

**PROVERBS 22:6 A MODEL FOR BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION OF  
FAITH IN CHILDREN**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
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## DECLARATION

I Kalangasa Alex hereby declare that this is my own original work and has not been presented to any institution of higher learning for any award of Master Degree.

Signed:.....



Date:.....

30<sup>th</sup>/07/2025.

## APPROVAL

This research proposal under the topic “Proverbs 22:6 as a model for building a strong foundation of faith in children” has been submitted for examination with my approval as a University Supervisor.

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## DEDICATION

This research study is dedicated to all parents, guardians, educators and Christian faith leaders who diligently labor to instill godly values and a strong foundation of faith in the lives of children. Their tireless commitment to nurturing the spiritual lives of the next generation in the ways of the Lord serves as both an inspiration and essential for the continuity of authentic Christian discipleship.

I also dedicate this work to my family, particularly my wife Emily, whose support, encouragement, and prayers have been instrumental throughout this academic journey. Her steadfast belief in the value of Christian education has profoundly shaped my understanding of faith formation and the vital role it plays in shaping the character and destiny of children.

This work is also dedicated to all children, who represent the Church of today and tomorrow. May they be guided by wisdom, strengthened in truth, and rooted in faith that endures.

Above all, I offer this study in gratitude to God, the ultimate source of wisdom and the foundation upon which true faith is built.

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored *Proverbs 22:6* as a biblical model for building a strong and enduring foundation of faith in children. Using a descriptive and analytical qualitative research design based on library-based resources, the research investigated three core objectives: the biblical and theological perspectives on nurturing children's faith, the approaches employed by the church in fostering children's spiritual development, and the formulation of a model for faith formation grounded in *Proverbs 22:6*. Data collection methods include biblical and theological text interpretation, a review of scholarly literature on Christian education and child discipleship, and an examination of church practices such as catechesis, Sunday school, and mentorship programs.

The study found out that effective faith formation in children is multidimensional, involving structured doctrinal teaching, relational discipleship, and active family engagement. Catechetical instruction provides foundational knowledge, while Sunday school and mentorship programs support experiential and relational learning that enhances spiritual resilience. The research emphasizes the complementary role of the family and church in the faith formation process, highlighting the importance of intentional, consistent, and contextually relevant approaches.

Drawing on insights from theological scholarship and practical ministry models, the study proposes four models for building a solid foundation of faith in children; The Discipleship-at-home Model, The Church Partnership Model, The Faith-in-Action Model and The Personalized Path Model. These models align with the principle of *Proverbs 22:6* and present distinct yet complementary approaches to spiritual

education, ranging from the foundational role of the home in cultivating a child's faith to the broader involvement of the church and community.

This study concludes that an enduring faith in children can be cultivated through collaborative, relational, and theologically grounded efforts that integrate both traditional and innovative methods of Christian formation. This research contributes to the discourse on spiritual development in childhood and offers practical recommendations for churches, educators, and families committed to raising spiritually grounded children in a rapidly changing world.

# CHAPTER ONE

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.1.0 Introduction

The spiritual formation of children is a critical aspect of faith communities, with many traditions emphasizing the role of parents, caregivers, and religious educators in guiding children towards a lifelong relationship with God. Proverbs 22:6 states, *“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (King James Version [KJV]). This verse has long been interpreted as a foundational principle for raising children in faith emphasizing the importance of early spiritual instruction. It suggests that a child’s moral and spiritual direction is shaped significantly by the teachings and values instilled during their formative years. However, the application of this proverb raises several theological and practical questions. How should faith communities interpret and implement this wisdom in contemporary contexts? What specific methods contribute to building a strong foundation of faith that endures into adulthood? This study therefore explores Proverbs 22:6 as a model for fostering spiritual resilience in children analysing its theological interpretation and practical implications in faith formation.

This chapter covers the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions and the scope of the study; it will also include the significance and justification of the study plus Literature Review.

### **1.1.1 Background to the study**

The biblical mandate highlights the foundational role of early spiritual education in the development of a child's faith. "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6, KJV). This scripture emphasizes the importance of providing proper guidance to children in their early stages of development to help them grow into responsible adults. Effective child ministry is crucial in laying the groundwork for lifelong spiritual growth and commitment in children. Psychological studies have shown that early childhood is a fundamental period for cognitive and emotional development, and effective child ministry utilizes this developmental phase to introduce concepts of faith, love, and morality in children.

Effective child ministry is therefore essential in fostering a strong foundation of faith in children. This ministry involves intentional and structured religious programs that nurture children's spiritual development through various activities and teachings. Bunge, (2001, pp. 45-47) discusses how various Christian traditions view the spiritual formation of children, noting that it is a process that requires intentional teaching, modeling of faith, and involvement in religious practices. She emphasizes the role of parents and the faith community in creating an environment that nurtures a child's faith. By engaging children in meaningful religious experiences, churches and religious organizations can ensure that faith becomes an integral part of their lives.

Proverbs 22:6 emphasizes the importance of guiding children towards a righteous path from an early age. This guidance is not merely about moral behavior but includes instilling a deep, personal relationship with God. As children grow, the

teachings they receive from the beginning of their spiritual life, influences their decisions and actions (Johnson, 2020). The Bible provides numerous examples of the importance of early spiritual instruction, highlighting the role of parents and religious communities in this process (Deuteronomy 6:7).

David Brewster (2011) emphasizes in “Child, Church and Mission” that children are not only recipients of ministry but active participants in God’s mission. Brewster advocates for viewing children as integral members of the church community whose spiritual formation is crucial for the church’s future. Similarly, Bunge (2011, P.23) in *Biblical Understanding of Children and Childhood* asserts that the Bible views children as gifts from God, deserving of care and instruction. Bunge emphasizes that children have inherent value and potential, and their spiritual nurturing should be a priority for Christian communities. This therefore highlights the need for the church to have proper models for use in guiding children during in their early formative years as they grow up to become responsible Christian adults in the church and this is what this study seeks to address.

Scottie May et al. (2015) in “Children Matter: Celebrating Their Place in The Church, Family, and Community” argue that children are central to the life of the church and should be included in all aspects of church life. They highlight the importance of creating environments where children can experience God’s love and learn about their faith in meaningful ways. Las G. Newman, (2013 p.204), in his devotional “Jesus, Children and Mission,” emphasizes Jesus’ special concern for children and calls for the church to prioritize children’s ministry as a vital part of its mission. However, what these scholars, (Scottie May Las G.) try to argue here seem to be wanting in our church today where it appears as if there is need for the

church to have clear and well-structured programs and models for nurturing children's faith.

The long-term benefits of a strong foundation of faith established through effective child ministry are diverse. Children who grow up with a solid spiritual grounding are better equipped to face life's challenges with resilience and hope (Bartkowski, 2007). They are more likely to exhibit pro-social behaviors, such as empathy, compassion, and self-sacrifice (Benson, 1997). Additionally, a strong faith foundation contributes to overall well-being, providing a sense of purpose and community (Vander Weele, 2007).

Despite the recognized importance of child ministry, there are notable gaps in its implementation in the church. According to a report by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2021), only 45% of children regularly attend Sunday school or other religious education programs. Additionally, a survey conducted by Uganda National Council for Children (2019) revealed that many churches lack structured child ministry programs, and those that exist are often under-resourced and understaffed. This lack of consistent and effective child ministry highlights a critical area that needs addressing to ensure that children in the church develop a strong foundation of faith.

### **1.1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Despite the Biblical directive in Proverbs 22:6, many Christian parents and faith communities struggle to establish an effective approach for nurturing a lasting foundation of faith in children. There remains a gap in understanding its interpretation and practical application in contemporary contexts. While some view it as a divine promise of lifetime faithfulness, others interpret it as a general

principle rather than an absolute guarantee. Moreover, in today's rapidly changing cultural and religious society, many parents and religious educators struggle to apply this verse effectively in nurturing children's faith. This study seeks to address these issues by critically analysing Proverbs 22:6 as a model for faith formation, explore the practical strategies derived from this verse for contemporary Christian parenting and discipleship and provide a comprehensive framework for building a strong foundation of faith in children that aligns with biblical teachings and modern challenges.

### **1.1.3 Purpose of the study**

Recognizing the critical role that religious beliefs play in shaping individuals' lives; it is important to understand how effective child ministry programs contribute to building a lasting foundation of faith during early childhood. This study seeks to examine Proverbs 22:6 as a model for building a strong foundation of faith in children.

### **1.1.4 Research Objectives**

- To analyze the Biblical perspectives on building a strong foundation of faith in children.
- To examine the approaches employed by the church to foster an enduring foundation of faith in children.
- To develop models for building a strong foundation of faith in children basing on Proverbs 22:6

### **1.1.5 Research Questions**

1. How do Biblical teachings outline principles for establishing a resilient foundation of Faith in children?

2. What approaches do churches employ to foster an enduring foundation of faith in children?
3. Which models can be developed based on Proverbs 22:6 for establishing lifelong faith in children?

#### **1.1.6 Scope of the Study**

The study was primarily library-based research with a focus on proverbs 22:6 as a model for building a strong foundation of faith in children and was limited to secondary data sources. It did not include primary empirical research for example interviews or surveys.

This Library study analyzed Biblical perspectives on faith formation, focusing on Proverbs 22:6 as a key scripture; it also explored church-based approaches to fostering a lasting foundation of faith in children, examining historical and contemporary strategies such as Sunday school programs, Catechesis and Formal Christian Education, mentorship and discipleship approaches among others.

Additionally, drawing from scholarly works, including those of Dan Brewster and Marcia J. Bunge among others, the study provides a comprehensive framework for nurturing children's faith; four faith formation models based on proverbs 22:6 have been developed. These models integrate Biblical principles, church teachings, and best practices that can be applied by the church in nurturing an enduring foundation of faith in children.

#### **1.1.7 Time scope**

The study was limited to a period of six months from January 2025 to June 2025.

### **1.1.8 Justification**

Children are particularly receptive to religious teachings during their formative years. The church recognizes the importance of establishing a strong spiritual foundation in children as they grow. By understanding the right models and factors that contribute to an effective child ministry, the church can enhance its programs and support the spiritual development of young members of the congregation.

### **1.1.10 Significance of the study**

The findings of this study will help church leaders tailor child ministry programs to better address the needs of children. Additionally, the study provides valuable insights for other religious communities and organizations seeking to enhance the spiritual development of children through effective child ministry practices.

The findings from this study will also provide useful information to help the church to address child ministry gaps. By addressing these gaps, the church can work towards implementing targeted strategies and programs that will holistically nurture children's faith, ensuring their spiritual growth and a stronger future generation of believers.

The study may be a basis for further research in respect to the model that will be developed based on Proverbs 22:6 to building a strong foundation of faith in children. This will result in developing comprehensive strategies, providing targeted training programs, and embracing innovative approaches to enhance child ministry practices and create a nurturing environment that fosters the spiritual growth and development of children.

## **1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The spiritual formation of children is a crucial aspect of Christian theology and practice. Throughout history, churches have played a central role in nurturing faith in children, ensuring that they grow into committed believers. The responsibility of guiding children in their faith development is shared among parents, church, and the broader faith community. This literature review examines biblical perspectives on the importance of early spiritual formation in children. It also explores various approaches the church employs to foster an enduring foundation of faith in children and presents a model based on Proverbs 22:6 for building a strong foundation of faith in children. By reviewing theological insights, scriptural foundations, and practical applications, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the significance of faith development in childhood and its lifelong impact.

### **1.2.1 Biblical Perspectives on Building a Strong Foundation of Faith in Children**

The Bible provides numerous references to the importance of establishing a strong foundation of faith in children. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 emphasize the continuous teaching of God's commands to children, reinforcing the necessity of faith-based upbringing (Wright, 2006, p.102). This passage instructs parents to talk about God's commandments daily, incorporating them into everyday life. By doing so, faith becomes an integral part of a child's worldview rather than a separate aspect of life practiced only in religious settings (May et al., 2005, p. 83).

Proverbs 22:6, a widely cited verse, instructs believers to "Train up a child in the way he should go," highlighting the long-term impact of early spiritual education (Longman, 2006, p. 94). This verse implies that children who receive consistent

and intentional training are more likely to retain their spiritual convictions into adulthood. Research suggests that Proverbs 22:6 highlights the importance of early spiritual education and parental involvement in faith formation (Anthony, 2006 P. 134). Jesus' attitude towards children, as seen in Mathew 19:4, demonstrates their significance in God's kingdom and supports the notion that children should be active participants in faith communities (Bunge, 2001, p. 63).

The parables of Jesus also provide significant insight into faith formation. In Mathew 7:24-27, Jesus compares a wise builder, who constructs his house on a rock, to those who establish their faith on a firm foundation. This analogy highlights the importance of early and consistent faith education, ensuring that children are well-equipped to navigate spiritual challenges (O'Brien, 1999, p.181). By instilling Christian principles from an early age, children develop resilience and a steadfast commitment to their beliefs, even in the face of adversity.

### **1.2.2 Approaches employed by the church to foster an enduring foundation of faith in children**

The role of the church in nurturing faith among children has been widely studied. Churches employ various methods to instill Christian values and teachings in children, including Sunday school programs, mentorship, youth ministry, Bible study groups, and participation in Liturgical activities (Bunge, 2001, P.45). Sunday school programs serve as one of the most common ways to introduce children to biblical teachings, with structured lessons that cover foundational Christian doctrines. These programs often incorporate age-appropriate materials, interactive storytelling and hands-on activities to engage children in their spiritual journey (Brewster, 2011, p.68).

Beyond structured lessons, intergenerational faith transmission plays a key role in ensuring the longevity of Christian beliefs in children (Stonehouse and May, 2010, p.34). when children engage with older believers, such as parents, grandparents, and mentors, they observe faith in action and gain a deeper understanding of Christian values (May et al., 2005, p.79). the participation of older believers in mentoring programs fosters an environment where children learn from experienced Christians, hence enhancing their spiritual development. Additionally, Christian camps, retreats, and faith based extra-curricular activities provide avenues for children to engage with their faith outside the traditional church setting, which further reinforces their spiritual foundation thorough peer fellowship and experiential learning (Anthony, 2010, p.134).

Children's involvement in corporate worship and liturgical participation is another approach used by churches to nurture faith. Allowing children to take part in worship services whether thorough singing in choirs, reading scriptures, or assisting in church activities fosters a sense of belonging within the faith community (Bunge, 2001, p.58). Research indicates that when children actively participate in worship and prayer, they are more likely to develop a lasting faith identity (Anthony, 2010, p.112). Additionally, faith-based service projects, mission trips, and community outreach programs provide practical applications of biblical teachings, helping children internalize Christian principles through real-world experiences (Longman, 2006, p.102)

Churches also implement discipleship programs that focus on sustained faith development over time. These discipleship programs often include small group discussions, one-on-one mentoring relationships, and structured Catechism lessons

that reinforce theological understanding (Barna, 2003, p.72). Discipleship models emphasize the importance of cultivating a personal relationship with God while equipping children with the tools to defend their faith. Research shows that children who are involved in consistent discipleship training are more likely to remain engaged with their faith throughout adolescence and adulthood (Stonehouse and May, 2010, p.57).

A crucial aspect of faith formation within the church involves sacramental participation. In many Christian traditions, Sacraments such as Baptism and Holy Communion mark significant milestones in the child's faith journey. Baptism, often conducted in infancy or early childhood, symbolizes initiation into the Christian faith and commitment to spiritual upbringing (Wright, 2006, p.127). Participation in Holy Communion from a young age fosters an understanding of Christ's sacrifice and reinforces a child's connection to the broader faith community. Research indicates that children who regularly partake in Sacraments develop a deeper appreciation for spiritual significance of their faith (May et al., 2005, p 87).

Churches also recognize the importance of addressing contemporary challenges in faith formation, including cultural shifts, technological advancements, and competing worldviews. Modern churches utilize digital resources, such as faith-based mobile applications, virtual Bible studies, and interactive media, to engage children in biblical learning (Anthony, 2010, P. 152). Digital discipleship allows children to access faith-based content in a format that resonates with their technological upbringing while reinforcing traditional Christian teachings. Studies suggest that integrating digital faith resources with in-person discipleship

strengthens the impact of spiritual formation efforts (Stonehouse and May, 2010, p. 66).

### **1.2.3 Developing a Model for Building a Strong Foundation of Faith in Children Based on Proverbs 22:6**

Developing a model for faith formation based on Proverbs 22:6 requires an interactive approach involving family, church and community participation. Research suggests that faith formation is most effective when it occurs within a supportive environment that includes parental guidance, church engagement, and personal spiritual practices (Anthony, 2010, P. 112). Barna (2013, p. 37), argues that parents play the most critical role in faith development, stating that a child's spiritual foundation is largely established by the age of nine.

In addition to traditional models of faith education, experiential learning plays a significant role in solidifying a child's spiritual foundation. Service-based learning, where children actively engage in community outreach, mission work, and acts of kindness, provides tangible demonstrations of Christian teachings (Longman, 2006, p.115). By applying Biblical principles in real-world contexts, children develop an embodied faith that extends beyond theoretical knowledge (Stonehouse and May, 2010, p. 72)

Building upon the biblical and theological insights, as well as the various ecclesial approaches to faith formation discussed in the preceding literature review, this study now turns to the methodological framework that supported the research. The following section outlines the qualitative, library-based methodology employed to examine Proverbs 22:6 as a model for building a strong foundation of faith in children. This approach facilitated a critical engagement with existing

theological literature and secondary sources, allowing for a systematic and contextually grounded exploration of faith development. Through this method, the study sought to synthesize biblical principles and practical applications to contribute meaningfully to contemporary Christian education and child discipleship.

### **1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This library study employed a qualitative research approach, utilizing a systematic review of existing literature, theological texts, and scholarly sources to explore the church's role in fostering a strong foundation of faith in children. The methodology was structured as follows.

#### **1.3.1 Research Design**

The study adopted a descriptive and analytical qualitative research design, which relied on library-based research. Theological literature, Biblical texts, and scholarly discussions on children's faith formation were systematically reviewed to develop a comprehensive understanding of the Topic.

#### **1.3.2 Data Collection Methods**

Since this was a library-based study, data was collected through the following means:

##### **a) Biblical and Theological Text Analysis**

- Examination of key scriptural passages related to faith formation in children with an emphasis on Proverbs 22:6
- Analysis of Biblical narratives and teachings on raising children in faith with a major focus on Proverbs 22:6.

- Use of Biblical commentaries and theological interpretations to gain a deeper understanding of scriptural principles.

#### **b) Review of Scholarly Literature**

- Collection and review of books, Journal articles, and theological writings on Christian education, child discipleship and faith formation.
- Engagement with works by scholars such as Dan Brewster and Marcia J. Bunge, among others to explore various perspectives on nurturing children's faith.
- Analysis of historical and contemporary church-based strategies for fostering an enduring faith foundation in children.

#### **c) Church Practices and Doctrinal Studies**

- Examination of different church approaches to children's spiritual formation including Catechesis, Sunday school, mentorship and discipleship programs.
- Review doctrinal statements and church policies used to foster faith formation.

### **1.3.3 Data Analysis Methods**

The data was analyzed through a thematic analysis approach, focusing on:

- **Biblical Themes-** Identifying recurring biblical principles related to children's faith formation.
- **Theological Perspectives -** Examining how different theological traditions interpret and apply biblical teachings of Proverbs 22:6 on raising children in faith.

- Church Based Approaches - Categorizing and evaluating faith formation strategies employed by churches across different traditions.
- Comparative Analysis - Comparing historical and contemporary methods to assess their effectiveness and relevance.

#### **1.3.4 Model Development Process**

Based on the findings from Biblical analysis, theological literature, and church practices, the study:

- Synthesized key principles from Proverbs 22:6 to establish a biblical framework.
- Identified best practices from historical and contemporary faith formation strategies.
- Developed four structured models for building a strong foundation of faith in children, incorporating scriptural principles and practical applications.

#### **1.3.5 Ethical Considerations**

Since this study relied on published literature and theological texts, ethical concerns related to plagiarism and intellectual property have been addressed by proper citation and adherence to academic integrity standards.

#### **1.3.6 Limitations**

The study was limited to secondary sources and did not include empirical research, such as interviews or surveys. Its focus remained on Biblical, Theological and church-based perspectives on children's faith formation.

## **1.4 Conclusion**

In summary, Chapter One has established the foundational framework for this study by articulating the significance of Proverbs 22:6 in the context of children's spiritual formation. It has outlined the background, problem statement, purpose, objectives, research questions, scope, and significance of the study, while also reviewing key literature that emphasizes the biblical, theological, and practical importance of nurturing faith in children. The chapter has highlighted the critical role of early spiritual guidance and the collaborative responsibility of parents, the church, and the faith community in shaping lifelong faith. Furthermore, the adopted qualitative, library-based methodology provides a structured and systematic approach to analyzing Proverbs 22:6 and its application in contemporary Christian education. This chapter thus serves as a vital foundation for the subsequent exploration and development of practical, biblically grounded models for building a resilient and enduring faith in children.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR CHILD TRAINING AND FAITH FORMATION BASING ON PROVERBS 22:6

#### 2.0 Introduction

In the biblical tradition, a child is best understood as a divinely created, image-bearing individual entrusted to the care of the community and family for intentional instruction, nurture, and spiritual formation. This is rooted in the theological assertion that all humans are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), children therefore possess inherent dignity, worth, and the capacity for relationship with God from the earliest stages of life.

Scripture consistently portrays children as gifts from God as seen in Psalm 127:3, emphasizing both their value and the responsibility of adults to guide them with wisdom and care. As recipients of instruction, children are to be trained “in the way they should go” (Proverbs 22:6, NIV), suggesting that early moral and spiritual education plays a formative role in shaping lifelong character and faith. This notion is further reinforced in Deuteronomy 6:6-7, where parents are commanded to teach God’s commandments diligently to their children, integrating faith into daily life.

Furthermore, Jesus’ teachings elevate the theological significance of children by affirming their spiritual capacity and status in the kingdom of God. In Matthew 18:3, Jesus states, “Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven,” highlighting their humility, receptivity, and example to the adult believer.

Thus, a biblical meaning of a child incorporates ontological, relational, and spiritual dimensions. A child is not merely an immature being in need of discipline but a valued member of the faith community, endowed with potential, deserving of nurture, and capable of genuine faith. This description calls for a response of responsible stewardship, recognizing the divine image and calling present within every child.

Proverbs 22:6 which states, ***“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it”*** (King James Version (NIV) has long been a foundational verse in Christian teachings on child-rearing, particularly within the context of faith formation. This verse is frequently cited as a guiding principle for parenting, emphasizing the importance of early spiritual instruction and the lifelong impact of intentional training.

The Biblical foundations for child training and faith formation are deeply rooted in both the Old and New Testament teachings. Scripture consistently affirms the responsibility of parents, caregivers and faith communities to nurture children in accordance with God’s commandments (Deuteronomy 6:6-7, Ephesians 6:4). Within the theological framework, Proverbs 22:6 emerges as a central text, offering a model for understanding the formative impact of intentional spiritual instruction, moral guidance, and the embodiment of faith in everyday life. This verse highlights the role of holistic, values-based upbringing in shaping a child’s character and fostering enduring commitment to the Christian faith.

This chapter explores the biblical principles underlying child training and faith formation, with a focus on proverbs 22:6. It examines the significance of this verse within the broader biblical narrative focusing on its implications for Christian

parenting and discipleship while looking at how the teachings of this verse can be practically applied in fostering a strong spiritual foundation in children. For clarity and in-depth understanding, Proverbs 22:6 is examined through its three distinct clauses; “Train up a child,” “in the way he should go,” and “when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

## 2.1 “Train up a Child”, the Role of Parents in Training Children

The Hebrew word translated as “*train*” in Proverbs 22:6 is derived from the root word “*chanak*”, which conveys a sense of dedication, initiation and the establishment of a foundation. According to The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, the word “*Chanak*” implies more than a mere beginning; it suggests the deliberate setting of a child on a particular moral and spiritual path (Longman, 2009, p. 488). This term denotes a holistic approach nurturing a child’s character and faith encompassing not only foundational teaching but also sustained moral and spiritual formation.

In this context, the concept of “*training*” involves a process of instruction and guidance that extends beyond the simple transmission of knowledge. As noted by Kidner (2008, p. 148), it represents “a shaping of life through direction and discipline”, aiming to mold the child’s actions, beliefs and character in alignment with godly principles. Thus, the parental role extends beyond instructing children in spiritual matters; it includes cultivating an environment that supports comprehensive growth emotionally, morally and spiritually in accordance with God’s ways.

Additionally, “*Training*” as described in Proverbs 22:6 is portrayed as a lifelong process, involving both direct teaching and modelling of godly behaviors. Waltke

(2005, p. 204) emphasizes that parents are called to “actively embody wisdom” through consistent engagement in the child’s spiritual life. This process involves not only structured religious instruction but also informal conversations and the lived expressions of faith within the daily routines of family life. It calls for parents to actively engage in the spiritual lives of their children, demonstrating faith through actions, words and the example set within the home. The emphasis is on the consistency, as training a child requires ongoing input and presence from parents whether through formal education, informal conversations or simply living out one’s faith day by day.

Theologically, proverbs 22:6 is consistent with the broader biblical teaching on the responsibility of parents to guide their children in the ways of God. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 explicitly instructs parents to teach God’s commandments diligently to their children and speak of them in all contexts, whether sitting at home, walking along the road, lying down or rising up. This comprehensive integration of faith into daily routines reinforces the idea that parental training should be consistent and all-encompassing. Biblical commentators such as Merrill (2008, p. 101) emphasize that faith formation is not a one-time task, but rather a continuous, active process that must permeate all aspects of family life. Parents are expected to engage in frequent teaching moments that are seamlessly integrated into routine activities, demonstrating how faith can shape their daily actions and decisions.

The Pulpit Commentary further notes that “*train*” in proverbs 22:6 includes the notion of “catechizing” or repeated moral and spiritual instruction aimed at embedding divine truth in the heart of the child (Spence & Exell, 1950, p. 456). This approach views training not only as shaping behaviour but forming the heart

and mind in alignment with biblical values. Repetition, consistency and engagement are therefore key components in the training process.

Importantly, the long-term nature of training implies patience, and perseverance. Children may not always respond immediately or consistently to guidance but the promise of Proverbs 22:6 is rooted in the idea of eventual maturity and return. Kidner (2008, p. 149) reminds readers that the proverb is a general truth, not a rigid formula, yet it highlights the enduring influence of early spiritual formation. The seed planted through years of faithful parenting may not bear fruit immediately but it is likely to produce lasting results.

Parental training therefore is as much about sowing seeds as it is about harvesting outcomes. It demands faith, commitment and a long-term vision. Parents must trust that their labor, grounded in God's wisdom and guidance will yield a harvest in due time. This echoes the biblical principle found in Galatians 6:9, which states that "let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (NIV).

In summary, the phrase "Train up a child" in Proverbs 22:6 encapsulates a robust vision for parenting grounded in biblical wisdom. The Hebrew term "*chanak*" reveals a multidimensional understanding of training as initiation, dedication and holistic formation. Parents are called to be more than instructors; they are to be examples, mentors and shepherds guiding their children through consistent teaching, loving correction and the modeling of a godly life. As Biblical scholars and commentators affirm, this process is deeply relational, long-term and rooted in a commitment to nurture children in the ways of the Lord. Ultimately, it is

through faithful, loving and consistent training that children are equipped to remain steadfast in their faith even into adulthood.

## 2.2 “In the Way he Should go”, the Individual Approach to Faith Formation

The phrase “*in the way he should go*” from Proverbs 22:6 is a foundational component of biblical wisdom literature; it carries significant weight, suggesting that each child has unique path or temperament that requires tailored instruction. While the opening clause, “train up a child” emphasizes parental responsibility in laying a moral and spiritual foundation, the latter phrase “in a way he should go” introduces an individualistic dimension of tailoring instruction to the unique nature and disposition of each child. This phrase has been widely interpreted by biblical scholars and commentators as advocating for an individualized, discerning approach to faith formation that accounts for each child’s personality, strengths and divine purpose.

According to Longman (2006, p. 403), the Hebrew expression translated as “the way he should go” is often rendered as “according to his way”, “*al-pi darko*”. Longman argues that this phrase can be understood to carry two primary layers of meaning; on one hand, it refers to the path of righteousness, wisdom and alignment with God’s law, as taught throughout proverbs; on the other hand, it has been interpreted as a reference to the unique characteristics, temperament and calling of each child. Thus, the verse encourages parents not only to instruct in general moral principles but to adapt their guidance to suit the child’s individuality. This is also highlighted by Clarke (2004, p. 328) who emphasizes that parental instruction should consider the child’s individuality in order to nurture them in a manner that aligns with their God-given traits and purposes.

Theologically, this phrase emphasizes that the process of training a child should take into account the child's individual personality, strengths, and spiritual needs. As Longman (2006, p. 403) notes, Proverbs, as a part of wisdom literature, calls for an individualized approach to parenting, recognizing that each child is distinct and therefore requires a personal, context-sensitive approach to spiritual formation. He notes that wisdom is fundamentally relational and situational, requiring discernment and attentiveness to the different aspects of each life context. Longman further elaborates that when Proverbs 22:6 speaks of "*the way he should go*," it does not merely refer to a generic moral path but rather implies that parents must seek to understand their child's distinct personality and direct them accordingly.

Bruce K. Waltke (2004), in his comprehensive commentary on Proverbs, interprets "*the way*" as being intimately connected to the God-given nature and potential of the child. He states, "The child's way is not a neutral path but is meant to be shaped according to God's revealed will and in light of the child's bent or natural disposition" (Waltke, 2004, p. 204). This understanding highlights the importance of recognizing a child's inherent strengths, weaknesses and inclinations in order to provide instruction that relates with a personal level.

This perspective shifts the understanding of parenting from a uniform, rigid model to one that seeks to discern and nurture the unique attributes of each child. By focusing on the child's particular needs and abilities, parents can more effectively guide them towards a flourishing spiritual life that aligns with their personal identity.

Tokunboh Adeyemo (2006), in the Africa Bible Commentary, reinforces this interpretation; He argues that the phrase “the way he should go” has been interpreted by some scholars as reference to a child’s unique character and potential. Adeyemo emphasises the need for respecting individuality in training, quoting Kidner to stress that parents should guide children in accordance with their nature but not in indulgence of their self-will (Adeyemo, 2006, p. 777). This distinction is critical; while honoring individuality; biblical parenting also involves shaping character according to divine standards of righteousness.

Derek Kidner (2008) also draws attention to the balance between individuality and moral formation. He acknowledges the ambiguity of the phrase but leans towards an interpretation that recognizes the distinctiveness of each child. Kidner explains that “the way” likely refers to a combination of moral instruction and natural inclinations, arguing that successful training must be realistic and tailored to fit the child’s character while also shaping it through wisdom and discipline (Kidner, 2008, p. 148).

From this perspective, “in the way he should go” is not an endorsement of letting children find their own paths in a relativistic sense. Rather, it advocates for an intentional, informed and empathetic approach that seeks to direct a child towards righteousness in a way that aligns with their God-given traits. Parental discernment, then is central; parents must observe, listen and engage deeply with their children to understand how best to guide them in a way that is both effective and faithful to Scripture.

Albert Barnes (2005) also supports the individualized approach suggesting that “in the way he should go” implies guidance that is consistent with a child’s particular

disposition. He cautions against rigid, one-size-fits-all methods of instruction and encourages parents to understand the tendencies of their children in order to correct and guide them effectively (Barnes, 2005, p. 621). The Pulpit Commentary further explains that “the way he should go” can be viewed as the “proper path” or appropriate course of life” that aligns with a child’s nature and spiritual potential. Spence and Exell (1950, p. 457) notes that this reading requires parents to exercise both wisdom and spiritual sensitivity in identifying and nurturing the child’s calling and responsibilities under God.

Additionally, Adam Clarke (2004) explores the grammatical structure of the Hebrew phrase and asserts that “the way he should go” could be better rendered as “according to the mouth of his way,” an idiom denoting individuality. Clarke argues that parents should “begin early to train the child in reference to the path in life which Providence intends him to follow” (Clarke, 2004, p. 328). This view frames parenting as a cooperative endeavor with God, in which parents discern divine purpose and guide accordingly.

This understanding is also deeply theological as it reflects the biblical view that God has created each person with a unique purpose and design. Psalm 139:13-16 affirms the intentional formation of every individual in the womb suggesting that God’s knowledge of a person precedes birth. Thus, parental training is in a sense participation in God’s unfolding plan for each child. The phrase “in the way he should go” serves as a reminder that parents are stewards of their children’s lives called to nurture their development in harmony with divine intention.

Practically, this means that effective parenting requires attentiveness, prayer and flexibility. A method that works for one child may not be suitable for another. Some

children respond best to structured instruction, while others thrive in relational and experiential learning environments. Some may demonstrate early spiritual sensitivity while others may require more time and patience. The individual approach recognizes and adapts to these differences aiming not to mold children into identical images but to guide them into becoming who God created them to be.

Furthermore, this approach is consistent with the broader biblical ethos of shepherding and discipleship. Jesus, in His early ministry tailored His teachings to the needs of individuals. He did not offer a uniform message but adapted His words and methods to the hearts of those He encountered. Similarly, Christian parenting when informed by Proverbs 22:6 should seek to understand and respond to each child with grace, wisdom and intentionality.

The enduring promise of Proverbs 22:6, “and when he is old, he will not depart from it” reinforces the long-term impact of formative, individualized training. This proverb offers encouragement to parents; when they invest the time and effort to guide each child in a way that aligns with both divine truth and personal design, the results will manifest over a lifetime. While the proverb is a general principle rather than a guaranteed outcome, it highlights the powerful influence of early spiritual formation.

In summary, the phrase “in the way he should go” in Proverbs 22:6 encapsulates a profound vision of parenting that honors the individuality of each child while guiding them towards God’s wisdom. Biblical commentators across centuries have highlighted the necessity of discerning each child’s path and nurturing it with care, discipline and faith. Parents are called not only to teach but to understand, not

only to direct but to discern. This personalized; Spirit-led approach to parenting forms the foundation for enduring faith and character development in children.

### **2.3 “And when he is Old, he will not depart from it”: The Long-Term Impact of Early Training**

The third clause of Proverbs 22, “*and when he is old, he will not depart from it,*” embodies a deeply influential theological and practical perspective on the enduring effects of early childhood spiritual formation. While the first part of the verse focuses on the act of training a child, this later clause addresses the outcome or fruit of that effort. It suggests that the formative experiences and values instilled in a child’s early years have a lasting influence that extends into adulthood. While this is not a promise of an inevitable outcome, it speaks to the likelihood that the foundational teachings instilled in the early years of a child’s life will have a lasting impact.

Proverbs 22:6 is written in the style of a proverb; a concise statement expressing a general truth rather than a guaranteed result. The clause “*and when he is old, he will not depart from it*” emphasizes the likelihood that a child trained in righteousness and wisdom will maintain those values into later life. Waltke (2004, p. 204), emphasizes that proverbs should be interpreted within the framework of wisdom literature which deals with probabilities based on experience rather than prophetic certainties. The purpose of such sayings is to offer guidance grounded in accumulated insights about human behavior and divine principle.

Waltke (2004, p.206), asserts that the Hebrew construction of this phrase also contributes to this understanding; the term translated “*he will not depart*” (lo’-yasur) conveys a strong denial but does not imply an unbreakable certainty. It

expresses a common outcome rather than an absolute rule. Waltke further notes that while the language is assertive, it should not be mistaken for a promise in the prophetic sense but rather as a general observation of cause and effect in moral and spiritual formation (Waltke, 2004, p. 206).

According to Longman (2006, p.412), the phrase “*when he is old*” highlights the long-term scope of parental influence, suggesting that the teachings imparted during childhood possess enduring significance. Longman explains that the Hebrew word for “old” (*zaqen*) typically refers to advanced age, implying that the verse envisions a time far removed from childhood or adolescence. The training given in the early stages of life has a kind of spiritual momentum; it sets the trajectory upon which a life may continue even into old age. Longman further emphasizes that the wisdom tradition often contrasts paths; righteousness versus wickedness, wisdom versus folly. Children who are placed on the path of righteousness are statistically more likely to continue along it.

The practical implications of this are profound. Parents and educators are encouraged not to underestimate the impact of their early spiritual instruction and modeling. While it is acknowledged that children may stray, the principle suggests that a well-rooted foundation in godly values increases the likelihood of long-term adherence. Merrill (2008, p. 96) points out that the statement should not be misinterpreted as a divine promise that guarantees unerring righteousness, but rather as a recognition of the powerful role early formation plays in shaping long-term behavior and belief.

This interpretation is also echoed by the Pulpit Commentary, which states that this proverb “rests on the moral certainty that early training secures lifelong habits.”

The commentary explains that while deviations may occur, the power of habit and the internalization of early teachings often draw individuals back to the foundational truths they were taught in their youth (Spence & Exell, 1950, p. 457). The authors acknowledge that exceptions exist but maintain that the principle holds the vast majority cases.

Furthermore, Clarke (2004, p. 331) argues that although life circumstances may lead individuals away from the path of righteousness, the divine truths instilled during formative years act like a compass that eventually redirects them. He emphasizes that the proverb should be read in light of God's grace and providence, which can use the early teachings of parents as tools for lifelong spiritual navigation. This adds a hopeful dimension to the proverb, it affirms the potential for return, reconciliation and restoration even after deviations.

In modern applications, this part of Proverbs 22:6 supports the view that spiritual formation is a long-term investment rather than a one-time endeavor. As Bunge (2001, p. 45) affirms, consistent teaching and authentic modeling of faith by parents shape not only the cognitive understanding of children but also their spiritual imagination and identity. Bunge emphasizes the relational nature of spiritual formation, where trust and example are key to transmitting enduring values.

The enduring nature of early faith formation also aligns with physiological and developmental theories that affirm the significance of early childhood experiences. Though Proverbs is a theological literature, it resonates with modern understandings of behavioral and moral development. Children who are nurtured in environments characterized by spiritual consistency, moral clarity and emotional

security are statistically more likely to retain those values into adulthood. This further corroborates the proverb's insight from a contemporary perspective.

Kidner (2008, p. 149) highlights the Proverb's realism; it does not guarantee perfection, nor does it ignore human freedom and the possibility of rebellion. Yet it affirms a truth grounded in observation, that early direction tends to be enduring direction. This implies that the strength of early impressions both positive and negative cannot be underestimated, which highlights the role that early childhood environments play in establishing moral and spiritual frameworks.

It is also important to distinguish between rigid determination and biblical wisdom. The proverb does not refute the complexities of human choice or the influence of external factors such as peer pressure, cultural shifts or personal crises. Instead, it offers hope rooted in the formative power of early spiritual training. As Merrill (2008, p. 97) notes, even in cases where a child wanders from the faith, the teachings planted during youth may act as seeds that germinate later in life, often in times of hardship or reflection.

Additionally, this clause can serve as a source of encouragement for parents and caregivers. While the outcomes of parenting are not entirely within one's control, Proverbs 22:6 affirms that the consistent effort to guide children in righteousness is not in vain. The cumulative effect of years of teaching, example, correction and love lays a strong spiritual foundation. As Gaebelein (1990, p.1035) explains, the verse is best understood as part of the larger biblical narrative that values discipleship within the family where the household serves as the primary setting for faith formation.

Theologically, the long-term nature of spiritual formation reflects God's own covenantal approach to humanity. Just as God remains faithful through generations, so too should parents view their role as part of a long arc of spiritual influence. Their faithfulness in the early stages of a child's life reflects the faithfulness of God, who patiently nurtures and guides His people. Parental training then is not just a task but a participation in God's redemptive work in the world.

In summary, the phrase "and when he is old, he will not depart from it" in Proverbs 22:6 should be understood as a powerful expression of the enduring impact of early spiritual training. While not a guarantee, it affirms the likelihood that foundational teachings imparted during childhood will influence a person's direction throughout life. Grounded in the wisdom tradition, the proverb encourages a long-term view of parenting; one that values consistency, relational investment and hope. Supported by biblical commentators and theological reflection, this clause invites parents to trust in the process of spiritual formation even when immediate results are not visible.

#### **2.4 The Role of Fathers and Parental Responsibilities**

Within the framework of Proverbs 22:6, the responsibility for guiding a child's spiritual and moral formation is placed squarely upon the shoulders of parents with particular emphasis on the role of the father. In the cultural and theological context of the Old Testament, fathers were regarded as the primary spiritual leaders within the household. Their role was not limited to material provision or discipline, but extended to the active shaping of their children's hearts, minds and characters according to God's law.

The Hebrew Scriptures consistently affirm the father's central role in instruction. As Merrill (2008, p. 89) explains, parental responsibility in Israelite society, especially that of the father was rooted in covenantal theology where the family was the first and the most foundational unit of spiritual instruction. This is particularly reflected in Deuteronomy 6:6-7, where fathers are commanded to teach God's words diligently to their children, embedding the teachings into the rhythm of daily life.

In the context of Proverbs 22:6, this mandate is echoed through the charge to "Train up a child," with the father envisioned as the primary trainer. Waltke (2004, p. 21) notes that throughout proverbs, there is an ongoing dialogue between father and son, suggesting an educational relationship in which the father imparts wisdom gained from experience, divine instruction and reflection on life. The father's voice is central in the early chapters of Proverbs (Proverbs 1:8, 4:1-4), where the phrase "my son" introduces repeated calls to heed instruction. This pedagogical tone reflects an expectation that fathers take proactive responsibility in nurturing their children's spiritual walk.

The role of parents, therefore is not confined to imparting knowledge or enforcing discipline. Instead, it is about nurturing the whole child, spiritually, emotionally, morally and intellectually. According to Bunge (2001, p. 45), parental responsibility includes fostering an environment that supports a child's holistic growth in accordance with divine principles. This environment must be rich in love, guidance, correction and consistent modeling of godly living. Bunge further emphasizes that parents serve as the first and most influential examples for their

children to follow. Through their daily interactions, habits and decisions, parents demonstrate how faith is lived out in practical terms (Bunge, 2001, p. 45).

This responsibility is further emphasized by commentators such as Derek Kidner, who notes that the training mentioned in Proverbs 22:6 involves not just formal teaching but also informal conversation and most critically the example set by parents (Kidner, 2008, p. 148). The effectiveness of parental training lies in its integration into the fabric of daily life. It is reflected in everyday routine; during meals, chores, and bedtime where foundational lessons are often imparted. Thus, training becomes a lifestyle rather than a periodic activity; the home becomes the primary context where faith is translated from abstract concepts into lived realities.

Clarke (2004, p. 329) adds that training a child in the way he should go is not confined to formal teaching but includes the living testimony of parent's own faith and values. Clarke emphasizes that the parent, particularly the father must "walk the talk," demonstrating godly conduct, patience and justice in everyday life. Children internalize more from what they observe than from what they are told, thus highlighting the parental responsibility to model righteousness.

The Pulpit Commentary further elaborates on this concept, stating that the father's role is to "initiate the child into a course of life that is in harmony with divine wisdom" (Spence & Exell, 1950, p.456). This initiation or Chanak in Hebrew involves a dedication of the child to a particular path; a deliberate act that reflects both spiritual leadership and covenantal responsibility. The root of this word suggests a ceremonial and habitual aspect of training that places the father in the role of spiritual initiator and custodian.

Longman (2006, p. 38) observes that Proverbs presents a parental framework that is both authoritative and nurturing. The father is not simply a disciplinarian but a guide, one who shapes the moral compass of the child through ongoing engagement. In this light, Proverbs 22:6 can be seen as a summarizing exhortation; fathers must initiate their children into a life of wisdom, rooted in fear of the Lord and model that life through consistent example and instruction.

The emphasis on the father's responsibility is not to diminish the role of mothers, who also play a vital role in instruction and nurturing. However, the ancient Hebrew perspective as seen in Proverbs gives primacy to paternal leadership within the covenant household. Gaebelien (1990, p. 1035) highlight that this paternal responsibility is part of the broader biblical ideal of household discipleship, where parents act as God's stewards in cultivating faith within the family.

This vision of parenting also aligns with broader theological themes of divine fatherhood; Just as God is depicted as a faithful Father who disciplines, teaches and loves His children, earthly fathers are called to reflect that image within the home. Thus, the parental role is not merely functional but deeply theological, it is participation in God's formative work.

In summary, Proverbs 22:6 provides a profound and comprehensive approach for understanding the role of parents in the spiritual formation of children. It emphasizes the importance of intentional, individualized training that takes into account each child's unique personality and needs. While the verse offers hope that early faith instruction will have a lasting impact, it also operates within the broader context of wisdom literature, suggesting that parents' efforts will generally lead to positive outcomes, even though individual decisions may vary.

This understanding invites parents to take seriously their responsibility in shaping the spiritual lives of their children, while also acknowledging the complexity of human choice and experience.

Proverbs 22:6 situates the father (and by extension both parents) as key agents in the spiritual and moral formation of children. The training referenced in this verse implies a holistic, intentional and lifelong investment. Biblical commentators affirm that this process involves instruction, modeling, correction and relational engagement. Fathers are thus called not only to provide but to shepherd, guiding their children in the way of wisdom with consistency, love and faithfulness.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Proverbs 22:6 stands as a timeless blueprint for spiritual formation within the family offering profound wisdom on the long-term influence of parental guidance. The threefold emphasis on the act of Training, the path suited to the child's nature and the enduring impact into old age demonstrates the comprehensive and relational nature of biblical parenting. Far from offering rigid formulas or guarantees, this proverb provides a framework rooted in wisdom, love and divine purpose.

Through careful study and reflection on key Hebrew terms such as *chanak* and *derekh*, it becomes evident that Proverbs 22:6 calls for a deeply intentional and spiritually grounded approach to raising children. It encourages parents to nurture the unique identity of each child while anchoring them in God's truth. Biblical commentaries both classical and modern affirm that this parental role involves not only verbal instruction but also the modeling of faithful life.

Finally, the enduring message of Proverbs 22:6 is one of hope and responsibility; parents are invited to see their influence as part of God's redemptive mission, one that extends beyond childhood and into the unfolding journey of life. When children are trained in righteousness and love, there is a great possibility that they will remain rooted in those values, even as they grow old. In this, the family becomes a sacred space for lifelong formation, guided by wisdom and grace.

## CHAPTER THREE

### NURTURING A LASTING FOUNDATION OF FAITH IN CHILDREN: A COMPREHENSIVE CHURCH APPROACH

#### 3.0 Introduction

Building a strong foundation of faith in children is a central concern in Christian theology and practice. Proverbs 22:6 states, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (KJV). This verse has been widely interpreted as a directive for parents, guardians, and the church in shaping the spiritual lives of children. The responsibility for faith formation extends beyond mere instruction to encompass an environment where faith is nurtured through relationships, community and engagement with scripture. A well-grounded spiritual upbringing not only impacts an individual’s personal beliefs but also contributes to the broader Christian community by fostering a generation of committed believers.

This chapter explores the approaches employed by the church in fostering an enduring foundation of faith in children, it also examines biblical perspectives on the importance of spiritual formation based on Proverbs 22:6. The review was based on a descriptive and analytical qualitative research design that relies on library-based research, incorporating biblical and theological text analysis, scholarly literature, and church practices and doctrinal studies. Some of the approaches employed by the church to foster an enduring foundation of faith in children include;

### **3.1.1 Sunday School Programs**

Sunday school programs are among the most widely used methods in churches to nurture faith in children. These programs provide structured biblical instruction tailored to different age groups, offering foundational knowledge of scripture and Christian teachings to children. Sunday school has played a crucial role in child faith formation special in protestant traditions. Root (2017, p. 78) highlights that Sunday school provides children with an early introduction to biblical teachings, moral values and spiritual disciplines. The curriculum often includes Bible stories, Memory verses, moral lessons and interactive activities designed to make biblical concepts accessible and relatable. By engaging children in age-appropriate biblical instruction, churches lay a foundation for lifelong faith commitment.

One of the key strengths of Sunday school programs is their ability to foster communal learning. By attending classes with peers, children develop a sense of belonging to the church community. This social aspect of Sunday school enhances their spiritual growth, as they learn not only from teachers but also through discussions and shared experiences with other children. Additionally, studies indicate that children who consistently attend Sunday school are more likely to develop lasting religious convictions and habits of faith (Bunge, 2012, p. 104).

Sunday school curricula vary across denominations, but most programs follow a structured approach that aligns with the church's doctrinal beliefs. Many churches adopt materials developed by Christian publishing houses, ensuring that lessons remain biblically sound and relevant to contemporary issues. Furthermore, some churches incorporate creative teaching methods such as drama, music, storytelling, and multimedia presentations to enhance engagement. These

interactive elements make learning enjoyable while reinforcing key theological themes (Anthony & Benson, 2011, p. 178).

Beyond the classroom setting, Sunday school often includes activities that encourage practical application of faith. Service projects, mission initiatives, and outreach programs help children connect biblical teachings with real-world experiences. For instance, many churches involve Sunday school participants in charitable activities, such as visiting the elderly and the needy or participating in community clean up events. Such experiences reinforce the Christian values of love, compassion, and service, making faith more tangible and actionable in their daily lives (Allen & Ross, 2021, p. 125).

The role of Sunday school teachers is crucial in ensuring the effectiveness of these programs. Effective Sunday school instruction requires trained educators who understand both child development and biblical principles. Churches often provide teacher training programs to equip volunteers with necessary skills to engage children effectively. Research suggests that well-trained Sunday school teachers can significantly impact children's faith development by creating a nurturing environment where questions are encouraged, doubts are addressed and biblical principles are clearly explained (Ray, 2017, p. 131).

Despite its many benefits, Sunday school programs face challenges, particularly in maintaining attendance and engagement. With the increasing demands of modern life, some families struggle to prioritize Sunday school participation amid busy schedules. Additionally, technological distractions and changing cultural dynamics pose challenges in retaining children's interest in traditional classroom-style. In response, some churches have adapted their programs by integrating digital tools,

such as online bible lessons, interactive apps and virtual Sunday school sessions, to accommodate contemporary learning styles (Knight, 2006, p. 212).

Moreover, intergenerational learning models have been introduced in some churches to address these challenges. These models integrate children, parents and older members of the congregation into joint learning sessions, promoting cross-generational faith transmission. Research indicates that when children learn alongside their parents, and other adults, they develop a deeper understanding of faith that is reinforced at home (Bunge, 2012, p. 147). This approach helps ensure that faith formation is not limited to a classroom setting at church but extends into every family and community.

Another emerging trend in Sunday school is the emphasis on experiential learning. Some churches incorporate field trips to biblical museums, historical religious sites like the case of Namugongo Martyr's shrines here in Uganda or outdoor retreats where children can experience faith-based teachings in a more immersive principles, making Sunday school a more dynamic and memorable experience (Allen & Ross, 2021, p. 234).

In addition, Technology continues to play a significant role in modernizing Sunday school programs. Some Churches are increasingly utilizing digital storytelling, faith-based video games, and interactive applications to make lessons more engaging. Online Sunday school platforms allow children to participate remotely, ensuring continuity in their spiritual education even when physical attendance is not possible. This technological shift has made faith education more accessible and adaptable to contemporary lifestyles (Ray, 2017, p. 158).

Sunday school programs in contemporary church remain a vital tool in faith formation, providing structured biblical education, fostering community and promoting practical application of Christian values. Through innovative teaching methods, service-oriented activities, and committed educators, Sunday school continues to serve as an effective means of building a strong foundation of faith in children. As churches adapt to the changing societal dynamics and technological advancements, the evolution of Sunday school programs ensures their continued relevance in nurturing future generations of believers.

### **3.1.2 Catechesis and Formal Christian Education**

Catechesis has long been a foundational approach in Christian traditions for nurturing children's faith. It involves systematic teaching of Christian beliefs through structured lessons often in church settings. Packer & Parrett (2010, p.52) emphasize that catechism provides a doctrinal framework that helps children develop a deeper understanding of their faith. Churches use catechetical instruction as a means to instill foundational Christian doctrines, such as the Apostle's Creed and the Ten Commandments. Many Catechetical programs emphasize memorization of scripture, prayers and church teachings, reinforcing the importance of integrating faith into daily life.

The significance of catechesis extends beyond the transmission of doctrinal knowledge; it also fosters moral and ethical formation. Catechetical programs typically incorporate discussions on Christian virtues, emphasizing the development of character alongside theological understanding. Stonehouse & May (2010, p. 67) argue that catechesis shapes children's spiritual identity by grounding them in the core tenets of Christian faith while encouraging personal reflection

and application. This structured approach ensures that children not only understand theological concepts but also learn how to live their faith in everyday life.

Catechesis is implemented in various ways across different Christian traditions. In protestant/Anglican and Catholic Church, for instance, Sacramental preparation programs such as First Communion and Confirmation classes serve a crucial stage in a child's spiritual formation. These church traditions including the Lutheran church place a strong emphasis on catechism classes as a means to equip children with doctrinal knowledge before they participate fully in church sacraments. Evangelical churches often integrate catechesis into their Sunday school programs, ensuring that biblical literacy and theological understanding are nurtured from an early age.

In addition to traditional Catechesis, some churches operate Christian schools which play a vital role in formal Christian education. These settings provide a structured approach to faith development that incorporates biblical teachings into academic subjects. Research suggests that children who receive formal Christian education tend to exhibit higher levels of religious commitment and moral development in adulthood (Anthony & Benson, 2011, p. 123). Furthermore, the integration of faith and learning in academic settings allows children to develop a coherent worldview rooted in Christian principles, reinforcing their faith through everyday learning experiences.

Church based Christian schools offer a curriculum that is centered on biblical principles, helping children/learners connect their faith with various academic disciplines. Science, history, literature, and mathematics are often taught through

the lens of Christian worldview, ensuring that faith is not seen as separate from intellectual pursuits. Scholars such as Knight (2006, p. 156) argue that an education rooted in biblical principles helps children develop critical thinking skills while remaining grounded in their faith. Moreover, Christian educators serve as role models, demonstrating the integration of faith and knowledge in their daily lives.

Catechesis and formal Christian education play a critical role in building a strong foundation of faith in children. Through structured theological instruction, moral development, and integration of faith into academic learning, children receive well-rounded instruction at an early age which significantly impacts their faith formation. Churches, Christian schools and families should work together to provide consistent and engaging faith education that nurtures spiritual growth and prepares children to live out their beliefs in a complex world.

### **3.1.3 Mentorship and Discipleship Programs**

Mentorship and discipleship programs serve as a highly effective approach to building a strong foundation of faith in children by establishing deep, personal relationships between mentors and mentees. These programs emphasize long-term faith development by pairing children with spiritually mature adults who provide guidance, encouragement and accountability. Unlike traditional classroom instruction, mentorship and discipleship highlight relational engagement, where children learn through personal interactions and modelled behaviour (Ogden, 2016, p. 67).

Discipleship programs often include structured curricula that involves Bible study, prayer and character development. Churches implement these programs through

small groups, one-on-one mentoring sessions and peer-led discipleship initiatives. Studies indicate that children who actively engage in discipleship relationships are more likely to develop lasting commitments, as they receive individualized attention and spiritual support (Coleman, 2018, p. 143).

Mentorship and discipleship also help children navigate challenges in their faith journey by providing guidance on moral decision-making, scriptural interpretation and spiritual discipline. Research suggests that when children have a trusted mentor, they are more resilient in maintaining their faith amidst societal pressures (Barna, 2020, p. 91). Many churches also integrate family discipleship models, where parents are trained to serve as primary faith mentors for their children, reinforcing biblical teachings at home (Anthony & Benson, 2011, p. 198).

One of the key aspects of mentorship programs is their ability to provide faith-based role models. Young believers often develop their spiritual identities through imitation, observing how their mentors live out Christian principles in daily life. Research by Dunn and Senter (2016, p. 205) indicates that faith formation is significantly strengthened when children see practical demonstrations of Christian virtues, such as love, patience, and integrity from their mentors.

Mentorship and discipleship programs often incorporate service opportunities, where children actively participate in ministry work under the guidance of their mentors. Activities such as community service, mission trips and evangelism efforts provide hands-on experiences that reinforce biblical teachings and deepen their commitment to faith. Experiential learning is crucial in helping children internalize Christian values beyond theoretical instruction (Black, 2019, p. 174).

In contemporary discipleship models, churches have begun to incorporate digital platforms to enhance mentorship efforts. Online mentoring sessions, faith-based social networks, and virtual discipleship groups enable mentors to maintain regular contact with children despite geographical barriers. Technological advancements have made mentorship more accessible and flexible, allowing children to receive continuous faith guidance even outside of church settings (Ray, 2017, p. 159).

Another emerging trend is the implementation of intergenerational mentorship, where older members of the congregation are paired with younger believers. This approach fosters a sense of continuity and community, ensuring that faith traditions are passed down through generations. Studies show that intergenerational mentorship not only strengthens the faith of children but also revitalizes the spiritual engagement of older church members, creating a mutually beneficial relationship (Allen & Ross, 2021, P. 241).

Peer discipleship is another effective approach within mentorship programs. Older youths and teenagers serve as role models for younger children, facilitating discussions, leading Bible studies and providing spiritual encouragement. This peer-based model helps children develop a sense of ownership in their faith journey while fostering strong bonds within the church community (Knight, 2006, p. 219).

Churches have begun incorporating family-based discipleship models, recognizing the importance of parental involvement in faith development. Programs designed to equip parents with discipleship tools enable them to lead Bible studies at home, model Christian values in everyday life and encourage faith-based conversations within the family. Research suggests that children who engage in faith discussions

at home with their parents are more likely to develop long-term spiritual convictions (Bunge, 2012, p. 163).

Challenges within mentorship and discipleship programs include ensuring consistency and commitment from both mentors and mentees. Busy schedules, lack of structured training for mentors and generational gaps can sometimes hinder effective mentorship relationships. To address these issues, some churches are investing in formal mentor training programs, providing resources and guidelines to enhance mentorship effectiveness (Barna, 2020, p. 112).

From this, it can be noted that mentorship and discipleship programs play a pivotal role in faith formation by fostering deep, personal relationships, providing faith role models, and creating experiential learning opportunities. As churches continue to adapt to modern challenges, integrating innovative strategies such as digital discipleship, intergenerational mentoring, and family-based faith formation, will enhance the effectiveness of these programs in nurturing a strong foundation of faith in children. Through committed mentorship and structured discipleship, children not only develop a personal relationship with God but also gain the resilience and wisdom needed to sustain their faith throughout life.

#### **3.1.4 Integrating Children into Worship and Church Life**

Integrating children into worship and church life is a vital strategy for fostering a strong foundation of faith. Bunge (2001, p.64) emphasizes the importance of seeing children not merely as recipients of religious instruction but as active participants in the faith community. According to Bunge, involving children in worship services through roles such as reading scripture, participating in prayer, or singing in the congregation, collecting offertory among others allows them to

experience the full richness of the Christian tradition and helps to cultivate a personal connection with God. Such involvement creates a sense of belonging and reinforces the idea that children are integral members of the church body, rather than isolating them without considering their contribution in the faith community.

By engaging in worship, children develop a deeper understanding of Christian rituals and practices. Bunge suggests that this participation fosters a connection between the child's personal faith and the larger faith community. Children who are included in worship not only witness the spiritual lives of adults but also learn by doing, which encourages them to see faith as an embodied practice rather than just an abstract concept (Bunge, 2001, p. 67). This approach reinforces the notion that faith is not confined to specific events or moments, but rather something that is practiced and lived daily in community.

Furthermore, Bunge (2001, p.70) argues that when children are integrated into the worship life of the church, they gain a sense of ownership over their faith journey. They begin to understand that they are responsible participants in their spiritual growth and are not merely passive observers of adult faith. This active participation strengthens their connection to both the church and to God, laying a strong foundation for lifelong discipleship and commitment to their faith.

### **3.1.5 Family-Centered Faith Formation**

Family-centered faith formation approach recognizes the family as the primary environment where faith is nurtured and developed and churches encourage families to be chief agents of faith formation in the lives of children. In many religious traditions, including Christianity, the home is considered the first church and the most influential place for shaping a child's spiritual life. This approach

emphasizes the importance of parents and caregivers in guiding and modelling faith, cultivating an environment of spiritual practices, and supporting children in their own journey of faith development (Smith & Williams, 2019, p. 22). Stonehouse & May (2010, p. 98) argue that parents serve as the first and most influential faith educators, shaping their children's spiritual perspectives through daily interactions and intentional religious instruction. Family devotional practices, prayer routines, and Bible reading contribute significantly to the development of a child's faith (Gundry-Volf, 2001, p. 230).

Theologically, family-centered faith formation is grounded in the biblical understanding of the family as a divine institution. In Christian tradition, Scripture provides numerous references to the role of the family in the spiritual formation of children. For instance, Deuteronomy 6:6-7, calls parents to teach their children God's commands in their everyday life; "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." This passage highlights the role of parents in consistently passing on their faith to their children through daily actions and conversations, making faith a natural part of family life (Bunge, 2004, p. 37).

At the heart of the family-centered faith formation approach is the responsibility of parents and caregivers to be spiritual leaders in the home. This approach emphasizes the importance of creating a Christian home environment where children's faith journey is developed and nurtured. Research indicates that children who grow up in homes where faith is regularly discussed, and where parents actively participate in religious activities, are more likely to develop a

personal and lasting commitment to their faith. Hill, 2015, p. 92, stresses that children are most likely to adopt the faith practices they witness in their parents, making the example set by parents pivotal in shaping a child's spiritual life. As such, the faith journey of a child begins with the intentional modelling of faith by their parents.

Parents' spiritual practices play an influential role in the child's faith development. For example, regular family prayers, Bible reading, and discussions about God's word help children develop an understanding of spiritual truths. Additionally, when parents or caregivers demonstrate love, forgiveness, and kindness, children learn how to apply these Christian virtues in their own relationships. Parental involvement in their child's faith journey is essential for fostering spiritual maturity, as it helps children understand the real-life application of their faith (Gordon & Carter, 2020, p.101).

The active engagement of both parents, whether biological or spiritual caregivers, in the child's faith formation fosters a partnership in spiritual development. This can involve parents taking part in faith-related events, reading faith-based literature or encouraging their children's participation in church activities. When parents prioritize faith and model it consistently, children are more likely to develop a personal relationship with God, cultivating faith that lasts into adulthood (Walker & Carter, 2017, p. 77).

While the family is the central institution for faith formation, the church and the broader faith community also plays an important role. Churches and faith community support families by providing resources, guidance and opportunities for fellowship. These institutions can offer workshops, parenting training and small

groups that help equip parents with tools for effective faith formation within the home (Martin, 2016, p. 55). In this partnership between the family, church and community, there is an opportunity for shared responsibility in nurturing children's faith. The church provides a setting for communal worship, teaching and fellowship, while the family and community provides space for day-to-day spiritual formation. These institutions must work together to reinforce the teachings and practices that children are exposed to both in church, family and community.

The Family-centered faith formation approach recognizes the home as the primary environment for nurturing a child's spiritual life. By integrating spiritual practices into daily life, parents and caregivers provide children with a foundation of faith that can sustain them throughout their lives. When coupled with the support of the church and faith community, family centered faith formation becomes a dynamic process that shapes the spiritual development of children, fostering a lasting relationship with God and the faith community.

This approach encourages the integration of faith practices into everyday family life. This can include practices such as:

**Daily prayer:** Regular prayer, both individual and family-based, helps children understand the importance of communication with God. It offers opportunities for parents to teach children how to express gratitude, ask for guidance and seek forgiveness. Through prayer, children develop connection with God and learn to rely on His Guidance (Walker & Carter, 2017, p. 103).

**Scripture Reading:** Engaging in regular Bible study as a family helps children grow in their knowledge of God's Word. This practice encourages children to reflect on biblical teachings and apply them to their own lives. Bible stories both familiar and

lesser-known, provide rich opportunities for spiritual learning and moral development (Rogers & Long, 2018, p. 87).

**Faith-based conversations:** integrating spiritual discussions into everyday conversations reinforces the significance of faith in the child's life. Parents can use everyday moments to discuss spiritual lessons, such as showing kindness to others, forgiving one another, or trusting in God during times of hardships. These conversations help children understand how faith relates to their daily experiences (Martin, 2016, p. 60).

**Serving Together:** Acts of service, whether through volunteer work or helping those in need, teach children the importance of living out their faith. Serving others together as a family encourages children to embody the values of compassion, generosity and empathy, which are core to Christian teachings (Gordon & Carter, 2020, p. 120).

**Celebrating Spiritual Milestones:** Observing religious holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, and celebrating spiritual milestones like baptisms, confirmations, or the child's decision to follow Christ, helps mark significant moments in a child's spiritual growth. These celebrations provide opportunities for the family to reflect on the significance of faith in their lives (Hill, 2015, p.88).

### **3.1.5 Conclusion**

Building a strong foundation of faith in children is a critical component of Christian ministry, serving not only the spiritual needs of individuals but also contributing to the broader church community. Proverbs 22:6 highlights the importance of early and intentional faith formation, offering a biblical directive that guides both parents and church communities in their efforts to raise children in the ways of the

Lord. The approaches employed by the church to foster a lasting foundation of faith ranging from Sunday school programs and catechesis to mentorship and family-centered faith formation demonstrate the strong commitment and variety of strategies available for engaging children in the spiritual life.

The church's role as a partner in faith formation is essential. Through structured educational programs like Sunday school and catechesis, children are provided with the tools and knowledge they need to develop a solid understanding of biblical principles and Christian doctrines. Furthermore, mentorship and discipleship programs strengthen the personal relationship that nurture children's faith journeys offering lifelong guidance and accountability. Family-centered faith formation highlights the importance of parental involvement which illustrates that the home is the first place where children learn to live out their faith.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### BIBLICAL MODELS FOR NURTURING FAITH IN CHILDREN BASED ON

#### PROVERBS 22: 6

#### 4.0 Introduction

The spiritual formation of children is a central concern for Christian discipleship because it lays the foundation for their lifelong relationship with God. Proverbs 22:6 reflects this principle, stating, *“Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (NIV). This passage emphasizes the crucial role of early guidance and intentional nurturing in a child’s spiritual development. As the next generation faces increasingly complex societal influences, it becomes imperative for families, churches and communities to adopt models that facilitate a strong, enduring faith in children.

This chapter proposes four models for building a solid foundation of faith in children; The Discipleship-at-home Model, The Church Partnership Model, The Faith-in-Action Model and The Personalized Path Model. These models present distinct yet complementary approaches to spiritual education, ranging from the foundational role of the home in cultivating a child’s faith to the broader involvement of the church and community. By integrating local examples, this chapter aims to highlight how these models can be applied in different contexts, providing practical frameworks for fostering deep, authentic and sustainable faith in children. The models suggested here not seek not only to instruct children but also to equip them with the tools they need to live out their faith actively and meaningfully in their everyday lives. Through these strategies, faith formation

becomes a dynamic, relational process that transcends mere instruction and becomes a lived experience.

#### **4.1 The Discipleship-at-Home Model**

Proverbs 22:6 emphasizes the significance of early guidance in a child's life: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (NIV). This model places the responsibility of faith formation primarily on the family, especially parents or guardians, acknowledging the home as the first and most influential place where a child learns about life and spirituality. The Discipleship-at-Home model promotes the idea that spiritual nurturing should be intentional, consistent and rooted in everyday family life with parents and guardians as primary faith mentors to their children.

At the heart of this model is the daily practice of prayer and Bible reading as a family. This doesn't require a formal or rigid structure, but rather a commitment to setting aside time, perhaps in the morning or at night when the family comes together to read Scripture and pray. This regular habit reinforces biblical values, introduces children to the word of God, and demonstrates the importance of connecting with God in daily life. Over time, these moments become foundational pillars in a child's spiritual memory and encourage a lifelong habit of personal devotion.

Another important component is Modeling godly character in everyday life. Children often learn more from what they see than from what they are told. When parents respond to conflict with patience, extend kindness to others, show humility in mistakes, or express joy in their faith, they are silently preaching powerful sermons to their children. These lived examples show children what faith

looks like in action. It becomes clear to them that Christianity is not just about going to Sunday school on a Sunday, pray and come back home but a way of life. Authentically, in the parent's spiritual walk helps build trust and inspires the child to pursue their own relationship with God.

Additionally, Faith-based conversations in natural moments also play a key role. Rather than isolating "faith talk" to church or devotion time. This model encourages parents to incorporate it into everyday life situations. For example, a car ride can become a moment to discuss gratitude, a bedtime chat can be a time to reflect on God's love or a conflict between siblings can be an opportunity to teach forgiveness. These spontaneous, informal moments are often the most impactful because they are deeply personal and rooted in real experiences.

The principle aim of the Discipleship-at-Home model is to make a home a nurturing space where faith is not just taught but lived. In such an environment, children grow up with a deep sense of belonging, purpose and spiritual identity. They see their parents not only as caregivers but also as spiritual mentors who guide them with love, wisdom and prayer. This model recognizes that while church programs and Christian education are valuable, the most lasting faith formation occurs when children witness the gospel being lived out everyday in their own homes.

At the heart of this model, Proverbs 22:6 is brought to life trusting that early investment in a child's spiritual development will have lasting effects, shaping their hearts, choices and identity for years to come.

#### **4.2 The Church Partnership Model**

Proverbs 22:6 emphasizes the importance of intentional training during a child's formative years. The Church Partnership Model builds on this biblical foundation by

recognizing that while parents are the primary disciplers, the church plays a vital supporting role. This model promotes a collaborative relationship between the family and the local church to ensure a well-rounded spiritual upbringing for children. When both the home and the church align in vision and effort, the result is powerful and consistent message that strengthens a child's faith foundation.

One of the core components of this model is Sunday school and age-appropriate Bible teaching. Churches offer structured learning environments where children can explore the Bible at their level of understanding. These sessions use storytelling, crafts, music and discussion to bring Scripture to life in a way that captivates young hearts and minds. Such programs not only teach biblical knowledge but also help children understand how faith applies to their everyday life. Regular attendance reinforces what is being taught at home and provides another layer of spiritual support and instruction.

Another vital aspect of this model is that of intergenerational mentorship within the church. Children benefit greatly from relationships with spiritually mature adults outside their immediate family. When older believers take time to invest in younger ones, whether through mentoring, shared activities or simply being present, it creates a strong sense of belonging and community. These relationships model faith in action across generations, giving children diverse examples of how to live out Christian values at different stages of life. This also helps them feel connected to the broader church body not just the children's ministry.

Involving children in worship and service is another key strategy for this model; rather than keeping children separate from the main church experience, this model encourages their active participation. Children can be involved in worship

through music, reading Scripture, helping with offering or joining in church-wide outreach activities. Service opportunities like visiting the sick, packing handouts for those in need or participating in missions allow children to live out their faith in practical ways. This involvement nurtures a sense of responsibility and shows them that they are valuable members of the faith community, not just passive observers.

The goal of the Church Partnership Model is to integrate children into the life of the church, complementing and reinforcing what they learn at home. This fosters a holistic discipleship experience where children feel supported by a wider network of faith-filled adults and peers. By being immersed in a spiritually rich environment both at home and the church, children develop a resilient and vibrant faith that is rooted in community, Scripture and service.

In due course, this model echoes the truth of Proverbs 22:6 by affirming that a child who is raised with consistent, shared guidance from both home and church is more likely to hold onto their faith into adulthood. It reflects the biblical image of the body of Christ working together, where each part (parents, pastors, mentors and teachers) contributes to the spiritual formation of the next generation.

#### **4.3 The Faith-in-Action Model**

Proverbs 22:6 urges believers to “Train up a child in the way he should go,” highlighting the importance of intentional guidance during a child’s formative years. The Faith-in-Action Model builds on this by emphasizing the power of experiential learning. It focusses on the idea that children internalize faith not only through instruction but also through hands-on engagement. This model encourages families and churches to help children live out their beliefs in practical

everyday ways. By actively participating in service and practicing Christlike behavior, children come to understand that faith is more than a set of ideas, it is a way of life.

A central component of this model is involvement in acts of service and charity. When children are included in activities like feeding the homeless on the streets, visiting the elderly, collecting items for those in need or helping a neighbor, they begin to grasp the heart of Christian love and compassion. These experiences teach them that serving others is a core expression of faith. Parents and mentors can guide children in understanding why these acts matter, helping them to connect the practice of service with biblical teachings like loving your neighbor (Mark 12:31) and caring for “the least of these” (Matthew 12:40)

Participation in mission activities or outreach is another important element. These do not have to be large-scale mission trips; even local outreach events can be impactful. For example, children can participate in community clean-ups, church-organized mission weekends or fundraising for a cause. These opportunities help children see themselves as part of God’s larger mission in the world. They learn that their actions, no matter how small, can contribute to building God’s kingdom. Through missions, children also develop empathy, cultural awareness and a deeper sense of purpose in their faith journey.

Equally significant is the daily practice of forgiveness, kindness and compassion. These traits may not involve organized events but they are the foundation of Christian living. Teaching children to say sorry, forgive others, share generously and show kindness to others especially in difficult situations helps them embody the teachings of Jesus. These everyday choices shape their character and faith in

powerful ways. Parents and caregivers play a vital role here by modeling these values consistently and guiding children through real-life scenarios where they can apply them.

The goal of the Faith-in-Action Model is to help children see faith as something active, not just theoretical. It shifts the focus from passive learning to active discipleship. By doing this, children discover that Christianity is not limited to Sunday services or Bible reading but it is a vibrant, daily commitment to live like Jesus. They begin to understand that being a Christian means serving, loving and acting with integrity, compassion and courage.

In the spirit of Proverbs 22:6, this model trains children by immersing them in the practice of faith. As they grow, the habits of service, kindness and Christlike actions become part of who they are, laying a solid foundation for a lifelong walk with God.

#### **4.4 The Personalized Path Model**

Proverbs 22:6 encourages parents to “Train up a child in a way he should go,” which can also be interpreted to mean training a child according to their individual giftings, their personality, interests and God-given potential. The Personalized Path Model builds upon this idea by recognizing that children are not one-size-fits-all when it comes to spiritual growth. Each child is uniquely wired and their journey of faith should reflect that uniqueness. This model invites parents, caregivers and church leaders to be attentive, flexible and creative in guiding each child towards a personal and meaningful relationship with God.

A key aspect of this model is observing and nurturing each child’s spiritual gifts and interests. Children show early signs of how they connect with the world and

express themselves, some are thinkers, others are feelers, some are outgoing while others are reflective. In the context of faith, these traits may manifest as an early sense of justice, compassion, curiosity about spiritual matters or a love for quiet prayer. Parents and mentors who intentionally observe these inclinations can help children discover how God has uniquely gifted them. By affirming and encouraging these traits, adults communicate that each child's journey with God is valuable and significant.

Another essential element is using the child's passions such as art, music, storytelling or nature as a way to experience and express their faith. A child who loves to draw might create Bible story illustrations; one who enjoys music could engage through worship songs or playing instruments; another who finds peace in nature might connect with God through outdoor reflection and prayer. These personalized approaches allow faith to feel accessible and alive. Rather than focusing children on uniform spiritual practices, this model invites them to discover God in ways that feel natural and joyful to them.

Equally important is the commitment to support each child's individual journey with patience and prayer. Not all children will progress at the same pace or show outward signs of spiritual growth in the same way. The Personalized Path Model encourages adults to be patient and trusting, believing that God is at work even when it's not immediately visible. Through consistent prayer, gentle guidance and open conversations, caregivers can offer a safe space for children to ask questions, express doubt and grow in their understanding of God.

The goal of the Personalized Path Model is to foster a deep, authentic relationship with God that aligns with each child's personality and design. It avoids pressure

and compassion, emphasizing instead that God speaks to each child in ways they can understand and respond. By honoring the uniqueness of every child, this model nurtures spiritual growth that is not only lasting but also rooted in genuine connection and joy.

Ultimately, the Personalized Path Model brings to life the wisdom of Proverbs 22:6 by helping each child walk the path they were created for, growing in faith with confidence, creativity and a sense of God's personal love and calling on their life.

#### **4.5 Table: Key Components of Biblical Models for Nurturing Faith in Children Based on Proverbs 22:6**

The table below presents a comparative overview of four biblical models for nurturing faith in children, each grounded in the wisdom of Proverbs 22:6. These models; Discipleship-at-Home, Church Partnership, Faith-in-Action, and Personalized Path—highlight different but complementary approaches to spiritual formation. Each model outlines its primary focus, key practices, the role of adults, and the intended outcomes in a child's faith journey. Together, they provide a comprehensive and practical framework for guiding children toward a resilient and lasting relationship with God.

<b>Model</b>	<b>Main Focus</b>	<b>Key Practices</b>	<b>Role of Adults</b>	<b>Desired Outcomes</b>
<b>Discipleship-at-Home Model</b>	Home-based, parent-led spiritual nurturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Daily prayer &amp; Bible reading</li> <li>- Modeling godly character</li> <li>- Natural, faith-based conversations</li> </ul>	Parents/guardians are primary spiritual mentors	Children see faith modelled daily; develop personal devotion and spiritual identity
<b>Church Partnership Model</b>	Collaborative approach between family and church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sunday school &amp; age-appropriate Bible teaching</li> <li>- Intergenerational mentorship</li> <li>- Active participation in worship &amp; service</li> </ul>	Church leaders, mentors, and parents working together to disciple children	Children feel connected to the church body and supported in holistic spiritual growth
<b>Faith-in-Action Model</b>	Experiential learning through acts of service and daily Christlike behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acts of charity and community service</li> <li>- Participation in missions/outreach</li> <li>- Practicing forgiveness and kindness</li> </ul>	Adults model and guide children through real-life application of faith	Children internalize faith as active, practical, and compassionate living
<b>Personalized Path Model</b>	Tailored spiritual formation based on child's unique personality, gifts, and interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying spiritual gifts</li> <li>- Using personal interests (e.g., art, music, nature) to engage faith</li> <li>- Supporting unique journeys</li> </ul>	Parents, caregivers, and teachers observe, affirm, and guide each child	Children develop a deep, joyful, and authentic faith journey that aligns with their God-given identity

## 4.6 Conclusion

The models presented in this chapter offer a comprehensive framework for nurturing a strong and enduring foundation of faith in children. Each model (The Discipleship-at-Home Model, The Church Partner Model, The Faith-in-Action Model and The Personalized Path Model) provides distinct yet interconnected pathways for engaging children in their spiritual formation. These models, each grounded in the guiding wisdom of proverbs 22:6 emphasize the importance of both individual and communal efforts in cultivating faith, drawing attention to the fundamental roles of the family, the church and the broader community.

Proverbs 22:6 serves not only as a biblical mandate but also as a foundational principle that highlight the importance of early, intentional and contextually relevant guidance in a child's spiritual journey. The Discipleship-at-Home Model emphasizes the vital role of parents and guardians as the child's first and most enduring spiritual mentors. The Church Partnership Model highlights the importance of a collaborative approach between the home and the faith community in reinforcing spiritual values through intergenerational relationships and corporate worship. The Faith-in-Action Model affirms that children internalize faith most effectively through tangible expressions of love, service and justice. Finally, the Personalized Path model which recognizes the uniqueness of each child and the necessity of nurturing their spiritual growth in ways that honor their God-given personality, gifts and pace of development.

Collectively, these models advocate for a solid and resilient approach to spiritual formation; one that is both theologically grounded and practically applicable across diverse contexts. They call for the cooperation of families, churches and

communities in shaping children not merely as recipients of religious knowledge but as active participants in the life of faith.

The application of these models affirms the enduring relevance of Proverbs 22:6 in contemporary Christian education and discipleship. By embracing a comprehensive approach to nurturing faith, parents, caregivers and faith communities can more effectively guide children towards a lifelong transformative relationship with God; one that withstands cultural pressures, matures over time and ultimately bears witness to the sustaining power of a Christ-centered life.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### GENERAL CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This final chapter presents the culmination of this study by offering a comprehensive conclusion based on the research findings and outlining strategic recommendations for fostering enduring faith in children. The chapter revisits the central aim of the study; exploring *Proverbs 22:6* as a model for building a strong foundation of faith in children and synthesizes insights gained through biblical and theological text interpretation and analysis, scholarly literature review, and an examination of church-based practices.

The conclusion highlights the significance of a collaborative approach that engages the family, church, and broader Christian community in nurturing spiritual formation during the formative years of childhood. It reflects on how doctrinal instruction, relational discipleship, and intentional mentorship; when rooted in Scripture, can contribute to a lasting faith that aligns with the wisdom of *Proverbs 22:6*.

Following the conclusion, the chapter offers practical, evidence-based recommendations intended for church leaders, Christian educators, and caregivers. These recommendations address key areas such as catechesis, Sunday school programming, mentorship, and family-based discipleship, emphasizing the importance of consistent, age-appropriate, and contextually relevant strategies. Collectively, the conclusion and recommendations provide a theological and pedagogical roadmap for building resilient faith in children, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on Christian education and spiritual formation.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

This study has examined Proverbs 22:6 as a foundational biblical model for fostering an enduring faith in children, with particular focus on biblical perspectives, church-based approaches, and practical strategies. Through a descriptive and analytical qualitative research design grounded in library-based resources, the research highlights that faith formation in children is a multi-dimensional process requiring intentionality, relational engagement, and consistent nurturing.

Biblical and theological text analyses and interpretations highlight the importance of early and intentional training in faith, as emphasized in Proverbs 22:6, without which children's spiritual formation risks fragmentation or superficiality. The study also notes that faith development transcends mere cognitive knowledge to encompass holistic growth involving family influence, community participation, and practical ministry engagement. Family discipleship emerges as a critical complement to church efforts, affirming the home as the primary locus of faith transmission.

The analysis of church approaches reveals that structured catechesis, Sunday school programs, and mentorship or discipleship initiatives collectively contribute to the development of a strong spiritual foundation. Catechesis offers a systematic doctrinal framework necessary for grounding children in Christian beliefs, while Sunday school programs provide interactive and age-appropriate biblical instruction that engages children cognitively and experientially. Mentorship and discipleship further enhance faith formation by fostering personal relationships

that model Christian virtues and provide individualized spiritual guidance, enabling children to navigate challenges and internalize faith principles.

Moreover, contemporary challenges and opportunities—such as integrating digital platforms for discipleship and addressing generational gaps—highlight the need for adaptive and innovative strategies within faith communities. The study finds that successful faith formation programs must balance doctrinal integrity with relational authenticity, experiential learning, and cultural relevance to remain effective in nurturing resilient, lifelong faith commitments among children.

In conclusion, Proverbs 22:6 offers a timeless and robust framework for guiding the church's efforts in building a strong foundation of faith in children. By employing a comprehensive approach that integrates catechesis, Sunday school instruction, mentorship, family involvement, and experiential ministry, the church can effectively nurture children's spiritual growth and equip them to sustain their faith throughout life. The findings of this study call for continued intentionality, collaboration among parents, church leaders, and mentors, and openness to innovation in faith formation practices to realize the promise embedded in Proverbs 22:6; that children trained in the way of faith will remain steadfast in their spiritual journey.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUILDING AN ENDURING FAITH IN CHILDREN

Based on the literature review and the insights gathered from the study of Proverbs 22:6 and related church practices, here are several key recommendations for building an enduring faith in children:

**Integrate Structured Catechesis with Relational Engagement:** While formal catechesis provides essential doctrinal foundations, it should be complemented by relational approaches that engage children personally. Churches should maintain systematic teaching of core Christian doctrines (e.g., Apostles' Creed, Ten Commandments) but also foster environments where children can ask questions, discuss faith, and relate biblical truths to everyday life. This combination helps children internalize faith beyond memorization.

**Develop Comprehensive and holistic Sunday School Programs:** Sunday schools should offer age-appropriate, interactive curricula that emphasize both biblical knowledge and practical application. Incorporating storytelling, music, crafts, and group activities enhances engagement. Regular training for Sunday school teachers is critical to ensure they can effectively communicate biblical truths and nurture a supportive learning environment that encourages children's spiritual growth.

**Establish Intentional Mentorship and Discipleship Relationships:** Mentorship programs pairing children with spiritually mature adults should be a priority. These relationships are important in providing personalized guidance, accountability, and modeling of Christian virtues such as love, patience, and integrity. Churches should create structured mentorship programs with clear training and support for mentors to ensure consistency and commitment. Furthermore, incorporating peer and intergenerational discipleship can expand relational support networks for children.

**Empower Families as Primary Faith Mentors:** Family discipleship is foundational, as parents and guardians are the primary spiritual influencers in children's lives. Churches should equip families with resources and training to nurture faith at home through Bible study, prayer, and open faith conversations. Encouraging family worship, spiritual discussions, and shared service opportunities strengthens the home as a spiritual training ground.

**Incorporate Experiential Learning and Service Opportunities:** Providing children with hands-on ministry experiences; such as community service, mission trips, and evangelism. This helps them live out their faith in tangible ways and fosters a deeper connection to Christian values. Churches should create age-appropriate service projects that allow children to practice faith in action, reinforcing lessons learned in teaching contexts.

**Embrace Technology and Digital Platforms:** Contemporary faith formation can be enhanced by digital discipleship tools, including online mentoring, virtual Bible studies, and faith-based social networks. Churches should utilize technology to maintain consistent faith engagement with children, especially when physical gatherings are limited or for geographically dispersed communities.

**Promote Intergenerational and Peer Mentorship:** Encouraging interactions between older and younger church members fosters continuity of faith traditions and community cohesion. Peer discipleship programs empower older children and teens to serve as faith role models, fostering ownership and engagement in the faith journey among younger children.

**Address Challenges Through Training and Support Systems:** Recognizing that mentorship and discipleship programs face challenges such as inconsistent

commitment and generational gaps, churches should invest in formal mentor training and ongoing support. This ensures that mentors are well-prepared and confident to guide children effectively.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I: Information check list for Data collection and analysis

Category	Item/Information Sought	Source Type	Status
<b>Biblical Foundations</b>	Interpretation of <i>Proverbs</i> 22:6 in the context of childhood spiritual development	Biblical commentaries, theological texts	✓ Completed
	Scriptural references on child training and faith formation	Old & New Testament Scriptures	✓ Completed
<b>Theological Perspectives</b>	Theological views on children and faith (e.g., Bunge, Brewster, Barna)	Scholarly books & journals	✓ Completed
	Historical perspectives on child discipleship	Church history texts	✓ Completed
<b>Church Practices</b>	Description of catechesis programs in various denominations	Church policy documents, manuals	✓ Completed
	Structure and content of Sunday school curricula	Church educational materials	✓ Completed
	Models of mentorship and discipleship used in churches	Church documents interviews and manuals	✓ Completed

	Evaluation of digital discipleship tools	Ministry tech platforms, reports	✓ Completed
<b>Family and Home Influence</b>	Role of parents/guardians in spiritual formation	Parenting & discipleship literature	✓ Completed
	Integration of faith practices in family settings	Practical theology texts	✓ Completed
<b>Scholarly Literature Review</b>	Books and journal articles on Christian education and child discipleship	Academic databases	✓ Completed
	Identification of best practices in child spiritual development	Peer-reviewed sources	✓ Completed
<b>Model Development</b>	Synthesis of data into a practical model for faith formation	Comparative analysis	✓ Completed
	Alignment of the model with <i>Proverbs 22:6</i>	Theological synthesis	✓ Completed

# APPENDIX II: TURNITIN REPORT



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