

In the Way They Should Go

An Exposition of Proverbs 22:6



by Andy Bloom

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Dedication	i
Forward	ii
Chapter I	
Rule of Interpretation	1
Chapter II	
Prevalent Interpretations of Proverbs 22:6	3
Chapter III	
An Analytical Look at Proverbs 22:6	5
Chapter IV	
Putting It All Together	9
Chapter V	
What Can You Do Now?	13
Closing Credits	14

DEDICATION

TO MY FATHER AND MOTHER, JESSE AND BETTY BLOOM,
FOR THEIR INSTRUCTION IN GOD'S WORD, FOR THEIR
OUTPOURING OF LOVE AND AFFECTION, AND FOR
HOLDING THE LINE WHEN OUR REBELLION WOULD HAVE
MADE MOST PARENTS COMPROMISE THEIR SCRIPTURAL
STANDARDS.

I

FORWARD

A pastor listens in his office as parents pour out their broken heart about a wayward child. The parents state, "We reared our child in church, Christian school, and we had a family altar. We taught him right. Although we are not perfect, we know we reared our child in a scriptural manner. Pastor, why has our child departed from it?"

Proverbs 22:6, has been a thorn in the side of many Christian parents who have watched their children leave home and depart from the way they should go. Some have interpreted this verse so as to give the parents hope, but little comfort.

I have both taught and preached the contents of this booklet in my church, as well as in other places. I have watched senior saints walk up to me, after the message, with tears of joy in their eyes, rejoicing over the load of guilt that the Holy Spirit has lifted from their heart. I ask that you read this booklet and compare Scripture. Above all, allow the Holy Spirit to minister to your heart through it.

CHAPTER I

Rule of Interpretation

Proverbs 22:6 is perhaps one of the most controversial and misapplied verses in Scripture concerning child rearing. Bible believing, fundamental, godly Christians often have a problem of agreeing among themselves as to the interpretation of this verse. It is important, we understand, that one portion of Scripture will not contradict another portion. One should never abandon Bible doctrine in order to make Scripture fit their interpretation.

The following illustration may help in understanding this principle. Jesus taught, in Luke 12:52-53, that five would be in one house, three against two, and two against three. Matthew 10:34-36 speaks of a man's foes being those of his own household. Since Christ indicates in both passages that He is the one who divides, would this then contradict Proverbs 22:6? If we interpret Proverbs 22:6 to mean that if a parent rears their child right, he will not depart from that life, then how could Christ be a divider in that home?

I do not believe Jesus contradicted Scripture. I personally believe Scriptures teach that we have a free will. One makes their own decisions. A force, good or evil, does not enter your mind to make a decision that you cannot resist; however, if we interpret this verse in the way mentioned previously, then the Biblical doctrine of free will must be discarded. What about Adam? Luke 3:38 states ". . . of Adam, which was the son of God." If we blame the parents, whenever a child, "**goes bad,**" then we must blame God for the failure of Adam, since He was the only one to train Adam in the way he should go.

These illustrations are for a purpose. In trying to claim a promise from Scripture, do not contradict doctrine or any other verse of

Scripture. If there is a contradiction, then we have misinterpreted the passage. Jesus stated in Matthew 5:18, ". . . till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law." Since God has chosen to preserve His word, (Psalms 12:6,7), we must be careful that we do not interpret one portion to the contradiction of another portion, or we make the Scripture of private interpretation.

CHAPTER II

Prevalent Interpretations of Proverbs 22:6

The prevalent interpretations of Proverbs 22:6 addressed in this chapter are not from liberal theologians. These interpretations are from fundamental pastors, evangelists, professors, and writers.

The first interpretation is as follows: When your child grows old he will come back to his training. He may wander far into the depths of sin but, "Praise God," if you trained him in the way he should go, he will come back to it. Now think about that. The child is sixty. You're dead and gone. You probably died with a broken heart and only a hope that he would one day come back. Have you thought about what else this is teaching? That means your child will **not** die in an accident, or contract any disease, or any other thing until he comes back to the Lord. No matter how low he goes in sin, the promise is that he will come back. If you believe that, do not read I John 5:16, which states that there is a sin unto death.

A second interpretation states, if you properly train your child up in the way he should go, he will never depart from it or rebel at any age. He may sin, but he will not live in a pattern of **prolonged sin**. Of course this is assuming you had your child in church faithfully, you had a family altar, you taught him right, and that you "warmed his britches" when he needed it. Of course the conclusion would be if, after leaving home or becoming a teenager, he becomes rebellious, then the fault is to be laid upon your parental training. Think about it! That not only goes against "free will," it supports the godless psychological theory that all people are products of their environment and cannot be held responsible for their actions. It is someone else's fault. Usually we blame parents or society.

During my ministry, I have had parents talk to me who had

homosexual sons or daughters. Many of these are good Christian people who reared their children right. Now, accepting the theory that training a child a certain way guarantees that this is the way he will go, then I must ask, how did these parents teach their child to be homosexual? Did they show videos of homosexual behavior, or did they read books on how to pick up someone of their own sex? Before one can protest, he must remember to be consistent in their interpretation. If the child would not depart from Christian virtues, then it is only logical that the parents gave lessons in homosexuality.

This true story shows how out of hand this dogma can be. A young teenage girl had a nervous breakdown. It took months to get her back to normalcy. She had a chemical imbalance in her brain. The problem was not from drug abuse. One lady, who evidently felt her ministry was to point out to people their failures, told the mother of the girl, "If you had reared her right, this would not have happened." I know this is an extreme example, but one can see where this thinking leads.

I believe that this line of thinking is best described as follows: If a child is rebellious or bad, the parent evidently did not know how to rule his own household, and secondly, the parent did not train him in right Scriptural principles. I regretfully admit that, as a young adult, I often found myself shaking my head at parents of rebellious children and thinking, "I wish I could have those kids for a month, I would straighten out all their problems." It is amazing how one can know everything a parent is doing wrong although one does not live in the same house? If you have one of these *know-it-all* critics of homes in your church, ignore their words and pray that their understanding will be opened. They may have been saved for years, but they have not **matured** in Christ.

CHAPTER III

An Analytical Look at Proverbs 22:6

Here is where the rubber meets the road. Now we go from considering theory, to looking at actual definitions of words. One famous commentator often states "words mean things." That is especially true of Scripture. Every word of God is pure!

Looking at the first two words in Proverbs 22:6, the Bible says "train up." This word in its Hebrew form appears only five times in the Old Testament. The word means to dedicate; to teach; to consecrate. The Hebrew word appears twice in Deuteronomy 20:5. Both times it is interpreted "dedicate" and refers to a man dedicating his house that he has built. In I Kings 8:63 it refers to the temple and the Hebrew word is interpreted "dedicated." The same interpretation is given in II Chronicles 7:5 using the word "dedicated." Proverbs 22:6 is the only place the Hebrew word is translated "train up." The context shows this to be the proper translation. The word indicates "dedication." Child training begins by dedicating the child to God. In our church we have baby dedications. The parents bring the child forward and we pray a prayer of dedication asking God to help the parents in rearing the child and that the child may be saved at an early age. The child belongs exclusively to God, and is given to us as a gift from God. We are expected to be wise stewards of this gift.

"Train up" indicates instruction being given by the parent. That is why each family should have family altar, or devotions, together. You dedicate your child, then you are to set out to fulfill that dedication by training the child in the way he should go. This is also why one should talk to their children about dating, morality and the kind of friends they choose. We need the attitude of Joshua, ". . . As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

(Joshua 24:15)

Now consider the next major phrase, "**a child.**" A child in this context is best understood as one that is economically dependent on his or her parents. That is important in understanding this verse.

The next phrase states, "**in the way he should go.**" The Old and the New Testament admonish us to teach our children. It is important that we allow Scripture to teach us. In Genesis 18:19 we read, "For I know him, that he will command his children **and** his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." Genesis chapter 25 reveals that Abraham had other children besides Isaac. Does this mean that neither Ishmael, nor any of the other children of Abraham rebelled? Yes, they erred from the way of righteousness. Eli was rebuked for not restraining or correcting his children. David did not displease Adonijah his son at anytime and it was wrong. However, we read of Samuel's sons in I Samuel 8:3, "And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment." "Turned aside" carries the idea of turning from, or rebelling against, what they were taught. Samuel is never rebuked in Scripture for the **way** he reared his children. Two examples of wrong child rearing are seen in David and Eli. Two right examples are seen in Abraham and Samuel. In Genesis 18:19, God said Abraham would train them right. If God says it, it is true. Yet, Abraham's and Samuel's children turned aside. We should use Scripture to teach our children how to live righteously.

The next phrase to consider is: "**when he is old.**" This term does not refer to age as much as it does to one leaving home. Chuck Swindoll states that the word "old" literally means "hair on the chin." It pictures a young man anywhere from 15 years old and up

preparing to leave home. He is at that age where we can begin to see "peach fuzz" on his chin. He is becoming economically independent. A check of the *Gesenius' Hebrew-English Lexicon* to the Old Testament will show this definition as accurate. The word "when" becomes important at this juncture. Dr. Jesse Bloom, my father, has been a pastor for many years. His study revealed that the word "when" carries the idea of "even." Even when he is old, that is, even when he is at the age of "peach fuzz," (an age we often associate with his most rebellious years), he will not depart from it.

It is important that we understand those word definitions. Remember. These are word definitions, not this writer's opinion. These are straight from the Hebrew dictionary. The word "depart" literally means "to turn off." The word "not" means "unable." "It" refers back to the training. Put it together and the definition is seen clearly. They will never be able to turn off the training. In other words, **the conviction will always be there. If** something has been drilled into us regularly, it will affect our life.

As I was growing up, **I** can remember being told to "turn off the light." I imagine **I** have put on a lot of miles just walking back to turn off the light. Today, I am fifty five years old. I find that **I** not only turn off the lights at home, but **I** have done it in public places where they probably wanted them left on. A pastor friend of mine told me that he was reared in a place where there was much prejudice. He said "**I** know it is wrong to be prejudiced, yet it is always there in my mind."

What I am trying to convey to you is the fact that Proverbs 22:6 is **not** teaching that your children will never leave the standards you taught them. **It is teaching that it will always be a prick on their conscience. They won't be able to turn it off.** Praise God for that! If there will always be a conviction, then there will always be a chance of repentance.

Have you ever talked to a filthy mouthed, ungodly man? You find out he was reared in a godly home, but if you mention anything around him about it, he becomes more passionate against the church, and anything to do with righteousness. Another man with him is just as filthy but was not reared in a Christian home. He is not passionate against God or the church. He really has no feeling one way or the other, although he is filthy mouthed, ungodly and a friend to this other man. What is the difference? It has not departed from the first man; therefore he is confronted with his sin, just by the mention of church and God. One man is dealing with guilt. The other is not.

Have you ever come home and noticed your child will not look at you? He seems to be avoiding you. You do not know what he did, but I can tell you two things: First, he probably was laughing and having a good time when he did the wrong thing. Secondly, he knew it was wrong and your appearance brought it out of his heart onto his countenance. You may not know what he had been doing, but you know he was doing something wrong. Often this happens with teenagers. They will be out doing every thing that is wrong with a smile, but once in the house, you can detect that their spirit is wrong. They may lie to you about what they were doing, but your spirit knows they are suddenly different. Be very careful, when suddenly, they feel the youth group is not right anymore and they do not want to go to church anymore. It probably isn't the church.

Mother or dad, if you've trained your children Scripturally, the guilt you live with is probably from Satan. Do not give him the victory. No parent is a perfect parent! If you see mistakes on your part, confess it to God. Ask Him to forgive you and He will. He will not bring it up again, only man and Satan do that. If you need to apologize to your child about your sin, then do so as soon as possible. Learn to forgive yourself and fully accept God's forgiveness.

CHAPTER IV

Putting It All Together

Your children have a free will. If they could not rebel against training, they would not have a free will. Scriptures serve to illustrate this point for us. Proverbs 20:20 states, "Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness." Why is the child accountable if he doesn't have a free will? Why would God command, in Ephesians chapter 6, that children are to obey their parents? If they trained them right, they would automatically obey. If they don't have a free will, they cannot obey, if they were not trained to obey. That would make it senseless to have Ephesians 6:1 in Holy Writ. I do not think that you believe the Holy Spirit would do a senseless thing. Why would the Old Testament speak of stoning a vile, unrepentant incorrigible son? Abraham was a very godly man who, in obedience to God, was willing to offer Isaac. A parent, who does not train his child right, would not take him to the city fathers for stoning as Abraham was willing to offer Isaac. Could it be the child has a free will?

Proverbs 20:11 tells us a child is known by his doings. If someone has five children, there are five different personalities. How could that be, if they are all trained by the same parent? Free will is the answer. Doctrine is the key to interpretation. Luke 12:51-53, referred to in the first chapter, speaks of a house divided. Why would they be divided? Perhaps the parents will stand for Christ and the children will rebel.

In my studies, I found that in the book of Proverbs, for *every one* time a parent is given responsibility, there is at least *four* times that amount of responsibility given to the son. In other words, there are four instructions for children for every one instruction given to parents. This is something you can check for yourself.

We can see present day illustrations of this truth all about us. I personally know of an evangelist, a friend of mine, that is very fundamental. He home schooled his children. He had nearly forty meetings a year. His family went with him to all of them. That means five or six nights a week of church attendance. They also had a family altar. They memorized Scripture. All of his children knew right doctrine. With all this, he has a child in full time Christian service and he also has a child that, after leaving home, is wild, adulterous and divorced. One would be hard pressed to say that was the way the child was trained to go.

Someone else may say, "Yes, but they will come back when they are old!" I know of another pastor who reared his son in church and righteousness. He knew Scriptures. He knew doctrine. This young man rebelled, and he was killed in his late thirties. He never came back. I could reverse that story by asking about pastors and evangelists that we know were born and reared in a drunkard's home or a broken home. They did not go in the way they were trained. One believes in either free will or he has a Calvinistic type belief--that training takes from the child his will, and therefore he cannot control what he is, or what he becomes.

As parents, we are responsible for training, instructing, and disciplining our children. Proverbs 19:18 and Proverbs 22:15 inform us to spank our children for their evil doing. We should make the pain of the punishment greater than the pleasure of doing wrong. I must clarify this. I speak of spanking, not using your fist or throwing a child around. That is abuse, done out of anger, not love, and should be punished by law. Discipline your child with a belt or that time honored "hickory switch." Understand, however, there are children that grow up in homes of discipline, instruction and training that rebel in their teenage years.

In short, one could say discipline and instruction are responsibilities of the parents, whereas, free will gives the child the

responsibility of obedience. This is the reason children have four times the amount of instruction in the book of Proverbs.

What is the purpose for parental training? Simply to train them in the way they should go. In Proverbs, the young man is instructed to gain wisdom. The first step in becoming wise is to reverence and fear the Lord. That is why a parent tries to lead his child to Christ. Wisdom comes from God. Wisdom does not come from parental training. The child must desire wisdom, i.e., Proverbs 2:16, and they must seek that wisdom from God and His Word. **A parent can discipline a child but only the Lord can make him wise.** Our training and our life should demonstrate to the child the right approach unto God.

Have you considered the commands in Proverbs to a son? He is told to stay away from harlots, bad company, alcohol, robbery and murder. He is to guard his affections. As parents we are to teach these things, but they are not given primarily to parents as a *training* pattern, rather, they are given to youth as a *living* pattern in the book of Proverbs.

Your children will become teenagers. They will be away from home more often and without supervision or with light supervision. You will not be sure what they are doing every waking minute. Therefore, the child is admonished to make right choices. Parents can train their children and pray for them, but the day will come when your child is fully tempted and his will exercised to do right or wrong. Wrong choices are the problem. Pastors, teachers, and fellow Christians who put the responsibility all on the parents are really unknowledgeable, unforgiving, and unknowing toward the Word of God.

This booklet has stated that you need to be consistent in your interpretation. John 1:12 states that, "As many as received Him to them gave He the power to become the sons of God . . ." This

makes God our spiritual Father (when one is saved by placing his trust in the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ). Since we are His children, if we backslide, or go into false doctrine according to Proverbs 22:6, it is our fault, not His. Now you begin to see the need for consistency.

Parents cannot control youth 100% of the time. They do not need Job's comforters when their children do evil. There are men who did not allow their daughters to date, and yet, the daughters became pregnant out of wedlock. Do these fathers need our self righteous condemnation?

CHAPTER V

What Can You Do Now?

Some will look at their present estate and ask what can I do now? Instead of developing a condemning heart toward a wayward child, or living with guilt that others have put on you, begin praying earnestly, (fasting if necessary) for the restoration of the wayward child. Ask yourself these questions: Did I teach my children to do right? Did I try to be a good example? Do they know that what they are doing is wrong? Then understand the doctrine of free will. Your child is responsible for his own sin. Yours is now a ministry of intercessory prayer. Be willing to forgive. However, let me caution you, hold the line on righteousness and discipline. Never compromise righteousness!

Claim God's strength and wisdom for today. If your child continues in rebellion, commit it all to God asking Him to do what is necessary to place His fear in their heart. Don't worry about what is coming or what could come, just trust God to take care of it. Remember, if you have taught them right, it will always be pricking their heart. They will not be able to turn it off. So lean totally on God's strength for your trial. (I Corinthians 10:13) If it is always pricking their mind, then there is always hope for repentance. Some of you reading this booklet will one day watch your last child leave home. Let us pray that if they have learned to yield their will to you as a parent, then they will not find it hard to yield their will to the obedience of God's will, their **heavenly** Father. With the trust you trusted Christ for salvation, you must trust Him in the matter of your children.

CLOSING CREDITS

This booklet started out as a sermon more than five years ago. Many hours of study were placed into this one sermon. Unfortunately, I did not contemplate, at the time, that I would use this material in a booklet. As a result, I cannot give you accurate footnotes and bibliography of all my sources. Some things I gathered from my own meditation. Others I gathered from listening to other preachers and teachers.

Through the Bible Volume Three . . . J. Vernon Magee
Proverbs. Song of Solomon H.A. Ironside
Liberty Bible Commentary - Old Testament
Matthew Henry Commentary
Preacher's Homiletic Commentary Vol. 13 by Rev. W. Harris
Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon
Strong's Concordance
The Hebrew Greek Key Study Bible KJV Zodhiates

As stated, this list is only partial and I am uncertain of which other sources I used.