

Chanak

"Train a child in the way they should go - even when they are old they will not turn from it."

Proverbs 22:6

"Train" is sometimes translated, "Start off", but we can still miss the nuances and the implications of the Hebrew. Here, the word, "Chanak" is used. **There are four main ideas associated with the word and I think they hold the keys to how we might nurture, guide and disciple children and young people.**



// **To Dedicate.** Often accompanied by sacrifice, this was serious stuff - a dedication to the Lord - think of Hannah bringing Samuel to the temple and dedicating Him to the Lord's service and you get the idea. So then, as we begin with children, is it us who are the primary agents of change? Do we bring our children before the Lord - for they are His, not ours - when are children ready to serve God's people? What does this look like in our context?



// **To Throttle.** This was about constricting or narrowing in order to discipline, like - a bit in a horse's mouth for example. Reigns on a toddler might be an equivalent as they learn to walk for themselves. *"This is the way, walk in it"* (Isaiah 30:21) springs to mind. There are marks of "The Way" that we are following, the narrow Way. There is something here about cost, about a path less travelled, about what we might give up to find Christ and walk close to Him. How do we explore this in our work with children and young people? Are there many ways - or one way? Are we clear that "The Way" is Jesus, not "our way" of doing things?



// **To Introduce.** In discipleship terms this is about encounter. I know young people who can tell me all about Jesus - what the Bible teaches about who He is, they know facts, they know the narrative, they can tell us about His miracles and stories. What is transformative is to meet Jesus Himself. Do we make space for encounter? Do we speak of our own "lived right now" relationship with God? Do we, actually, introduce our children to Jesus?



// **To Initiate.** This is about creating an appetite for something. In order to get a baby to suckle, it was the habit in the Middle East to put oil or crushed dates in the roof of a babies mouth so they could begin to get a taste for food. How do we "try out" our faith together? What "works" in our faith practice that could be doing alongside our children? Do we invite them to join in, to "get a taste" for life with God?