

Christian Urban Legends
“A Godly Home Guarantees Godly Kids ~ part 1”

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A godly home does not guarantee godly kids...but a godly home can lay the foundation for the grace of God and the Gospel of Christ that *alone* can produce godly kids.

Three G's of Godly Parenting –

I. Stop Looking for Some Kind of Parenting Guarantee

Where did we get this idea of a “money-back guarantee” that if we raise our kids in a godly home, they’ll follow hard after God?

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

That verse is almost always taught as a promise for parents who do right... and at the same time an indictment against parents whose children are not following the Lord. It’s unfortunate that most of our English translations make it sound like a “money-back guarantee” regarding parenting.

A stronger and more correct translation and interpretation of this verse would be:

“If you bring up a child *in his way* [i.e. the way he is bent (as a sinner)] when he is old he will not depart from it.”

In other words, this verse is a warning for parents more than it is a promise.

“In it’s proper context Proverbs 22:6 is not a promise so much as it is a warning to Christian parents. In the Hebrew text of Proverbs 22:6, the phrase ‘in the way he should go’ is entirely lacking. Rather, the Hebrew says, ‘Train up a child in his way and when he is old he will not depart from it.’... Allow a child to have self-expression, allow him to pick and to choose what he will and will not do, and as that habit is formed in his youth he will not change when he is older...If he does not learn discipline from you as a child he will never learn it as an adult... If you let your children run over you, if you withhold the rod, if you fail to discipline them, if you fail to diligently and meticulously instruct them in the little things as well as the big, if you let your children decide what they will and what they will not eat, what they will and will not wear, what they will and will not do... look into the future and you will see those same children unbridled, undisciplined, and unable to bring their bodies into submission to the commands of God and others. This verse is a stern warning.”

~ Bruce Ray, *Withhold Not Correction*, p. 33

This “Urban Legend” is especially devastating because it produces...

- Needless **guilt** in the parent who worked hard to raise their kids for God
- Foolish **pride** in the parent who is seeing good results
- and a **false sense of hope** for parents to cling to instead of looking to God’s grace and the Gospel

So what does the Bible actually teach about parenting?

A. Wandering & Rebellion Can Happen to the Best of Families

Isaiah 1:2-3 “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: ‘I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master’s crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.’”

B. Your Child is Responsible for Their Own Actions and Choices

And it's only the grace of God and the power of the Gospel that can rescue them for their own destructive, sinful choices. Oh, you can do it for them while they're children, but you can't once they turn into young adults.

You can't live their lives for them and you can't make them follow Christ! You can't take out a heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 18:20-21 "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die."

Your children are going to stand before God and be responsible for their own choices and actions.

"Don't play the shame game or the blame game. Let me encourage you not to take on more or less responsibility than is biblically required... For the longest time I had a running argument with myself. If God tells us how to raise our children, and they turn out bad, then isn't that my fault? This is what I call the shame game. Later came the blame game. I'd fall into the ditch on the other side of the road by saying, 'This is God's fault. If there is a god, He's cruel or weak.' I'd go back and forth between beating myself up for not being able to help my miserable and tortured daughter and being angry and frustrated with her uncontrollable behavior. I'd feel sorry for her; then I'd have a big pity party for myself. Doubts and fears overwhelmed me sometimes."

~ Elyse Fitzpatrick, "Dear Unbelieving Child, How I Long For Your Soul," *The Afternoon of Life, Finding Purpose and Joy in Midlife*

C. As Parents You Can Have Lots of Influence – But You Have Absolutely No Power to Change a Life!

We are Gospel-dependent, grace-dependent, Christ-dependent! We have to cry out to God to do what only He can do...and we don't like that. As parents, we want some guarantees. We want to sleep good at night, so we want someone to give us a system that we can follow that without fail will produce the kind of kids we want to have for the glory of God! But there's not one.

"You know, the Lord has to pour out just as much grace to save a child from a believing family as He does to save one from a more worldly environment! We parents need to embrace this humbling (yet liberating) truth: We are not in control of our children's destiny. We are powerless to create faith in our children's hearts. While we can encourage our children to hunger for Wisdom's Feast, we cannot make that choice for them. Only the sovereign Lord can change our children's hearts, and that's because, as dear as they are to us, our children are sinners by nature."

~ Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jim Newheiser, *When Good Kids Make Bad Choices*, P. 28

A great parenting verse that can help us keep our focus when we're facing the ongoing trial of a wandering or rebellious child is found in 2 Chronicles 20 where king Jehoshaphat has just received news that the Moabites and Ammonites have combined together to come against him with a huge army:

2 Chronicles 20:3 "And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord..."

2 Chronicles 20:12 "O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You."