

Train Up a Child - Bob Harvey

My text this evening is Proverbs 22.6, Proverbs 22.6. One verse, verse that we all know, most of us know it by heart, especially those of us that have raised kids, have grandkids, the older they are and so on, this is a verse that we go to quite often.

Proverbs 22.6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

When Elder Martin and I decided on our sermons and what we were gonna be doing, we did not coordinate this, right? He talked about the blessings of children this morning, and it just so happened I'm talking about training up those blessings.

So, praise the Lord for that. Without raising hands, how many of you have adult kids, already out of home, having their own families, doing their own parenting and so on? Few of us have, a few of us have families here this evening. Few of our younger members in the back there.

How many of you thought, as our children are older, I have 15 grandkids, how many people like me thought my parenting is done? I'm done with it, I'm over with it, I don't have to worry about parenting anymore. Wrong. Once a parent, always a parent.

We continue to parent, we continue to do these things in different ways. Once they're out of your home, even once they turn 18 years, right? As they get older, things change. We change, and we need to, we grow with it.

I grew up in the OPC, I was baptized in the OPC. That doesn't make me any better or any worse, that just means I'm narrow-minded. I know this about religion, about OPC.

Others have other backgrounds, so other people have more understanding, more wisdom on certain things than I do. But I grew up in the OPC. My brother, my sister, all three of us are different.

We, like I said, we are baptized. We're brought up in a reformed faith. I was married in the OPC.

My wife and I were married in Carson, California, OPC church out there. I would tease my mom, saying that my dad and I saved her and Jerry. And she said, what do you mean? I said, well, you guys used to be baptized in your evil ways, and we brought you around to reformed faith.

I won't tell you what she told me. But different backgrounds, different ways of doing things. We moved out here.

We started going to a reformed church out here. Different denomination. My parents in my session said, be wise.

You shouldn't be doing certain things. You shouldn't be joining this one denomination. Shouldn't do that.

But I knew better. I knew this church. I like this church.

This particular church we were going to. Not here, it was another church. So they gave me a letter of transfer, and everybody, you know, we went our different ways.

Didn't go into, I shouldn't say that. We joined this other church. But we learned.

Basically, after being there about two and a half, three years, I learned that maybe I made a mistake. And it's a mistake, and it's an opportunity that nobody could have told me. I had to learn it myself.

I had to be there. I had to see it. I had to experience it, and so on.

Somebody couldn't tell me. My father was an elder and deacon in church for almost 30 years. He knew.

My session knew. They were wiser than I. But I had to decide what was best for me and my family, and I did. But I also had to learn from it.

My dad later said, after we started going to OPC, he was concerned for us. And he asked himself, what did we do wrong? Where did we go wrong with you? And you didn't listen. I didn't do everything the way he thought.

Nothing my dad did. I learned many things from my father. My father was a very important man in my life, and he's with the Lord now.

And I praise the Lord for that. I still use him as an example of what a man should be, what a father should be. And he was not perfect.

All of us as fathers, we all know our sins. We all know our mistakes. We all know who we are.

And none of us are perfect. But we grow. We learn.

Many of us judge how good a parent we are on how our children turn out as adults. And we can't. We can't do that.

But we do, we do. We think about, why are they doing that? That's not what I taught them. Or why are they going this direction? That's not who we are.

That's not the direction we want. As our kids grew up, we taught them, we guided, we explained, we prayed with and for our kids. I brought them up in a reformed faith.

They should be reformed, all of them. My one daughter is, but in a different church. And that's okay.

But my other two are not. What did I do wrong? The fruits of all the labor, the fruits of what I did, was I that bad of a dad? No. No, not the case.

We see our kids making good choices. We see our kids making bad choices. Good decisions, bad.

Sometimes reckless and dangerous. Sometimes physically life-threatening. We also watch our kids make spiritual decisions, good and bad, some decisions that will lead them to hell.

And it concerns us. What did I do wrong? We talk to ourselves and ask ourselves, what if? What if I did this? I could have, I should have, I would have. The mortals, the mortals of opportunity.

That's what they call those, the mortals of opportunity. Yeah, we had opportunities. And yes, I blew some of them, we blew some of them.

But we did our best. We still did what we, did the best we could at what we did. It's funny because they're older now.

Most of the time when I start giving them my godly, perfect wisdom, they're not asking for it. What is advice that's not wanted? Criticism. Unwanted advice is criticism.

I took it as criticism when someone tried to tell me how to do something and I didn't ask for it. It's no different with our children. Ecclesiastes 3, one through eight, talks about there's a time for everything under the sun.

Everything there is a season, a time for a purpose under heaven, a time to be born, a time to die, a time to embrace, a time to refrain from embracing. A time to keep silent and a time to speak. I'm still learning how to be silent.

I'll probably be learning that till the day I die. How do we know when we keep silent? We all know the don't ask, don't tell, right? That came up during Clinton's time. Don't ask, don't tell.

But how about didn't ask, don't tell? But they aren't asking, don't tell. And we're talking about older kids, right? Maybe 15 year olds too, maybe 13, 14, whatever it is. There are times to let them learn.

I have a piece of paper on my desk and it says consider this before you answer a question or voice your opinion. I sit on calls all day long, talking to people and so on. And it says, is it true, I have on there, is it true, is it good, is it kind? Is it useful, is it necessary, is it wanted? But they aren't doing it right, you tell yourself.

They're doing it wrong, they're not, you know. I know how to do it right. I wanna show them how to do it right.

But guess what? We didn't do it right either. All of us are learning. Where did we go wrong, what do we do? Many of us come back to this verse.

Train up a child in the ways you go and when he is old he will not depart from it. It's a promise, right? It's not, it's not a promise. Do this and God will give this to you.

Nope, that's not what it is. My parents asked, all our parents as well as us asked, where did I go wrong? I had a girlfriend in high school. We were just down in California and we came up on freeways where we used to go to school and I had a girlfriend in high school.

She came in on a freeway, on one freeway this way, I came in on another and once in a while we would meet in our cars and the race is on. We'd race to high school and we both got in trouble. I don't know who got in more trouble.

We learned, we made mistakes. I had friends that went to Mexico, asked me what I wanted. I said fireworks and a switchblade knife.

They brought me back a switchblade and a package of quarter sticks of dynamite. Awesome. Bad.

I blew up a lot of stuff. Not good. My parents, where did we go wrong? Why would you want a switchblade knife? Why would you want dynamite, you know, things like that.

We teach our kids all kinds of things. Don't marry outside the phase, be a responsible citizen, don't drive fast, wear your seatbelt, obey the rules, color within the lines, stay in the OPC. After all, we are the only perfect church.

Not. Don't swear, obey God's word, be respectful, clean your rooms, make your bed. This is an interesting one, make your bed.

Admiral William H. McRaven gave a commencement address to the graduates of the University of Texas in May 17, 2014 and he started out and he said, if you make your bed every morning, you will have accomplished the first task of the day. It will give you a small sense of pride and it will encourage you to do another task and another and another. By the end of the day, that one task is completed and it's turned into many tasks that you have completed.

Making your bed will also reinforce the fact that little things in life matter. If you can't do the little things right, you can't do all the big things. He said, and if by the chance you have had a miserable day, at least you come home to a nice, neat, made bed. It reminds you you get to start all over the next day.

Train Up a Child

Proverbs 22.6, my first point, train up a child. Every one of us here has a different way of how we did things.

I'm not here to tell you how I did it. Every child is different. It doesn't say train up the children, it says train up a child.

I had three daughters, each one of them were different. Each one of them need to be trained differently, shown differently. Each one of them had different attitude towards things.

They saw things differently. In Deuteronomy 6, six through nine, it says, in these words which I commend you today, shall be in your heart, you shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk to them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lay down, when you rise up, you shall bind them on the side of your hand and you shall be as frontless between your eyes, you shall write them on the doorpost of your house and on your gates. Huge homeschooling advocate verses.

We've had our kids in Christian school and homeschool and public school. Each one has a different place. I'm not gonna tell you which one to do.

We encourage, you know, whatever's best, we encourage, you know, homeschooling, but our pastor even wrote a book about homeschooling is not the end of all ends of how to do things. Here we all sit, some with children in the seats, some with children who have already grown up. We taught them all that we could.

In the time allotted to us, we took them to church, Sunday school, youth groups, Bible studies, we drove them everywhere doing these things. Eventually they give them keys and they can start driving themselves to these things. I drove 11 kids to a youth group one time, couple times, almost got us all killed.

11 kids, they were literally lined up on the back on top of each other. Lord have mercy on us. So let's get it out in the open, what's really the problem? We're sinners, you're sinners.

We are sinners trying to teach sinners not to sin. You get that? We are sinners trying to teach sinners not to sin. Do as I say, not as I do.

Sometimes the other way around. Years ago I called my dad after a particular trying time of watching my older daughters and asked him if he's still worried about us. He said, yes.

I said, why? He says, I'm not done. He said, I'm not done teaching you guys. I'm not done teaching my grandchildren.

I'm not done teaching my great-grandchildren. He was an example until the day he died of God's love and mercy. In Job 1 verses four through five it says, and his sons would go and feast in their houses each on his appointed day and would sin and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

So it was in the days of feasting that had run their course that Job would sin and sanctify him, them. And he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings to the Lord. According to the number of them all, for Job said, it may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.

Thus Job did regularly. These children lived outside his home. And he's still sacrificing animals saying, Lord, please forgive them.

We don't sacrifice anymore. All we can do is pray. We pray for our children, for our grandchildren and so on.

Like Tripp said this morning, kids are a blessing. But raising kids is not always easy. It takes time.

Sometimes it's one day at a time. In Isaiah 1, 2 it says, hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me.

God brought up Judah. In the nurture and admonition of his word, he trained them and taught them and they still rebelled. In Luke 12, 51 to 53, it says, do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.

For from now on, in one house, there will be five divided. Three against two and two against three. They will be divided.

Father against son and son against father. Mother against daughter and daughter against mother. Mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law.

There's not a lot of hope there. This verse saying, hey, train up a child in ways to go and he will not depart. For a promise makes there and yet he says, here, I'm here to divide people.

People are gonna have different opinions. Your children are gonna have different opinions than you. Matthew Henry said, a great duty and joy particularly to those that are parents and instructors of children, in order to the propagating of wisdom that it may not die with them, train up children in the age of vanity to keep them from the sins and snares of it in that learning age to prepare them for what they are designed for.

Is Proverbs 22, six a promise? Not so far, doesn't seem like it. Kind of hard.

In the Way He Should Go

My second point, in the way he should go.

2 Timothy three, 14 to 17 says, but as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. Scripture is good.

Scripture is what we need. There's hope. There's hope for them, there's hope for us to be complete, equipped for every good work to the man or woman of God.

There is hope. For some of us, our training and learning about God started when we were young. Like I said, I was trained from a baby up.

Some of us started as teenagers. Some of us started as adults, right? 10 years ago, five, some people started as adults a week ago, today. We are all at different places before God.

Our children transition from being instructor-led, elementary, high school parent, to one-way type of presentation instruction. We're constantly teaching and trying to guide and help. But around 18 or so, that starts to change.

College comes in, right? High school, they want you to sit there, they want you to do your work, they want you to do that, hand it in. If you don't, you're gonna get marked down. Going to college, they don't care if you're there or not.

It's up to you. Now you're considered an adult. Now you're considered, you need to start taking care of it yourself, doing your own thing.

I told my kids and grandkids that I'm a dictator. Maybe you've heard this from me before. I'm a dictator in my house, I'm a dictator.

Hopefully I'm a benevolent dictator. Hopefully I'm a loving dictator. Hopefully I listen.

I'll challenge, they challenge me. We negotiate, especially as I get older, we start negotiating things. Time, how can I stay out, can I do this? You know, whatever it is.

I don't think I ever negotiated with my three-year-old. But I do negotiate with the olders. For our children to be trustworthy, we have to give them trust.

How are they gonna learn how to be trustworthy if we don't hand them and allow them to make mistakes? They're gonna learn from those mistakes. Having three daughters, we've all heard the saying, you know, that you tell your kids the stove is hot. Don't touch it.

One child will say, I will not touch, I believe you. Every word you say, I believe it, I will not touch it. The second one says, I don't know if it is or not, and they sit there and negotiate it, kind of, you know, not sure.

Maybe they might try a little bit. But the third one says, you know, I know it's hot, but I'm gonna try it. I need to feel that burn to know it's truth.

It's not that I think you're lying, I just think I just gotta try it. They've gotta put their hand on there, they gotta test it. Don't do drugs.

Don't do this, don't do that. No, I gotta try it. I've gotta try these things to make sure.

We pray that our kids don't go through those hardships. We pray that our kids will live a good life and so on. But they've gotta learn too.

They have to learn. Same goes spiritually. Eventually, all our children have to make that decision.

Am I going to love the Lord or not? Am I going to join a church or not? My sister joined a church. Most of her life. OPC.

But she later came out and said, I'm not a Christian. A lot of kids follow their parents. They join because that's what their parents said or thought was a good idea.

And they did it. But eventually, they may have to come back and rethink, is this what I truly believe? Am I doing this for Mom and Dad or am I doing it because this is the truth, what they believe? They have to make that decision. We cannot make it for them.

When They are Old, They will Not Depart from It

My third point. And when they're old, they will not depart from it. This is the one part that we lean on and we pray on it.

They will not depart from it. I've taught them to reform faith. I've taught them everything good.

I've showed it to them. They will not depart from it. In an alternate translation of that verse that I read, bring up a child in his own way and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

It changes a little bit. Each child is brought up in their way. But eventually, they have to make that decision.

Eventually, the Lord's gonna do the rest of the work. We don't know if we've planted, we don't know if we've watered, tilling the ground, doing whatever it was, but we have to try. That's our job as parents to raise our children and do the best job we can.

But God is gonna do the rest of the work. He does that work in their lives. Proverbs 3, five through six says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" and lean not on your own understanding.

"In all your ways, acknowledge him" and he will direct your paths." It's not what we do. It's what the Lord does. Mark Becker and I have talked about that several times.

All we did was our best. But eventually, we gotta let it go and say, it's up to the Lord now. John Quincy Adams, our sixth president, when asked how he was preserved in the face of ever-present hostile opposition that he was under, he said, "The duty is ours, the results are God's." We are to do what we are told to do as parents, to raise them up, to teach them, and so on.

But the rest is the Lord's to do that. We know the best is all we can do. The could have, I have, I could have, I should have, I would have doesn't matter.

What matters is what God does in our children's hearts. In 1 Thessalonians 5, 15 through 18, it says, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing," and everything give thanks, for this is the will of God." Prayer is the first thing and the last thing that we do. About everything.

Trip brought it up this morning. Our church is gonna grow. We're trying different things, but it starts with prayer.

It ends with prayer. Our days should start with prayer. Our days should end with prayer.

You don't know how our children are gonna be. We should never give up hope. 1 Corinthians says, love hopes all things.

We should never give up hope. Augustine of Hippo was born in 354 CE or AD. His father was a pagan, his mother was a Christian.

Monica was a Christian. Augustine had an excellent education in rhetoric and philosophy. He was very good at that.

He knew his stuff. He was also a playboy. He fooled around with women.

For 30 years, he fooled around. This went from place to place to place. He took care of his mom or his mom followed him with him and constantly prayed.

For 30 years, mom prayed for him. He wrote down later in his life, in his memoirs and so on, he said, give me chastity and continence, but not just yet. He wasn't done playing.

He wasn't done doing what he wanted to do. He converted to Christianity in 386. He became famous because he wrote about it in detail in his confessions.

He wrote a psychological retrospective of his life and what he did. His mom followed him around and he uses her as the reason why he came to the Lord. Obviously, the Lord did it, but his mom prayed without ceasing.

A couple of thoughts. We are not responsible for adults' children's sinful choices. And I would even, I've read this somewhere else, and I would say even the good choices.

Maybe we had an influence, but they made those choices, good and bad. Ezekiel 18 says, yet you say, why should the son not bear the guilt of the father? Because the son has not done what is lawful and right and has kept all my statutes and reserved them. He shall surely live.

My soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. Each one is different.

The father and the son, they don't bear each other's guilt. They don't bear each other's sin. Number two, I must not protect him or her from the consequences of their own sin.

Too many parents try to take care of them. 20-year-olds, 30-year-olds, making mistakes. Protection is an innate response of most animals and human parents.

It's noble and often necessary when they're young. Someone wrote, I ran myself to exhaustion running up and down the street, holding the seat of my child, learning to ride a new bicycle so that it wouldn't crash and be injured. But when that same child steals or lies, cheats or becomes pregnant or whatever, we try to save them.

They need to learn from their mistakes. And how they do that and how you do that is up to you and up to them. But children will never learn from their mistakes if we are constantly rescuing them.

Number three, all my failures as a parent cannot negate the work of God in my child's life. God is in control. He has ordained everything that we do and our children do.

He allowed us to teach the good along with our mistakes. We want to put our kids on our shoulders. Kevin Swanson said this down at Reformation Church.

We want our children on our shoulders to be better. Learn from my mistakes, don't repeat them. I want you better.

I want to lift you up and help you to be a better person than what I was. Number four, I am just one of the many means that God may be using in the life of my child. There's other people, there's other things, other means that God is using to bring them.

And again, I may water, I may toil, I do all kinds of things in the soil. I may not be the one that they come to know the Lord. If they do, if that's the Lord's choice.

It is within God's power to save my child. It's not mine. I cannot save my children.

I cannot save them, it's up to God. We need to remember, pray. Leave it in God's will, it's up to them.

In the story, in the last part here, in the story of the prodigal and lost son, we see the youngest son take his inheritance and suspend it on reckless living. The father didn't go out and try and stop him. Gave him the money.

Son took off, lived. Lived his partying and harlotry and everything that he did. Father didn't go out and find him.

But the father did keep an eye. Did keep an eye, because he saw him from afar coming down the road. He had hope.

My father had hope. And when he came up and he saw him coming down the road, he got up and he ran down and had compassion for his son, embraced him and kissed him. Love hopes all things.

Psalm 31, 24, be of good courage and you'll strengthen your heart and all you who hope in the Lord. The Lord is our strength. The Lord is the one that's gonna save our children.

The Lord is gonna help us as we guide our children, our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you, Lord, for what this verse means, Lord, maybe to me, to others. We can explain it better, Lord. Lord, help us and guide us, those with young kids.

Be with them as they train up their children. Lord, be with the rest of us who have grandchildren, great-grandchildren, Lord, as we guide them and help them too, as we help other parents. So Lord, thank you for your word, for being the tool of which to do that.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen.