

APPENDIX

The translation of Proverbs 22:6

Some Christian parenting experts insist that if children are properly trained, they will (a) become Christians and (b) never leave the Lord. Some Christian leaders, based on a strict interpretation of Titus 1:6, forbid elders to serve if one or more of their children are not Christians. Both of these views, in our opinion, are too narrow. Parenting is not mechanical.

AB: Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it.

CEV: Teach your children right from wrong, and when they are grown they will still do right.

DT: Train up the child according to the tenor of his way, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

ESV: Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

HCSB: Teach a youth about the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

HEB: חֲנֹךְ לְנֶעַר עַל־פִּי דְרָכּוֹ גַם כִּי־יִזְקֵן לֹא־יִסּוֹר מִמֶּנּוּהָ:

KJV: Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

LXX: Missing entirely from the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was the Bible of the early Christians!

NIV: Train [or start] a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

NJB: Give a lad a training suitable to his character and, even when old, he will not go back on it.

NLT: Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older, they will remain upon it.

NRS: Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.

TM: Point your kids in the right direction—when they're old they won't be lost.

VUL: Proverbium est adulescens iuxta viam suam etiam cum senuerit non recedet ab ea.

YLT: Give instruction to a youth about his way, even when he is old he turneth not from it.

To sum up, the Hebrew is ambiguous. “According to his way” is susceptible of more than one translation. Is it to be rendered “his way”, עַל־פִּי דְרָכּוֹ = in the way he should go (traditional view); or in “His” (God’s) way; or according to his own personality type (suggested in the 9th century by a Jewish commentator).

The strictest possible understanding of the verse will be attractive to those who believe they can *control* the behavior of others. This view of the passage may put too much responsibility on the parents, and too little on the child. Even if the KJV and versions influenced by it are correct, still we ought to keep in mind that Proverbs brings us general truths, not necessarily absolute promises.

Proverbs 22:6 is *not* an ironclad promise that good parenting always produces faithful children.