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The Art of Shaping Lives Instead of Just Directing Them

Telling People What to Do Is Not Enough; ONLY True Training Changes Lives

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July 25, 2025 – From Telling to Training: Cultivating Growth & Transformation

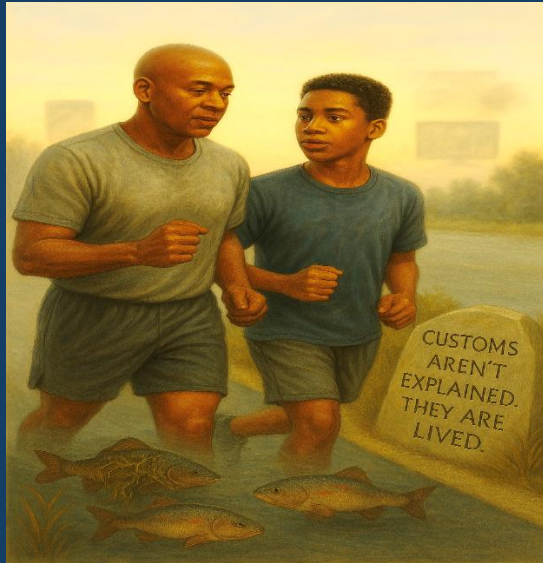
Too often, we think change begins with advice. We tell our children, those in addiction recovery, or people re-entering society after incarceration, to “do better” or “go the right way.” But Proverbs 22:6 doesn’t say, “Tell the way to them.” It says, “Train up a child in the way that he should go...” This distinction is the difference between surface-level guidance and life-altering transformation.

“People, including myself, are making the grave mistake of telling our children, those in incarceration, addicted to drugs et cetera, the way that they should go

instead of training them in it.”

Training is not just instruction. It is involvement. It is repetition. It is patience. Therefore, merely talking to someone does not make them fit, qualified, proficient, or prepared for life. You must train them (that is, teach and drill them, give instruction to them, and discipline them et cetera until they learn it). This type of training is like physical exercise. Therefore, it must be repeated until what you are teaching becomes second nature, that is, until it becomes a custom, because customs are not just explained and discussed; they are lived. In other words, customs are

not passed down by just talking about them. They are passed down through active training until they become an inherent part of an individual's way of life.



Just as you guide the growth of a plant by attaching it to something firm to direct it to grow in a desired direction, so must we do with our people during the entirety of their development, especially those with ingrained behaviors, who have grown wild due to neglect. If we leave them unattended, both plants and people can "grow wild," veering off course. This highlights the critical need for instruction, discipline, and drills to foster habits that become second nature, because when we walk with them daily, guiding their

direction, their growth becomes intentional.

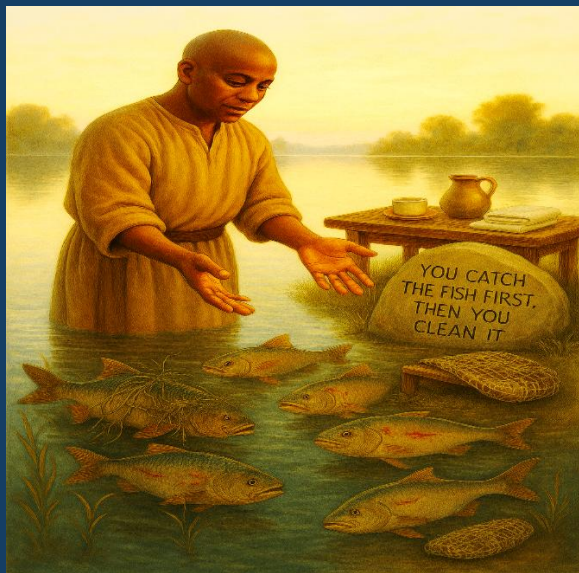
The Art of Fishing—and Catching People

The analogy of fishing provides a rich framework for understanding the process of guiding people toward positive change. As the saying goes, "Give a man a fish, and he will eat for a day; teach a man to fish, and he will eat for a lifetime." This emphasizes the importance of imparting survival skills and fostering self-sufficiency. Jesus's call to his disciples to become "fishers of men" extends this metaphor, implying a deliberate and artful approach to engaging with individuals.

Jesus said to his disciples, "I will make you fishers of men." That is not a casual statement. It is a blueprint for ministry, mentorship, and rehabilitation.

Anyone who has ever fished knows that it is an art to catching a fish. You do not start by trying to catch the fish. You start by studying the fish. What does it like? When is it active? What bait draws it

in? Then you go fishing—with patience. You don't yank the line or rush the process. You wait, prepared. People are the same.



“You catch the fish first, then you clean it. In other words, you can't clean a person's life up before you catch them.”

Yet so many of us try to fix someone before we have ever reached them. We judge the addict, the prisoner, the struggling teen—expecting change before we have built connection. But Jesus didn't work like that. He caught people in the midst of their chaos, then trained them through love, repetition, and truth.

Once you catch the fish—then the cleaning begins. That's

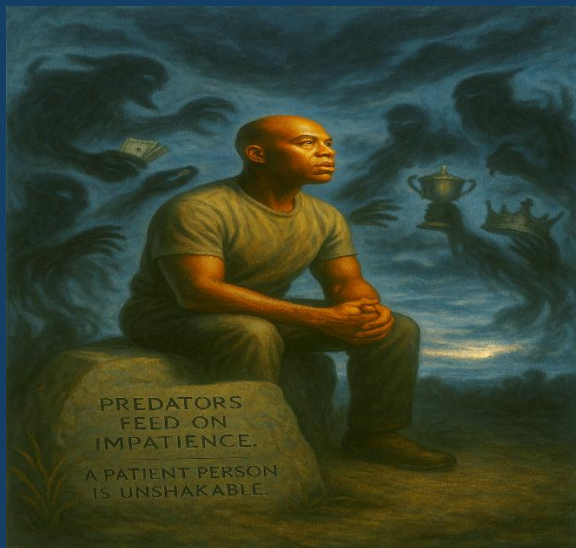
where Proverbs 22:6 applies again. And although the verse is written about a child, its principle applies to anyone: former inmates, addicts, adults trying to change. We are all children in the process of retraining.

Habits are formed by routines. A routine is just a series of small, daily decisions. When you do the same thing every day, your body and mind start to default to it. That's how bad habits are formed—but it is also how good ones are built. You trained your mind to be what it is now—whether you meant to or not. But here's the good news: it can be retrained. In other words, at the heart of sustained change lies the establishment of a daily routine. Our routines dictate what we become. If we aspire to be a doctor, we must commit to a daily routine to study and practice, which leads to becoming a doctor. If we wish to achieve nothing, a routine of inaction will suffice. Moreover, a daily routine begins with a scheduled plan, and adherence to that schedule solidifies the routine.

“Since routine forms habit, then change your routine and you will change your habit.”

Patience: The Forgotten Discipline

One of the most overlooked parts of training is patience. James 1:2-4 gives a roadmap for how to handle challenges: Let patience have her perfect work. This is vital—not just for those being trained, but for the one who is doing the training.



Without patience, we rush to fix problems. And in our rush, we can make things worse or fall prey to manipulators. Predators feed on impatience. They offer quick solutions, flashy distractions, or shortcuts that end in deeper bondage.

But a patient person is unshakable. They want nothing—not because they lack desire, but because their desires are disciplined. This, too, must be trained. Just as a child learns not to touch a hot stove, we learn through experience how to avoid baited traps that look good but destroy lives.

Tough Love and Real Growth

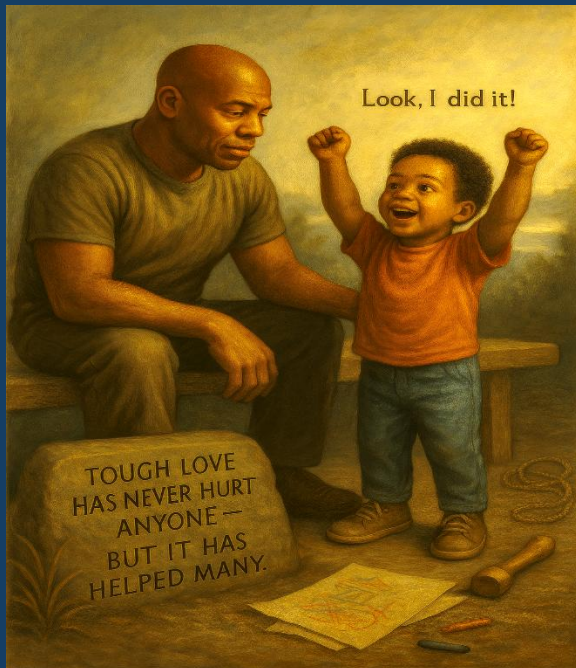
Remember, there will be resistance, because some people don't want to change, while others feel they can't, or they are convinced that they don't need to. But even if they fight back—like a wild fish thrashing on the line—you don't let go.

Training often involves what some call tough love. And though it may feel harsh in the moment, it is an act of mercy. It is like potty training a child who cries, rebels, and resists, but you persist. And one day, they stand proud and say, “Look, I did it!”

“Tough love has never hurt anyone—but it has helped many.”

This is our calling. To be trainers—not just teachers. To walk with people. To build

routines. To model truth. To fish patiently. To clean with grace. To train until the habits become customs, and those customs become tradition. Only then, as Proverbs says, will they not depart from it—because it is not just what they know. It is who they have become.



Our Collective Responsibility

The principles of understanding human behavior, cultivating patience, and implementing consistent training are not just for parents or rehabilitators; they are fundamental to building a more functional and supportive society. If we fail to actively train individuals in

the way that they should go, providing them with the tools, discipline, and ongoing support that they need to adapt and thrive, then we have failed them.

If we do not this, then we have failed society by not doing our part to raise and lead our people. Therefore, it will not be that these students, addicts, prisoners et cetera fail in society to adapt, but we have failed them by not helping them to adapt.

P.S.: Let's go Beyond this Ideal to Address Reality

As we champion the art of training over mere telling, it's vital to acknowledge a significant challenge that we often face, which is a prevailing societal tendency towards disengagement.

While this article outlines the how of effective guidance, we must also confront the why it is often neglected.

Many parents, caregivers, and institutions, whether due to overwhelming pressures, a lack of resources, or simply a desire for convenience, can fall into the trap of merely

"managing" or "distracting" individuals rather than genuinely investing in their growth. We see this when children are dropped off at football practice or other activities primarily to occupy them, or when rehabilitation and incarceration becomes more about containment than transformation. This isn't always intentional malice, but it can create a system where the deeper work of training is inadvertently sidestepped.

This reality makes our call for active training even more critical. It underscores that true transformation demands not just knowledge, but a profound shift in commitment and a willingness to be truly present and engaged. Our collective responsibility is to resist this tide of disengagement and champion the dedicated, patient, and sometimes "tough love" approach that truly cultivates growth and allows individuals to thrive.