

Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, Proverbs, Proverbs 22:6, Train Up a Child?

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Hildebrandt, Proverbs, Proverbs 22:6, Train Up a Child?, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This text is a lecture by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt interpreting Proverbs 22:6 ("Train up a child in the way he should go..."). Hildebrandt argues the proverb is not a promise guaranteeing positive outcomes but rather a proverb, a genre of literature offering observations rather than absolute truths. He examines the Hebrew words for "train" (hanak) and "child" (naar), suggesting a more nuanced interpretation than the common understanding. He proposes that "hanak" signifies initiating or dedicating, while "naar" refers to a late adolescent, not a young child. Finally, he offers a revised translation reflecting this interpretation and its implications for parental guidance.

2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Hildebrandt, Proverbs, Proverbs 22:6, Train Up a Child? – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms & Wisdom → Proverbs).



**Hildebrandt_Prov_2
2_6_Train.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Hildebrandt, Proverbs, Proverbs 22:6, Train Up a Child?

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided source, "Hildebrandt_EN_Prov22_6.pdf," focusing on Dr. Ted Hildebrandt's analysis of Proverbs 22:6:

Briefing Document: Dr. Ted Hildebrandt on Proverbs 22:6

Subject: A Re-evaluation of Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Introduction: Dr. Ted Hildebrandt presents a detailed study of Proverbs 22:6, challenging traditional interpretations and delving into the nuances of the original Hebrew. He questions common assumptions about child-rearing, the nature of proverbs, and the meaning of the key terms in the verse. His analysis moves away from a simple instruction manual for parents to a more complex understanding of initiation, status, and the transition to adulthood.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Proverbs as Wisdom Literature, Not Law:

- Hildebrandt emphasizes that Proverbs, as a form of wisdom literature, should not be interpreted as legalistic commands.
- He contrasts proverbs with law, history, prophecy, and apocalyptic literature, noting that each genre has a different function and authority.
- **Quote:** *"So, history doesn't mean law. In other words, we don't follow the history and say, well, yes, history is true. What he did happened. And that is true. However, that is not become a should or ought or a law for us."*
- Proverbs often describe "the way it is" rather than "the way it should be."
- **Quote:** *"Proverbs, some Proverbs tell not how it should or ought to be, but that's just the way it is."*
- Proverbs may also include "twisted proverbs," which take a common saying and present an alternative or contradictory perspective.
- **Quote:** *"Absence makes the heart grow fonder. Yes. But absence also makes the heart to wander."*

1. Challenging the Common Interpretation of Proverbs 22:6:

- Hildebrandt argues that the common interpretation that a good parent always produces a good child and vice versa is flawed and simplistic.
- **Quote:** *"A good kid always proves a good parent. Is that always right? And then what about a bad child? The bony finger comes out to accuse you of being a bad parent."*
- He cites biblical examples of good parents with bad children (God and Israel; Saul and Jonathan) and bad parents with good children.
- **Quote:** *"Children I have reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me."* (Isaiah 1:2, spoken by God).
- **Quote:** *"Saul was a real jerk for a father. Jonathan turns out like a gem. So, it's possible for a bad parent to produce a good kid."*
- He notes that a proverb is not a promise, and good parenting does not guarantee a specific outcome.
- **Quote:** *"So, a proverb is not a promise and you can be a good parent and a perfect parent and yet have rebellious children."*

1. Re-examining the Meaning of "Train Up" (Hanak):

- Hildebrandt critiques the common translation of "train up" (*hanak*) and offers an alternative interpretation based on its usage in the Old Testament.
- He questions the etymological link to an Arabic root related to "stimulating desire" with the palate.
- **Quote:** *"Etymology does not determine meaning. Context determines meaning."*
- He analyzes the four other occurrences of *hanak* in the Old Testament, finding they relate to the dedication or initial use of buildings (houses, the temple, altars).
- He concludes that *hanak* might be better translated as "dedicate," "initiate the use of," or "celebrate the first use of," focusing on the completion of a process and the transition to a new status.
- **Quote:** *"So, in conclusion, in short, the word Hanuk focuses not so much on the process of training is on the resultant responsibility and status of the one initiated."*

1. Re-evaluating "Child" (Na'ar):

- Hildebrandt demonstrates that the Hebrew word for "child" (*na'ar*) does not primarily refer to a young child.
- He explores its diverse usage throughout the Old Testament, where it is applied to people of various ages, from unborn infants to young men involved in adult activities.
- Examples include Joseph (age 17), David (fighting Goliath), Joshua (as Moses' aide), and spies sent to Jericho.
- *Na'ar* often denotes a young person with status, responsibility, and often serving in a personal attendant role to a person of status.
- He contrasts it with other Hebrew words for young children, such as *yeled* (common word for young child).
- He notes that *Na'ar* often occurs alongside terms like servant (*'ebed*) or elder (*zaqen*) indicating its connection to status and position within a social hierarchy.
- **Quote:** *"The Naar is a young person who's, just come into those ranks. He's able to fight, but he's not a seasoned warrior. So, status, not age per se, is usually the focus."*
- He also analyzes the term *na'arah*, its feminine form, which often refers to high-born females.

1. Contextualizing "His Way" (Darko):

- He discusses five different views of what "his way" means:
- **Moral View:** This view says there is one right way of life. Hildebrandt notes there is no "should" in the Hebrew.
- **Reversal View** (Clifford, Stewart, Aiken): Says the verse is a warning against overly permissive parenting. They see "his way" as the bad path a child will take if not disciplined.
- **Vocational View:** This says training should prepare a child vocationally.
- **Personal Aptitude View:** Training should be tailored to a child's unique interests.
- **Personal Demands View:** The "Stuart-Clifford" view of simply letting the child go his way.

- Hildebrandt proposes a *na'ar*-based interpretation. He argues that “his way” refers to the status and responsibilities associated with being a *na'ar*, a young person transitioning into adulthood.
- **Quote:** *"According to this, his way as a naar, the status he has as a naar, we said it was not age, but it was rather status and responsibility that the na'ar was a person of status."*
- He emphasizes the importance of understanding the role of a *na'ar* in the context of the proverb.

Conclusion and Modern Application:

- Hildebrandt concludes that Proverbs 22:6 is not primarily a verse about early childhood training, but rather about the transition into adulthood.
- He suggests the verse should be understood as celebrating and initiating a young person into their status and responsibilities as they move towards adulthood.
- **Quote:** *"Celebrate the starting out slash initiating of the young person on his way. And when he is old, he will not depart from it."*
- He sees the verse as being relevant to an age similar to bar mitzvah, a rite of passage marking a transition into manhood.
- He argues the verse is about giving young people respect and responsibilities commensurate with their new status.

Implications:

- This analysis challenges the traditional interpretation of Proverbs 22:6 and encourages a more nuanced understanding of the text.
- It emphasizes the importance of considering the historical and cultural context of the proverb.
- It provides a fresh perspective on child-rearing and the transition into adulthood, focusing more on the initiation of responsibility than on early training alone.
- It raises the issue that words carry a history of usage which must be understood to properly interpret scripture.

This briefing document provides a comprehensive overview of Dr. Hildebrandt's analysis. His work prompts a more thorough understanding of Proverbs 22:6 and underscores the challenges of interpreting ancient wisdom texts.

4. Study Guide: Hildebrandt, Proverbs, Proverbs 22:6, Train Up a Child?

Proverbs 22:6 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. How has Proverbs 22:6 traditionally been used, and what potential issues does Hildebrandt identify with this use?
2. According to Hildebrandt, what is the difference between historical events, law, and prophecy in the Bible and how should these different types of writing be interpreted?
3. What is the meaning of "twisted proverbs" and provide an example from the text?
4. What does the word *hanak* mean, and why does Hildebrandt challenge the common translation of "train up"?
5. What is the significance of the word *na'ar* in Proverbs 22:6, and how does it differ from common interpretations of "child"?
6. Give three examples of a *na'ar* or *na'arah* from the Bible and what do these examples reveal about their status?
7. How does Hildebrandt differentiate between the terms *na'ar* and *yeled*, and why is this distinction important for interpreting Proverbs 22:6?
8. Describe two of the five interpretations of "in the way he should go," and identify which of these interpretations Hildebrandt favors.
9. How does Hildebrandt use the concept of "status" to clarify his understanding of the terms in Proverbs 22:6?
10. Explain the significance of the bar mitzvah analogy and how it illuminates the modern application of Proverbs 22:6, according to Hildebrandt.

Quiz Answer Key

1. Proverbs 22:6 has been traditionally used to emphasize the importance of early childhood training, suggesting that if parents train their children well when they are young, they will not depart from it when they are old. Hildebrandt argues that

this interpretation leads to the problematic assumptions that a good child always proves a good parent, and a bad child is evidence of bad parenting.

2. Hildebrandt argues that while historical events are factual, they are not necessarily normative or prescriptive; likewise, laws given to Israel at a particular time do not necessarily apply today, and the actions of prophets are specific to their context rather than universal commands. He argues that each genre must be interpreted in its own unique context rather than as universally binding truth.
3. "Twisted proverbs" are proverbs that are deliberately altered or reinterpreted to present an alternative or even contradictory meaning, such as "absence makes the heart grow fonder" versus "absence makes the heart wander," and it points out the complexity of truth.
4. Hildebrandt argues that *hanak* does not primarily mean "to train up," but rather "to initiate" or "to dedicate", reflecting the ceremony of putting something into use, which is supported by other uses of the term. He suggests that the term emphasizes the resultant status, not the process.
5. *Na'ar* is not used to denote a young child, but a young person, often a late adolescent, with status and responsibility, usually a servant or attendant to someone important; it is a status rather than age-specific term. This changes the meaning of the verse from early childhood training to a rite of passage into adulthood.
6. Joseph, at age 17, is called a *na'ar*, yet manages a large household and is a member of Jacob's family. Rebekah is a *na'arah* in Genesis 24:16; and, as a high-born woman, she is a person of status chosen to marry Isaac. Joshua is called a *na'ar* while assisting Moses, demonstrating his status as an important assistant rather than a child.
7. Hildebrandt explains *yeled* is a common term for young children, while *na'ar* is specifically used for older adolescents and young adults who are often in a position of service or responsibility. This difference is significant because it indicates that Proverbs 22:6 is not about early childhood training, but about guiding young people as they enter adulthood.
8. Two interpretations of "in the way he should go" include the moral view (a right path to be followed) and the vocational view (training for a specific destiny or profession). Hildebrandt favors the *na'ar*-based view, which focuses on

understanding a young person's status and responsibility and celebrating the initial use of the young person in their status.

9. The concept of "status" helps clarify that *hanak* is not so much a process of training as it is a ceremonial initiation or dedication of a young person into a new role or status. *Na'ar* is also a status, not an age, emphasizing responsibility.
10. The analogy of a bar mitzvah helps to contextualize the verse within a rite of passage, such as that of welcoming a young boy into manhood, which illuminates Hildebrandt's belief that Proverbs 22:6 is less about early childhood training and more about recognizing the responsibilities and status of young adults.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze how Hildebrandt uses linguistic analysis of the Hebrew terms *hanak* and *na'ar* to reinterpret the meaning and application of Proverbs 22:6, and how his approach contrasts with traditional interpretations of the verse.
2. Discuss the significance of understanding genre in biblical interpretation based on Hildebrandt's critique of the traditional application of Proverbs 22:6. How does this understanding affect one's application of other Old Testament proverbs?
3. Compare and contrast the various interpretations of "in the way he should go," as presented by Hildebrandt, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each viewpoint, including his preferred *na'ar*-based view.
4. How does Hildebrandt's interpretation of *na'ar* as a figure of status, rather than a young child, affect your understanding of the role and responsibility of young people in both ancient Israelite society and today?
5. Based on Hildebrandt's analysis, discuss the implications of his reinterpretation of Proverbs 22:6 for contemporary parenting practices and societal views on the development of young adults.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Apocalyptic Literature:** A genre of writing that reveals hidden or future events, often using symbolic language and imagery.
- **Etymology:** The study of the origin of words and the way in which their meanings have changed throughout history.
- **Genre:** A category of artistic composition, as in music or literature, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter.
- **Hanak (חנך):** Hebrew verb traditionally translated as "train up," but Hildebrandt argues it means to "dedicate" or "initiate the first use of."
- **Kol amar Mar Yahweh (קול אמר מר יהוה):** Hebrew phrase meaning "Thus says the Lord," indicating a direct message from God.
- **Na'ar (נער):** Hebrew term traditionally translated as "child," but Hildebrandt argues it refers to a young person of status, often a late adolescent or young adult with specific responsibilities and status.
- **Na'arah (נערה):** Feminine form of *na'ar* that refers to a high-born female.
- **Retainer:** A servant or attendant trained in specific skills, often military, as seen in Genesis 14:14.
- **Wisdom Literature:** A genre of literature that focuses on practical advice for life and morality, often using proverbs, riddles, and parables.
- **Yeled (ילד):** Hebrew term for a young child, often used to distinguish young children from *na'ar*.

5. FAQs on Hildebrandt, Proverbs, Proverbs 22:6, Train Up a Child?, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Proverbs 22:6 - "Train up a child in the way he should go..."

- What is the common interpretation of Proverbs 22:6, and what are some of the issues with that interpretation?** The common interpretation of Proverbs 22:6 is that if parents train a child in the right way when they are young, they will continue to live that way when they are old. This has often been used as an encouragement for parents to raise their children well and as an accusation against parents when their children go astray. However, there are issues with this interpretation: Does a good kid always mean a good parent? Does a bad kid always mean a bad parent? This view assumes a direct causal relationship between early childhood training and adult behavior, which doesn't always hold true, as examples in the Bible and real life demonstrate. Furthermore, this interpretation can lead to guilt and judgment.
- How should the word "hanak" be translated in Proverbs 22:6, and why is this important?** The word "hanak" is typically translated as "train up." However, a closer look at its usage suggests a more accurate translation would be "initiate the use of," "dedicate," or "celebrate the first use of." This is because "hanak" appears in other contexts related to dedicating buildings like houses, temples, and altars. This translation emphasizes a transition and a celebration of a new status or responsibility. Instead of focusing on a long process of pedagogical training, it focuses on the marking of a change in status and responsibility. The implications are that it is less about the process of training and more about the recognition of a new phase of life.

- **Who is the "na'ar" (translated as "child") in Proverbs 22:6, and why is this important?** The term "na'ar" is often translated as "child" in English translations, but in Hebrew, it refers to a young person, often a late adolescent or young adult, who has entered a new phase of responsibility. The term "na'ar" is used in the Bible to describe individuals of varying ages from infants to young adults of 17 and 30 years old, including young men in military service or holding positions of responsibility as an attendant. It carries a sense of status rather than simply age. This is important because it reframes the meaning of Proverbs 22:6 from early childhood training to a rite of passage or a recognition of a young person moving into adulthood. This challenges the idea that the verse is primarily focused on early childhood rearing.
- **What are the different views on the phrase "in the way he should go," and what are the implications?** There are various views on the phrase "in the way he should go."
- The **moral view** suggests that it refers to a specific right path in life. It assumes there is one right way.
- A **reversed moral view** (Clifford, Stuart, and Aiken) argues it's a warning: If you let a child go their own way without discipline or limits, they'll develop negative behaviors they will not depart from in adulthood.
- The **vocational view** proposes that it refers to training someone in their calling or destiny.
- The **personal aptitude view** emphasizes tailoring training to a person's unique abilities and interests.
- A **na'ar based view** states that the "way" is based on the status a na'ar has, and what is required of them in that role. These different views highlight the ambiguity of the phrase and how it can be interpreted positively or negatively, depending on the overall approach. The absence of "should" in the original Hebrew is notable, suggesting the original intent was potentially less about a prescribed "right way" and more about acknowledging the path one is naturally taking.

- **How does the understanding of literary genres in the Bible affect how we read Proverbs 22:6?** Understanding the literary genre of Proverbs is critical. Proverbs are not laws or promises but rather are part of wisdom literature, which uses general observations about life rather than universal absolutes. This implies that Proverbs 22:6 is not a guarantee of how a child will turn out, but an observation about a general pattern and a word of advice. It should be viewed as something to reflect on, not as a hard-and-fast rule. Proverbs are not necessarily meant to be universally applicable.

- **What are some examples in the Bible of good parents having bad kids, and vice-versa?** The Bible provides examples that challenge the idea that good parenting guarantees good children and that bad parenting guarantees bad children. God, the perfect parent, had children who rebelled against Him. Saul was a bad father but his son, Jonathan, was a good man. These examples show that the relationship between parenting and a child's choices is not straightforward. Factors beyond parenting play a significant role in how a child will turn out.
- **How does this new understanding of Proverbs 22:6 apply to modern parenting?** The revised interpretation of Proverbs 22:6 emphasizes the importance of recognizing and celebrating the transition from youth to adulthood. Rather than seeing the verse as a promise for how children will turn out, it highlights the critical period of late adolescence when young people are ready to assume new responsibilities and establish their status. Modern parenting should include recognizing these transitions with proper respect and responsibility, which can be likened to a Bar Mitzvah. It emphasizes that parenting involves supporting young people in their journey into adulthood while recognizing that their personal choices and free will are an integral part of life.
- **What is the suggested interpretation of Proverbs 22:6 in light of this analysis?** Taking all of the points into consideration, Proverbs 22:6 can be interpreted as: "Celebrate the starting out/initiating of a young person on his way, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This version shifts the focus from the process of training to marking a transition into responsibility. It sees the "way" as a reference to the path a young person is already taking into adulthood, recognizing their status and responsibilities at that stage. It emphasizes the need to honor this transition and not focus solely on early childhood education.