

Proverbs 22:6 - Defining “he will not depart”

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

Most believers interpret God's Word and laws the same way we interpret man's laws: we like to add or take away what is ruled according to our personal convenience. For instance, most view speed limits as flexible or negotiable instead of concrete. **The sign commands “Speed Limit 55”, but most people add a bunch more words than the 3 that are really present. :) (“Everybody knows you can go 5 over., etc...”)** The conscience God gave man, though, catches up with us when we spot an outside authority (police), and most drivers slow down even more than the speed limit so they don't get pulled over. Why? Because no matter how many lies our deceitful heart tells us, God has made it known deep down that rules are to be obeyed to the letter. **Man may not always keep us to those laws, but God does.**

Proverbs 22:6 is one of those speed limit signs in parenting. However, the stiffness and strictness that God requires makes the average person resist. God stresses that proper training leads to offspring “not departing” from that training all the way to when they are “old”. Now, the average reader doesn't quite like God's directness so we add, diminish, or take away as is personally convenient. Many do the same exact thing to parenting that they do to speed limit signs! We look around us and see offspring that remove God from their life despite being raised in a seemingly godly home. Proverbs 22:6 stands as a convicting verse to us so we add words that say, “when he is old, he will come back to the training he has forsaken in his younger life”. However, that is obviously not what the verse promises.

The word “old” is only used a handful of times in the Old Testament, but every single reference is used to denote not only someone who is aged, but specifically, someone who is near the end of life. The word “depart” is used throughout the Old Testament as phrases like “to remove”, “took off”, “put away”, “turned aside”, etc.... **In other words, Proverbs 22:6 is a promise that a properly trained offspring will never “remove”, “take off”, “put away”, or “turn aside” from their parents' training even to the very end of their life (“old”).** By the way, this can be said of all training both good and bad. **Whatever a parent has instilled, instructed, or influenced in their child's life stays with that soul until they die.** God's miraculous, changing grace makes the difference, but otherwise, your offspring is a by-product of who you are and what you do in their life.

So, “when he is old” means near the end of life, and “he will not depart” does not mean “to depart and then return again” but simply “he will not depart” “in the way he should go”.