

Communicating Your Convictions

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

Recently I had the opportunity to speak to a group of young parents eager to learn the 'secrets' for successfully rearing their children. I revisited this familiar passage of Scripture because it is one that is so often misunderstood and wrongly applied. Though there is a clear application for parents, there is much that we all can glean in communicating our convictions to those we desire to influence for Christ.

Often the common understanding of this verse is – 'Drill into to kid's head what you think they ought to know and after they have sown their wild oats and lived it up in the world, there will eventually come a day when they will come back to God.' That however is not what Proverbs 22:6 is teaching us! The emphasis in this verse is not on the 'message' but the 'manner' in which the message is relayed to another. There are plenty of passages that give us the 'what'...however the focus here is on the 'how'. How do we communicate our convictions to those entrusted to our care? How do we entrust the pearls we have been given with those God desires us to influence for eternity? Let's break this verse into bite-sized pieces and see.

"Train up a child..."

MAKE IT APPETIZING – The words 'train up' come from an ancient Palestinian custom in which midwives would rub a date or fig on the inside roof of the mouth when a child had difficulty in nursing. This was done in order to stimulate the child to suck. This practice coined a phrase which came to mean...'to create an appetite', hence to make it appetizing. Let's focus on living Christ in a way that draws the attention to the beauty and grace of our Savior. Let's model our message with exemplary lives that communicate hope, integrity, honesty, forgiveness, and love. Let's never forget that 'how' we live speaks so loudly, that people may not hear what we are saying. Our life in Christ is to be an appetizer, a preview to the – major attraction yet to come!

"...in the way he should go..."

MAKE IT APPROPRIATE – Literally this training that creates an appetite should be done...'according to his way'. The emphasis in this phrase is not on the direction or the goal, but the training of a child in his way of learning. Every person is different in the way that they learn. Some discover on their own, others like to hear, many like to see, and so it goes. We learn at different rates, in different ways, and at different times in our lives. Make sure that your training is appropriate to the unique needs of the person you are seeking to impact. This means we must be a good student of those you are training up.

"...and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

MAKE IT ADDICTIVE – Personally imparted truth becomes habit. As we make it appetizing and appropriate it becomes a part of them. Remember, I may misunderstand you and the high advice you give...but there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

We can't impart what we don't possess!
