

Vocabulary for Child Development

Proverbs 22:6

Feder, Don. "Clinton Might As Well Tear Down War Memorial." *Conservative Chronicle*. 26 July 1995, p. 3.

Proverbs 22:6 - Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.

The words "train up" translate the Hebrew verb *hanak* which has several meanings: dedicate, begin, initiate, inaugurate. It is used in this verse to indicate a starting point at which parents begin the process of feeding data into the child's conscience.

The definitions of the English words used to translate *hanak* contribute some understanding to the meaning of this Hebrew word: dedicate: To become committed to as a goal or a way of life. Implies solemn and exclusive devotion to a sacred use or purpose. To surrender or set apart to a particular person for a specific purpose.

The parents thus dedicate the child for a sacred purpose the fulfillment of which becomes the goal that they are committed to as a way of life. Their objective is to orient the child to Jesus Christ for the purpose of eternal salvation and his subsequent execution of the Christian way of life in time.

initiate: To begin or start.

inaugurate: To commence, usher in, enter upon.

The birth of the child is the starting point of this endeavor. It is a process which is entered upon with the understanding it will be a continuing process over the next 20 years.

The word also takes on the concept of setting aside, narrowing, or hedging in. The concept here is that parental restraint narrows the child's permissible conduct. He is moved away from the trends of the sinful nature toward the standards of Bible doctrine.

Now what is the best English word to bring together all these concepts? It is, interestingly enough, "train." The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word as follows:

Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "train":

To subject to discipline and instruction for the purpose of forming the character or of making proficient in some occupation. To instruct and discipline generally.

This is what the parents are dedicated to do at the moment the child is born. This training must continue through age 20 with the objective of contributing to society a mature individual who regulates his behavior from the source of a Biblically developed conscience.

If upon reaching age 20, the individual has not developed a mature lifestyle, then the training has not achieved its desired goal. Training therefore cannot be accomplished by simply telling the child what behavior is expected. Further, merely demonstrating the desired behavior in the home is not enough. These virtues and values must be trained into the child's conscience.

The only way the child makes these values and virtues his own is if the parents use God's system of training to instill them. The parents must be capable of recognizing the manifestations of the trends, weaknesses, strengths, and lust patterns of their child's sinful nature. Secondly, they must resolve to never allow any of those tendencies to express themselves without setting the child on the right course of action. Consequently, the child may not choose a lifestyle in the way he wants to go but rather as God's standards require.

In order for the child to accept the training he must first be made obedient to his parents. If obedient then he will respect their position of authority and thus accept their instructions. Once children are trained to be obedient, then the parents can easily teach them the standards of right conduct.

The parents have the obligation to train and teach from the standards revealed to them from their own personal Bible study. Parents must resolve to learn the standards of God's word so they can accurately teach them to their children.

The word for "child" in Proverbs 22:6 is *na'ar* and refers to a child in his formative years between 0-13. Thus, parents are informed that if they train their child from the beginning in the principles and standards of divine truth, when he is old—in adulthood—he will not depart from that instruction.

The training process requires an insistence on obedience and respect while restraining the trends of the sinful nature. Once obedience and respect is won and the sinful nature is under constant restraint, then teaching may begin.