**Train Up Your Children**

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A popular child-rearing proverb teaches fathers: "Train up your children in the way they should go, and when they are old, they will not turn from it." This proverb, well-known in faith communities, provides a mixture of comfort and concern for dads.

First, in a complex and changing culture, it is comforting to have hope for a struggling child during times of rebellion or confusion. Conversely, dads who have not trained their child in the early years of life have anxiety and guilt over lost opportunities. In both cases, the faith of a father is put to the test.

Additional background of the above proverb's original meaning illuminates its use and application for today's fathers. The verbal imperative "train" has other usages in the Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament. It occurs in reference to dedicating a new house or Solomon's temple for sacred use.

The word "child" refers to a status rather than a chronological age. It's various translations include infant, young man, and a cadet who is preparing for military service.

The phrase "in the way he should go" is best understood in a broad, general sense. It means "in the right way," where character and perseverance are more important than a particular vocation or desire.

In summary, the proverb could be expressed in this paraphrase: fathers must dedicate their newborns, teenagers, and young adults to live responsibly, and when they mature they will not get off track or turn away from the right way of life.

**ACTION POINTS**

* Initiate a time of dedication for your child (or reaffirm a past dedication). Give him or her a blessing that identifies and affirms specific character qualities.
* Discuss with another father how your high commitment to fathering impacts your life decisions.
* Empathize with and reach out to another father or mother who is facing difficulties with his or her child.
* Have a friend or family member capture video of you and your child doing something together. Make sure some affirming words or gestures are included. Then watch the video with your child.