

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

Deuteronomy 4:2 “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”

Deuteronomy 12:32 “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.”

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

It is easy to understand how important the addition or subtraction of one word or number is to a command or equation. If someone places a “Don't step on grass” sign in their yard but the word “don't” is missing, you believe that permission is given to step on the grass. Some troublemakers sometimes have changed or added words to signs like “No swimming allowed.” Take away the “no” and someone who hasn't seen the sign assumes it is okay to swim. However, that one missing word could have deadly consequences.

Our all-wise God knows this, and so He has stressed repeatedly in His Word not to add to or diminish or take away anything from His Word. And why does God command this? Because He knows sinful man all too well. God knows that His Word can be very difficult to accept for our rebellious, deceitful heart. The promise of Proverbs 22:6 is no different.

Repeatedly, believers have “diminished” Proverbs 22:6's impact by adding and taking away words. **We take away “he will not depart from it” and we add “he will return to it” to make the verse read, “when he is old, he will return to it”.** Even though that is the most common interpretation these days, that is a different verse altogether from Proverbs 22:6. **“He will return to it” is very different from “he will not depart from it”.**

Why do Christians do this? Well, some do it because they say that is the proper interpretation. **But if you have to add or subtract words to define God's Word, you are not interpreting God's Word correctly since God told you not to add or subtract from His Word!** Many others interpret Pro. 22:6 that way because of personal experience. Their children grew up and rejected their teachings on God, therefore, Proverbs 22:6 must not mean what it appears to mean. However, **personal experience is absolutely not the way to define God's Word.** Sadly, many interpret God's Word on important matters like divorce, TV usage, church attendance, etc... on this philosophy of personal opinion, feelings, and experience.

Some have fought those who properly interpret Prov. 22:6 with statements like, “Just wait 'till your kids leave the house!” Or if the kids have already left, “Well, you're just being proud and snobbish that all of your kids made it. It wasn't you, but grace!” I totally agree with the need for grace. Everything in our life requires God's grace. But many believers are missing the point. The Christian life is “by grace through faith”

(Eph. 2:8). Faith cometh from heeding God's Word (Rom. 10:17), and faith without works is dead (Jms. 2:20). This is about faith in “Thus saith the Lord” not yours or my personal experiences, opinions, philosophies, traditions, etc.... Otherwise, without faith no believer accesses God's grace (Rom. 5:2). **So, yes, when children leave the house and “keep the faith” it is by grace that was accessed by a “faith”ful life of obedient, trusting, resting faith!** If God promised, “when he is old, he will not depart” then that is exactly what God meant without adding or diminishing one word. **If your kids leave the house and God altogether, then something wasn't properly followed on the first part of the verse, “Train up a child in the way he should go.”** It is that simple. We must all be willing to admit that: yes we are all sinners, and, without God, we fail miserably at parenting. However, many are not willing to admit their failures to God, but rather, blame their preacher, their teachers, or that Prov. 22:6 doesn't really mean what it says.

Proverbs 30:6 “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”