

# John 14:1-14

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[ 0 : 00 ] Do you be seated? We're taking a break from our series in Romans. I hope there'll be a number of baptisms this year,!

Let me read it to you. Proverbs 22 and verse 6. Train up a child in the way he or she should go, and even when he or she is old, he or she will not depart from it.

Train up a child in the way that he should go, and even when he's old, he will not depart from it.

Aaron and Bexy, like any parents, like all parents, want the best for their child.

Every one of us wants that. We want to give our children a good start in life. We want children to have a good start in life.

And that is a natural concern, isn't it, that parents have. That children should be put on the right road. But what is the right road?

[ 1 : 31 ] There's another proverb, and it says this. It says this. There is a way that seems right to man and woman, men and women, but it ends in death. And I don't know about you, but I don't want that for my child.

And you don't want that for your children or the children in your family. So how can we avoid that? How can we know what is the right way to bring up our children?

And for those of us who don't have children, you're part of this congregation, is there a right way to bring up children? Is it even possible, some people would ask that, wouldn't they?

We can't talk about there being a right way and a wrong way. One way is as good as another.

You've got to kind of work it out for yourself. Is it even possible to speak about a correct way of bringing up children?

There's lots of different ways out there. Many different philosophies. Lots of ideas around. It's a bit like Spaghetti Junction. You know that? I don't think I've ever been on it, but you know Spaghetti Junction, don't you?

[ 2 : 42 ] You've seen photos of it. If you haven't seen it, it's like a bowl of spaghetti. And you go in one way, and you think you've taken the right way, only to come out completely in the wrong direction.

And life can be like that, can't it? And so Aaron and Bexy, this morning, you are at Spaghetti Junction with the birth of your first child. Because you have to steer this little one, this little precious boy, onto the right path.

And you are concerned, you want him to go in the right direction, you want him to arrive at the right destination. And so what a relief it is, isn't it, to read this morning that the Bible tells you with a message from God that there is a way that he should go.

That's what the Bible says, isn't it? It says, can you see it? Train up a child in the way that he should go. And even when he's old, he will not depart from it. Two things in the verse that I want you to see, really simple, both begin with P.

First of all, a pathway and a promise. Let's look at the pathway. Train up a child in the way that he should go. So let me ask you this question.

[ 3 : 50 ] Do you know what Christians were called before they were first called Christians? Anybody? Anybody? What were Christians called before they were called Christians?

Followers of the way. Followers of the way. Followers of the way. That's very good, isn't it? Who said that? Followers of the way. That's right. Followers of the way. I think that's a really brilliant description, isn't it, of those first Christians.

And what I want to do, just for a little bit, is I want to kind of walk you through that and show you how they were called that. Hopefully, it will come up on the screen behind me. Is that going to work? I hope.

There you go. So there's six references in the Acts of the Apostles. And it's probably one of the most neglected themes in all of the Bible. So if those churches, early churches, had notice boards, they didn't have church buildings, but if they did notice boards, it would have not said International Presbyterian or First Baptist or Church of England or any of those things.

It would have said Followers of the Way. It's not just a denominational label, is it? It's a message. I think it communicates something to the outside world.

[ 5 : 02 ] It's very good marketing. This is how the world thought of them. So first of all, in Acts chapter 9, in verses 1 and 2, I'm hoping that's behind me, Saul, before he was converted, he said this, but Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, he went to the high priest, and he asked him for letters to the synagogue at Damascus so that if he found any belonging to the way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Next up is Acts 19, 8 and 9, where we're told Paul went to the synagogue at Ephesus and he spoke boldly. And he entered the synagogue and for three months he spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading people about the kingdom of God.

But when some people became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the way, before the congregation he withdrew, took his disciples with him.

And he reasoned daily in the hall of Tyrannus. So you go back right to the start of the Christian church and they're not called Anglicans, they're not called Baptists, they're not called Brethren, they're not called Presbyterians, they were called followers of the way.

And that is how they were known to the outside world. That's how they thought of themselves. Let me take you to the end of chapter 19. Chapter 19 verse 21.

[ 6 : 25 ] Now after these events Paul resolved in the spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and to go to Jerusalem saying after I've been there I must also see Rome. And having sent into Macedonia goes on to verse 23 saying about that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the way.

Chapter 22 verse 1 Paul is defending himself against the mob in Jerusalem. He's been arrested. He says brothers and fathers hear the defense that I now make before you. I'm a Jew born in Tarsus in Cilicia but I've been brought up to this city.

I was educated at the feet of Gamaliel this famous Jewish teacher. According to the strict manner of the law of our fathers I was zealous for God as you all are today.

I persecuted this way to the death. I hated Christians. Binding them and delivering them to prison both men and women. chapter 24 and verse 14 I confess to you that according to the way which they call a sect I worship the God of our fathers.

Believing everything laid down in the law and the prophets. It's not some Christian sect he's saying. This isn't some kind of John E. come lately group that have arrived that's appeared on the scene. It's rooted in the Old Testament.

[ 7 : 43 ] And then later on in that same chapter Felix says this having a rather accurate knowledge of the way put them off. So can you see just in that little brief thing that I've shown you this is how the early Christians described themselves.

That's how they were known to the world as followers of the way. Everyone can relate to that. It's not just a denominational label. It's a message isn't it?

It's a message that communicates to a world that has lost its way. So one Russian writer has described our world as a country in which there are no signposts because there's nowhere to go. It's like the council road man who was asked why are you digging that ditch? And he says I'm digging the ditch to get the money to buy the food to get the strength to dig the ditch.

And that's what life might be like for you. It may be that you get up in the morning and you go to work and then you come home and you eat your supper and you watch the telly and you go to bed and you get up in the morning you go to work you come home you eat your tea you watch your telly and then you go to bed and you get up in the morning and you go to work like a hamster on a wheel.

[ 9 : 03 ] Really busy but going nowhere. Doesn't life feel like that sometimes? Like a desert. It's a really dangerous place to live. A desert, isn't it?

Because the wind blows in the desert and the landscape changes and you lose your bearings and you don't know where you are. Is that what it feels like for you this morning? Maybe you look back and you thought there was a time where I thought I knew where I was going.

I had my bearings in life and I thought I really knew what life was all about where life was taking me but then the winds of time blew across the landscape of my life and now I'm afraid to admit that I'm lost.

And you don't know what it's all about. And so here are a group of people that claim to know where they're going. A group of people who claim to know what it's about.

And Ruben has been born into this company of people. Followers of the way. Here are people that know where they are going. Here are people who realize that life is not an end in and of itself.

[10:16] but it's a preparation for life to come. They're followers of the way. But what is this way that we're talking about?

It's not some kind of secret. It's not some kind of mystical knowledge that we've discovered. What is this way that the Bible is talking about?

It's a person, isn't it? Did you pick it up when Kephaz read it? What did Jesus say? Jesus said, what did he say? He said, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

And no one comes to the Father except through me. And sometimes Christians want to say, well, that's a triple claim. That he's the way, he's the truth, and he's the life. I don't really think it is that.

It's a single claim. In other words, Jesus is saying, I am the way, and I am the true way, and I'm the living way. And I'm the only way. I'm not a cul-de-sac, I'm not a detour, I'm not a diversion.

[11:20] There's loads of people that think, don't they, that Christianity, that's what it is. It's a bit like a cul-de-sac. It's a little bit like a diversion. If it helps you, that's great.

Great for you. If it helps you get through life and the bumps of life, well, that's all right with us. It's a diversion from the real business of living.

That's what people think. It's nothing of the sort. Jesus doesn't offer himself as a diversion. He says, I'm the way. I'm not a detour.

I'm not a diversion. I'm the true, and I'm the living way. So that if a man or a woman or a boy or a girl believes in the Lord Jesus, he's going places. Because he who believes in me, Jesus says, has eternal life.

He has it. And so the moment that you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are there.

[12:22] You have eternal life as a gift. So what is eternal life? It's not endless existence. No one wants that, do they?

No one wants to go on forever and ever living like chewing gum. You know how chewing gum we just, it loses all flavor, doesn't it? And you keep on chewing it, but you don't know why you're chewing it.

It's lost its flavor. Who wants life like that? Who wants endless existence? That's not heaven. That's hell. Eternal life is not endless existence.

This is eternal life, the Bible says. It is to know God and Jesus Christ in whom he has sent. And so eternal life is a relationship with the living God.

So time is a really funny thing when you're trying to think about it. When you're first in love with someone, if you are in love with someone and if you have a relationship with someone, then time seems to pass, doesn't it?

[13:22] And you're not aware of it passing. That first date where you went out and you met at 10.30 for brunch and you said goodbye to each other at half eleven at night and you don't know where the time went because you were so caught up in each other.

And that's what eternity is like for the Christian. It's not endless existence. It's not boredom. It is to know God, the most exciting person in the universe.

And Jesus says, I am the way to that. I am the true way and I am the living way and I am the only way. And no one else can do this for you. The Homan writer says, there was no other good enough to pay the price of sin.

He only could unlock the gate of heaven and another sin. There's no one else in the history of the universe who's claimed to be able to do it, to even pay the price of sin, to put himself between a God who is holy and other, who cannot even look at sin, to put himself between that God and a sinful people.

To take the punishment that is due to us. No one else even claims that but Jesus. I am the true and the living and the only way into the Father's presence.

[ 14 : 41 ] Without me, he's saying, you're lost. It's very offensive, isn't it? I'm the way. I'm not just the Western way. I'm not just the British way.

I'm not even the Christian way. As if there was some other kind of way you could choose. I am the way, the only way. Do you notice he says, he's not saying, I know the way.

He's not saying, I can point you in the right direction. He's not even saying, I have the way. I have the way. Follow my teaching and you'll be alright. He's not even saying that. He is saying something far more personal, isn't he?

He is saying, I am the way. And he draws attention to himself, to his own person. And that is what Christianity is all about.

It's to do with a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not about religion. It is about having a relationship with the living God.

[ 15 : 46 ] That's what the Bible talks about when it says that we're lost. So we're not lost in terms of our surroundings, are we? That is not the nature of human lostness.

We live at a time when our world has never been more aware of its surroundings. Scientists can tell us, can't they, the most amazing things about the universe in which we live. We're not lost.

We're not lost so much in terms of our surroundings. We're like, aren't we, the little boy or the little girl who's lost in London. They've lost sight of their parents. They've become cut off from their parents.

And the police find this little boy on Oxford Street and they say, what is your name? And the little boy can tell them his name. They say, do you know your address? And the little boy can tell the police his address.

And he can even tell the police what bus he should catch home. He's not lost in terms of his surroundings, is he? But he's lost in terms of his relationship.

[ 16 : 55 ] he's lost sight of his parents. And he's cold and he's miserable and he's disorientated because he's lost sight of his mother. And that's what the Bible means when it talks about lostness.

You're not lost in terms of your surroundings. You're lost in terms of your relationship with the God who made you. And what the Bible teaches is that sin, our rebellion, has broken that relationship. And sin has alienated us from the God who has made us. But Jesus Christ says, I'm the way back. I'm the true and I'm the living way. And I'm the only way that you can come into a relationship with the living God.

And that's what we want for little Reuben. Not religion. It is a religious ceremony that we performed this morning.

But we're not wanting religion for him. I once heard somebody describe religion as a grumbling appendix. I think that's a really good likeness.

[ 18 : 10 ] And maybe that's what your Christianity is. You're not really quite sure why it's there. And you're not quite sure what religion is all about.

But it grumbles. And it's there. And so every so often you give attention to it and you get it checked out. And sometimes it flares up and it gets infected and it causes you a bit of discomfort.

You see, if you are religious this morning and nothing else, the best thing you can do is have your religion removed. To get rid of it altogether. It's not a bit of good to you.

In fact, what it will do in the end is it will poison you. It can destroy you in the end. We don't want to make Reuben religious. God forbid that he should become religious. We want to see him have a relationship with the living God.

And faith in Jesus Christ is what this baptism is all about. It's what Christianity is all about. It's a people who know God through faith in Jesus Christ.

[ 19 : 16 ] Let me read to you this little passage I read this week talking about the Lord Jesus as the only way to God. It says this, In the early days of the railway in Britain, some towns refused to have the railways go through them because they feared that the sparks from the engine would set their properties alight.

Instead, the stations were set on the outskirts of the town to the immense inconvenience of later generations of townsmen. Explains an awful lot doesn't it? Why in Cambridge the station is miles from the centre.

It loads them. So it says they are to construct a branch line to the main line but not so this way with Christ. He runs right through the slums of Sin Town wherever the child of God can sometimes get.

He is available to us as we are. Where we are prayerless, cold and defeated we only have to acknowledge our true condition and repent of the sin that has caused it. And the grace of God reaches us in the very place where we are.

We are cleansed and restored. And there and then we have stepped onto the way. What is the way to God? What is the way that you are to set Reuben on?

[ 20 : 30 ] Jesus says I am the way to God and there is no one else. And that is very, very embarrassing today, isn't it? And we are supposed to respect all religion.

We do respect all religions but we are supposed to treat all religions the same around and about but Jesus will have none of it. He says I am the way and there is no other way. I am the true and the living and the only way and for anyone anywhere in the world to come to know God what's the way to God?

Jesus is the way to God. What's the way to Jesus? There is no way to Jesus. He is the way and so this morning as the word of God is explained and proclaimed and tried to be applied to your conscience Jesus is here this morning.

Don't think that you've got to find some way to him. He's come to you. So maybe you're thinking maybe I need to read the Bible a bit more. Maybe if I start to pray maybe I should attend church a bit more.

Then I may come to Jesus. No, Jesus is the way to those things. You've got it the wrong way around. You'll never understand the Bible until you come to Jesus. You'll never want to come to church until you come to Jesus.

[ 21 : 46 ] You'll find it an enormous bore unless you know Jesus. No, Jesus is the way to those things. Those things are not the way to Jesus.

And so Jesus is here this morning and he offers himself to you wherever you are in your life. Whatever problems you've got whatever condition you're in whatever the things you've gone through Jesus offers himself to you and he says I am the way.

And all you've got to do is acknowledge your need. All you've got to do is cry out to me in your heart of hearts and you're on the way. You're on the way to your father's house. You're on the way to the place that he is preparing for you.

That's all you need. And Jesus says I'll bring you home. Just acknowledge your need. Just admit that you're lost and step my way by faith and you are home.

You do not need religion to get you home. Jesus says come to me. And so that's what we want for our children.

[ 22 : 56 ] We want them to grow up trusting in the Lord Jesus knowing him as their Lord and Savior. That is the significance of what's gone on this morning. That we are setting Reuben apart to be a Christian.

We've not made him a Christian this morning by sprinkling water on him. We're not into magic. Water doesn't make anyone a Christian. Not even baptismal water.

Not even baptismal water that needs to be cooled down. It's a sign and a seal. It doesn't make people Christians. We've not made Reuben a Christian this morning.

But what we've done is we have set him apart that he might be Christ. We've put him on the way. That isn't going to happen automatically. Being born into a Christian home doesn't make him a Christian.

So what guarantee do we have that this child will grow to know the Lord Jesus for himself? And secondly it's the promise. Can you see the promise in the verse? Train up a child in the way that he should go and even when he's old he will not depart from it.

[ 24 : 05 ] And baptism is the sign and the seal of that promise. God is saying to Aaron and Bexie this morning train him up in the way that he should go. And I promise you that when he is old he won't depart from it.

And we need that promise. We need the strength of that promise. We need the means of grace. We need baptism to remind us of that promise.

As we go through life for a number of reasons. For one thing the way that he should go is not the way he would go. Left to himself. If you go to chapter 15 in Proverbs verse 15 of chapter 2 sorry just a little bit down we're told that folly is bound up in the heart of a child.

But the rod of discipline drives it far from him. Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. We sometimes underestimate children don't we?

Children know a great deal. Solomon who wrote Proverbs he doesn't mean when he says foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child that children are unintelligent.

[ 25 : 18 ] No it's talking about the way that we would go left to ourselves. And so even in a small child there is something twisted something not right.

And we don't like to think like that but that is what the Bible says. We're born with perversity in our hearts. This is something we pick up on the way.

We didn't pick it up when we went to junior school or when we went to secondary school. Some of you know David in the Old Testament he wrote most of the Psalms he was the great king and when he was in his middle age his late middle age disaster came he had a moral collapse.

He stole another man's wife. He got found out to try and cover up his tracks. He had the husband killed. And when David actually sat back and he reflected on his life and he confessed his sin to God he traced it back and he said my sin it began when did it begin?

Right at the very beginning. Psalm 51 says I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me. Why did David go at the age of 50 and car crash his life?

[ 26 : 36 ] Why did he wreck another family for his own convenience? Why did he do such a terrible thing? And David says do you know what I can trace it back to my mother's womb? The moment I began is the moment I was a sinner.

Before I ever did a sinful thing before I ever behaved in a selfish way I was already a sinner by nature. And that's true of me. That's true of Reuben as adorable as he is.

he should go. The way he should go is not the way that he would go left to himself.

And I remember you will need to remind him as you bring him up, as you train him and discipline him and you correct foolishness, that perversity. The last thing that Christian parents should do to their children is let them just express themselves.

because what we are by nature is not what we should be. Left to ourselves is a disaster.

Foolishness is bound in the heart of all children so parents are to correct that in the ways of Christ.

[ 27 : 45 ] And so we need this reminder of baptism. This promise brought home to us that God can cleanse our hearts from sin like the water can wash away the dirt.

when he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. And so you are to teach him that and to tell him that and to model that and to pray for him for that. But the way he should go is not the way he would go.

You cannot leave him to himself. We all like sheep have gone astray. We've all turned everyone to his own way but the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Left to ourselves we do our own thing but the truth of the Bible is that God has provided a saviour.

And God himself has come in the person of his own son to Calvary to take our sin upon himself.

And so we've got to say to little Reuben and to our children you and I we are sinners by nature and if you carry on in your sin you will perish.

You will end up in eternity without God but God has provided a way of salvation. And God himself has come to take that sin upon himself at the cross and so believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

[ 28 : 55 ] You've got every encouragement to believe. So did God put you into this family by accident? And God has promised that if you repent and if you believe in Jesus Christ he will wash away your sin.

That's what baptism means. And so we bring up our children on that promise God made at our baptism. We pray that promise every day that God will do this for you.

And that's one reason why we need this promise. Another reason. The way that he should go and the way that we would go is radically different from any other way.

Christianity is not respectable. If you at the time you could go through those passages that I quoted to you from Acts and you'd see in every context there was persecution. And we don't like what's different.

And so Paul says the apostle he says all who would live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. The world won't persecute you if you're good.

[ 30 : 03 ] It'll pat you on the back. The world won't persecute you if you're noble. It'll give you an MBE. It can appreciate that but godliness is something different. And we're not talking about Reuben growing up with good morals or about kind living, about being decent.

But godliness is so radically different that the world will not tolerate it. And when they saw it in the Lord Jesus they smashed it on the cross.

And Jesus says if they crucify me they will crucify you. And so at baptism there is something isn't it? It's funny when the baby gets covered in water.

It's a beautiful thing but it's also a really really serious thing. baptism is a putting off of one way of life and bringing him into a new way of life.

And so Aaron and Bexley you will need to train up Reuben. You can teach without training but training must involve teaching. You will show him and model it and live it out a radically different Christian way.

[ 31 : 14 ] And so don't be afraid to be different little man. Don't allow your family life to be dictated by the world so that you become like everyone else. Live it out as a Christian.

Train the child in the way that he should go. Model it and pattern it and live it out. And God says I promise you that when he's old despite all the opposition despite everything that is against him and telling him otherwise and all the pressures God says my grace is stronger than all that.

I promise you. I promise you. Martin Luther the German reformer as I finish. He's a man who kind of suffered incredibly.

He's in his room working once and he said it was as if the devil was in the room with me. And he was accusing me and tempting me of all sorts of things. He felt he was going out of his mind.

And Luther picked up the inkwell and he threw it across the room. And he shouted at the devil. He says this. He says I'm a baptized man. I am baptized.

[ 32 : 21 ] I'm baptized. God has made promises to me in my baptism. I say I go to the pub tomorrow night.

I've got a meeting tomorrow night. So I won't. But I'm there and these very attractive girls come and talk to me. You probably think oh it's very unusual. I'm standing at the bar.

What do you do at that point? I don't know what you do at that point. But what do you do? I go like this. I'm a married man. You hold up your wedding ring. If you're ever in a pub and you see somebody taking off their wedding ring, don't go near that person.

Because this ring is a sign of God's promises. I'm a baptized man. God's love. God's love. So I hope some of you are thinking about becoming Christians but I need to tell you that sometimes it's pretty hostile to be a Christian like it was for Martin Luther.

And you remind yourself remind yourself Reuben in years to come I'm baptized. I'm engaged to be Christ. I've been put in Christ's way. I'm not going to go any other way.

[ 33 : 33 ] I renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil. I'm Christ. I'm a baptized man. Let's pray.