roses. All they need to do is just blossom out, and what adults must do is sit back and never set any restrictions on them. And when any are placed upon them by any sort of institution, many times you will have a parent to look you in the eye and say, "Who are you to tell my child what he must do?"

Recently in the City of Richmond we had a School Board election. I found it consoling in Letters to the Editor, that there were on three occasions letters from teachers. All of them saying exactly the same thing, that whoever we elect to be head of our School Board, they need people to help us restore discipline within the schools. If we have any one major problem, this is it. Out of that School Board election there is a letter on my desk. It came from a principal of a school not too far from here. This past year in that one school there were 16 bomb threats, 1 major fire, opportunities where the principal was saying I can't get kids to pick up the trash, there are opportunities where my hands are tied. I need help! So many times when teachers and administrators try to do anything, the mentality is don't set any restrictions.

I have a good friend who teaches. During lunch with him one day recently, He was telling me about a young girl he was trying to teach. He happens to teach high school English, so it wasn't long into the school year he handed out a test. She walked up to him, handed him the paper back, and said, "I'm not taking the test." He said, "Not taking the test?" She said, "No, sir. I haven't taken a test in high school yet, and I am not getting ready to start now." Now the difficulty is when administration and teachers do not have the opportunity to do what they are called to do. One of the things that has to happen in homes, schools, churches, and organizations is that we come back to the opportunity to tell all people that they have to live by the rules and people under authority. Let me remind you that the biggest problem in America is not with people who see too much authority, the biggest problem is people who do not have any authority. Until we can come and recognize that within our culture, we will always have family breakdowns. That is the reason today we have these sorts of movements in society. Are you aware, for example, that now 43 states have taken away, in law the difference between adults and children. So if a 13 year old does something that is terribly wrong, he has to be sent to an adult prison and stay there as long as if he were an adult. We have circumstances where time after time we are crying out for somebody to try to help us.

My own conviction is, that is the reason God gives us Christian families, that Christian families could say that in love and in positive discipline we believe this is the way we need to raise our children and set the tone for society. The big question is when do you do this? I love the passage of scripture over in Deuteronomy Chapter 6, Verse 4. The Jewish people call that the shema of the great teachings. It talks about the times when you can invest in the lives of those you have in your care. One of them says that you do it at meals, when you sit down to eat. I know that is a big problem for a lot of families. I talked to a teenager not long ago. He said we never eat as a family. So I know that the great challenge, Moms, that you are sitting there almost like a Piccadilly Cafeteria. You know just as they are going by, you give them something. But the great challenge I think is that we have an opportunity to restore

family meals. Perhaps the culture is in a little cartoon I saw not long ago. Mom was talking to a teenage daughter. She said, "I want you to set aside an hour tonight. We are going to eat together as a family." The teenager said, "An hour?" "Yes! There are lots of things I want to talk to you about, and I want you to talk with me." "An hour?" "Yes, we are just going to have a casual meal, and we are going to eat, and we are going to talk as a family." Last section of the cartoon, "Well, at least you can tell me what I am being punished for." But to be able to sit together. You see family means that we are together. We don't happen to be just people who live in the same house. We are family. Part of that is we eat together. Part of that, the Bible says, is when you go to bed at night. You know, I have 3 children and 8 grandchildren. When they come home, I am so glad for them to say to me, "I am sorry we are going to put the kids to bed." Now part of that is survival, but it is a great teaching time. They always bring their books. When I am given that responsibility, and I go up and read, if I don't read it all, they say, "You forgot something." They know! It is a wonderful time to be able to sit down and teach wonderful stories about the things of God. Psychologically what you go to bed at night thinking about makes all the difference in what you are going to do during the night, and how you are going to get up the next morning.

The third thing Deuteronomy 6:4 says is when you get up in the morning. I know how it was most of the time. You are going to be late. People are making fortunes where you throw it in the microwave, put it on a paper plate, and you give it to them as they go out the door. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we went back to the Biblical method of saying we are going to get up a few minutes earlier, and we are going to come together and just thank God that we woke up this morning, and we are going to dedicate this day to Him? The Bible says, *early in the morning I rise to give my praise unto you.* And just as important as you end the day, it is vitally important as how to start the day. To have time alone with God and just to say a brief word would make all the difference in the world.

The last thing it says is "when you walk along the way." I think that is that teachable moment. It is not when you give a whole lecture. It is just that teachable moment. Dr. James Dobson, I mentioned earlier, was telling about one of those with his two kids. They were in the car. His oldest daughter was sitting in the front. His younger son was sitting in the back. They went by and saw a building that had X's all over it. The daughter said, "Daddy, that is a place where they show dirty movies, isn't it?" He said, "That is right, and I hope when you grow up you will understand what that means, and you will not be a part of that." That night he was putting his little boy to bed. His little boy was saying his prayers, "Dear God, I pray for all those people who go to dirty movies. Lord, I pray you will work in their lives so they will stop spitting on each other." For him as dirty as you could get was to spit. Well, Dr. Dobson then had just a moment. It is a little more than just spitting on each other. When he had the opportunity just before going to bed to have the privilege of being able to teach at a teachable moment. It is the opportunities that God has given you that whenever it comes, you will be able to do it. It means that both of you, if both are in the home, both have the responsibility to be able to take those teachable moments.

I want to say just a word to all of you who are still under the authority of your parents. You remember one of the Ten Commandments that says you are to honor your father and your mother. There is a big difference between honoring and obeying. You might obey because you don't have any choice. You remember the story of the little girl who was running all over. Her mother said, "You have jumped enough. Go sit down." "I don't want to sit down." "I know you don't want to sit down, but I want you to sit down. Go sit down." After a while she sat down. Her brother walked in and said, "You are sitting down." She said, "Well, I am sitting down on the outside, but I am standing up on the inside." You know how to obey even if you don't want to, but honor is something that you have a choice about. Honor is saying I voluntarily give us unto you, and I believe that one of the great things every child in the audience ought to say today if you have a parent, even if you don't agree with everything they do, you ought to honor them that they love you enough to invest enough time in you to try to help you to become what you are meant to be. A child who comes running up to me, and says I can't do that. I've got a mean old momma.. He has just come to recognize they really don't know what it really means to honor father and mother.

You remember the last part of that passage. It says "*honor your father and mother that your days may be long which the Lord your God gives you.*" It means until we learn how to respect authority in parents and we learn to honor those who are older than us, we cannot build a lasting society. Cultures disintegrate when there is not a strong home life. There is a remarkable statement in the scripture that said this. When Jesus was 12 years of age, how much did Jesus know when he was 12? Whew! Listen to what he says, "When he went from the temple back home, he went and he was under their authority." If Jesus did it, every child in this room needs to do it. You need to do it with honor, and you need to do it with gratitude. Teenagers, you can look at me and tell I have lived a few years. But let me tell you, I was amazed. I went away to college, and I came back as a freshman who had learned so much. I was amazed how much my parents had learned in that same period of time. Even this morning when I woke up and realized again this significant day, there are things that prey in my mind that my Mother said to me and my Father said to me that still today motivate, inspire and encourage me. Let me tell you that while you may wonder today if they know what is going on, let me tell you that they do, and one day you will live your life in gratitude that they care enough about you to invest their life inside of you.

Let me say a last word about discipline. In the Book of Proverbs, it all starts not with husband and wife. It starts with God. Proverbs Chapter 3, Verse 11. "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline. Do not resent His rebuke. The Lord disciplines those He loves even as a father the children he delights in." What we Christians say in our Lord's Prayer is *Our Father*. So many times we stop and do not realize that what that means is that He continues

to be interested in us and cares for us as I care for my own children. God is going to work in my life first positively to teach me and to help me, but when I go astray, God will work with punishment and restrictions and lack of freedom in my life if I disobey Him. In fact, over in the Book of Hebrews it says if you go and do what you want to do, and nothing happens to you, it just shows you are not one of God's children. I ought to honor God. He is my heavenly Father. Part of my prayer is every day, dear God, may I never do anything today that would dishonor You. Lord, as I see your work within my life, I understand time and time again that it is God's way of limiting me and teaching me that I can become all that He wants me to be. I understood very clearly that my father loved me unreservedly. I also understood that if I disobeyed my dad that I would pay a consequence. I understand that God loves me unreservedly. I also understand that when I disobey Him, God says let me show you how parental authority works. There will be consequences. Within your own life, I hope you will rejoice again in those who disciplined you, taught you, helped you, and today will be a day of gratitude. For others of you who are in that responsibility, I hope today will be a day in which you rededicate yourself to the high calling that God has given us. For those of us who have the opportunity to spread the message to family members and others, I hope we will try to say to others what the Bible teaches about this important lesson in discipline.