

## Training Our Youth

### 1. Study Proverbs 22:6. What type of Hebrew poetry is this?

Proverbs 22:6 is an example of a type of Hebrew poetry called *progressive parallelism*. In this type of parallelism, this two-line proverb requires both lines to be understood; the second line of this type of parallelism provides the context and completes the truth of the first line. Identifying the line that contains the “truth” establishes the focus of the study.

### 2. Do a word study on “train.” What do you discover about this Hebrew verb?

The Hebrew verb *hanek* normally means “to initiate” or “to dedicate.” The English translation of *hanek*, to “train”, is unusual, because in the biblical context, in only 3 other instances, *hanek* is used as dedicating a house (Deut 20:5) or of dedicating the temple (1 Kings 8:63; 2 Chron 7:5). *Hanek* also forms the basis of the word *Hanukkah*, which is the Jewish Festival that celebrates the re-dedication of the temple during the Maccabean era.

### 3. How do you interpret the first line of this parallelism? Does your interpretation fit within the context of Proverbs?

There are two challenges to the interpretation of the first line.

#### 1. The term, “way,” is ambiguous for it leaves the interpreter wondering if it’s in reference to:

- a, God’s way, or
- b. the child’s way

#### 2. Hebrew construction of the text allows for two translations:

- a. train a child in the way he should go, or
- b. train a child according to the way he goes.

Consequently there have been various interpretations of this passage.

1. The traditional interpretation, found in most Bibles, takes the construction as “train a child in the way he should go” in the manner of “God’s way.” This directs the parents towards Bible study and the discovery of “God’s way” in order to teach it to their children. And the process is repeated in the next generation.

2. An alternative approach takes the construction as “train a child according to the way he goes” in the manner of realizing the child’s potential. This interpretation directs the parents’ attention towards the child so that they may determine age appropriate methods or the best method of education, or determine their future trade, skill, or profession.

3. Another alternative interpretation takes the construction as “train a child according to the way he goes” in the literal manner of “the child’s way.” This interpretation suggests that the child be allowed and encouraged to self indulge without any limitation or discipline.

Within the context of Proverbs, there is little on the subject of training children what to do; all of the verses are in the context of reproof or discipline (Prov 19:18; 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15; 29:17).

## **Training Our Youth** (page 2)

Throughout Proverbs, the theme of godly wisdom is emphasized where the way of righteousness is contrasted with the way of the foolish or wicked; it contrasts believers who honor the Lord with those who do not believe in God. In this context, Proverbs 22:6 should read “train a child in the way he should go”, because it refers to the “way” or path that leads to spiritual life and righteousness. The verse is centered on God not on the child or his desires.

Proverbs is a collection of instructions and observations, not promises or commands, which are intended to offer practical guidance. In Proverbs 22:6, parents are challenged and encouraged to “dedicate” or “begin” their child with a God centered worldview at an early age, which forms the basis of their moral development, and leads to a life that is spiritually alive.

## Training Our Youth

1. Study Proverbs 22:6. What type of Hebrew poetry is this?
2. Do a word study on “train.” What do you discover about this Hebrew verb?
3. How do you interpret the first line of this parallelism? Does your interpretation fit within the context of Proverbs?