

Sowing the Word: Evangelize, Awake, Equip
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by Jason Butte

Question: Does Proverbs 22:6 teach that if a child is properly trained they will ultimately return to God, though they may stray for a time? For example, after a period of "sowing their oats" during teenage and young adult rebellion years?

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

Answer: No, that Verse does not teach that at all. It teaches that they "will NOT depart" when they are grown. Many people use this Verse as a promise of hope after the fruit of unbiblical evangelism becomes apparent in their children. Proverbs 22:6 in no way teaches that people may depart from the Lord but then promise their later return. That is actually contrary to what the Verse says. Also, the Bible NOWHERE gives license for people to have a period of "sowing their oats". While it is true that most people do go off into the world for a period, it is also true that most people do not know the Lord.

You see, mankind is fallen and our depraved nature loves itself and it loves sin. When you take a person who does not have new life in Christ, then you remove restrictions and restraints from them (which happens for most people either in their teen years or when they leave home) then their TRUE nature begins to be manifest.

The person who has been "born again"; however has new life. If a person belongs to Christ they have been changed and have the indwelling Holy Spirit, new desires, a new nature, etc. They will NOT depart. They may stumble, they may fall, they may stray (they will certainly NOT be sinless) – however, they will be greatly grieved and soon corrected. The Scriptures are very clear and the Scriptures are true. We must accept them. A pattern of life in willful and desirous sin does not mesh with one who has been born again. It is not possible. In fact, a person who is born again will despise sin in their own life. That does not mean we don't sin – we do. However, the believer is like what Paul describes in Romans 7; they yearn for righteousness and obedience to God. When they stumble it breaks their heart – they do not desire to remain on that path at all. The victory comes when we yield to the Spirit of God (See Romans 8).