

## The Turn Back Verse

*Proverbs 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. (NIV)*

*Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it. (NASU)*

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

*Proverbs 22:6 Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older, they will remain upon it. (NLT)*

I just read it again in another book—the idea that it will all turn out okay in the end. One way or another, your child will be brought back to the faith, even after a period of rebellion. There may be years of rejection and upheaval, but he will turn back.

Am I missing something here? Is that what this verse says? I don't claim to be a biblical scholar by any means, but that doesn't make sense to me. Where does the verse talk about turning back? Instead of talking about turning back it carries the idea of not departing from it in the first place.

Don't get me wrong, I think that could be a fine secondary application for the verse. If a parent has a child who is struggling greatly, I would certainly offer this verse as encouragement. However, it is not the primary application of the verse.

Why nit pick such a subtle difference? My concern is that if we get accustomed to this being the “turn back” verse, we will deemphasize the importance of “training a child in the way he should go,” and mistakenly hold back on necessary training through times of rebellion. After all, it will all turn out okay in the end, right?

Instead, I believe the proper focus should be on our training, not on the child's return. The verse is not addressing the parents of prodigals, but parents. As the parents of young children, we need to be careful not to overlook this encouraging verse and think it applies to someone else. This verse is ours, and offers great hope for our futures.

Imagine a driver's education teacher who takes great comfort in the fact that most of his students could recover from their wrecks after much physical therapy and rehabilitation. Such a warped view could make him prone to emphasize the importance of seatbelts and airbags because they save lives. It could also make him deemphasize the use of defensive driving, turn signal use, driving the speed limit and other techniques that could help prevent his students from getting into wrecks in the first place. Not all wrecks are avoidable, but many are. A good teacher would focus intensely on equipping his students to be good drivers, and not just hope that everything would turn out okay in the end.

As parents, we also need to focus on the training. It is very encouraging to think that it will all turn out okay in the end, but how much more so if it all turns out okay in the middle as well. Obviously there will be bumps in the road at times all the way through life, but I'd like them to at least stay on the road.