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DO NOT PROVOKE YOUR CHILDREN

One of the great challenges and struggles so many homes wrestle with is in the exercise of parental discipline. While the Scriptures are very clear that parents are to administer discipline as a way to train their children to be obedient (*Prov. 29:15; 22:15; 23:13-14; 19:18*), and children are admonished to respect their parents and learn from the discipline they receive (*Prov. 15:12; 13:1; 29:1*), every parent faces the great challenge of maintaining the proper balance in the way discipline is given. If discipline is too light and inconsistent, the lessons we seek to incorporate into their behavior are completely lost (*1 Sam. 3:10-14; 2:12-17, 22-25*). When discipline is

too harsh and unwarranted, parents run the risk of actually driving children into further disobedience and rebellion rather than correcting them (*Eph. 6:4*). One of my favorite lines from the movie *It's A Wonderful Life* is when Clarence learns his mission is to go help a man named George Bailey. "What's the matter with him, is he sick?" "No, worse, **he's discouraged.**"

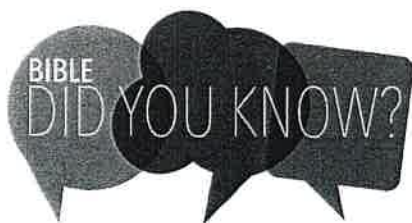
Discouragement is that cruel virus which attacks the eyes, blinding us to the point we are unable to see the hope that lies ahead. It was discouragement which prevented the Israelite slaves in Egypt from believing the hope Moses sought to instill in them in their pending deliverance. "Then I will

take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians...’ So Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses on account of their despondency and cruel bondage,” (Ex. 6:7, 9). It is this dangerous virus of discouragement, resulting from excessively harsh and unnecessary discipline, that Paul warned fathers to be aware they are capable of instilling in their children as well. *“Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart,” (Col. 3:21).* Disciplining our children in such a way that prevents them from seeing the hope of success and acceptance is perhaps the most abusive form of discipline there is. Paul was even able to speak of the shining encouragement of hope set before him despite the incredible hardships he endured. *“...we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but*

not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed...” (2 Cor. 4:8-9). Our children are not to be so harshly chastised over every insignificant point of contention to the point where all hope in ever being seen as doing anything right at all is completely abandoned. God, the perfect Father (*Mt. 7:11*), demonstrated this most beautifully significant manner of disciplining just right without crushing hope in the garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned in their disobedience to God’s instruction that they refrain from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, His punishment was swift and severe. Eve would bear children in pain and hardship, Adam would struggle in sweat and hardship to grow food and both would be banished from the presence of God and ultimately return to the dust of the ground in death (*Gen. 3:16-24*). What is interesting about the punishments God distributes is that they all take aim at various forms of seed, bringing hardship in a variety of ways, while admonishing

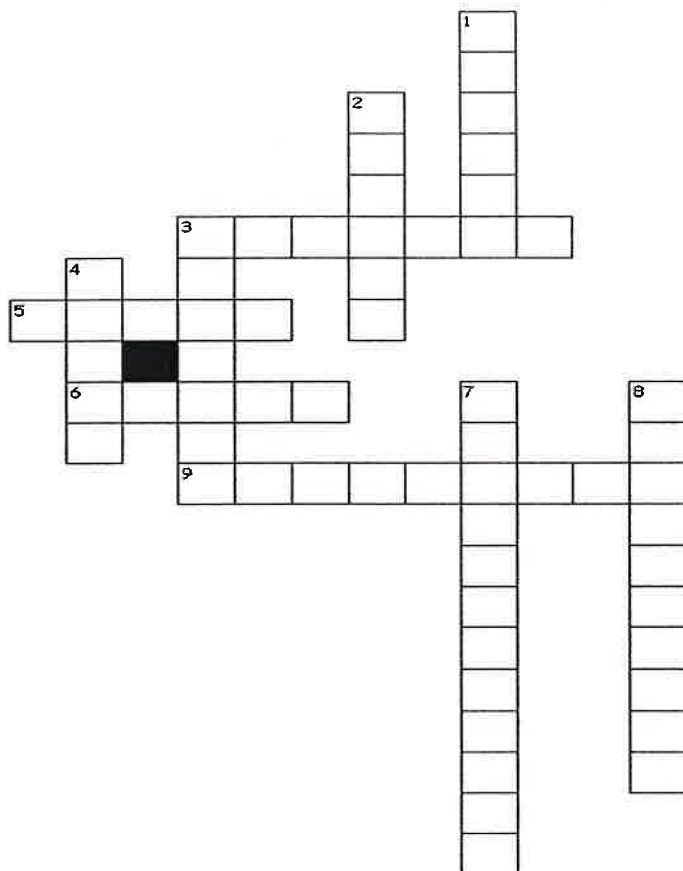
and encouraging them to realize the seed will not be destroyed. While God states there will constantly be strife and bitter conflict and struggle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, ultimately the woman's seed would destroy the seed of the serpent, crushing his seed on the head despite the woman's seed being bitten on the heel (*Gen. 3:15*). While growing the seed of children in the womb of Eve would consequently be endured with great pain and discomfort, it still would not hinder them from experiencing the joy of bringing new life into the world (*Gen. 3:16*). While cultivating the seed of the earth would prove increasingly difficult in a cursed ground, it still would not completely hinder them from eating bread and the plants of the field (*Gen. 3:17-19*). And ultimately, while the beginning spiritual seed God had planted of mankind's coexistence with Him would be removed from the garden, there was hope planted in their hearts of a redeemer who would restore

the broken relationship allowing us to be reborn (*Jn. 3:3-8; Gen. 3:15*). Let us learn from our perfect Father, who teaches us to follow His steps and correct our children in love while being careful not to extinguish the light of hope in their future success.
– Daniel Ruegg



Paul was a father figure to Timothy. "To Timothy, my true child in the faith," 1 Tim. 1:2. "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly...But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father," Philip. 2:19,22. "To Timothy, my beloved son," 2 Timothy 1:2

The ULTIMATE CRSSWORD



ACROSS

3. The disciples needed prayer and ____ to cast out a demon (Mt. 17:21)
5. Food can't defile us because it doesn't go into this (Mk. 7:18-19)
6. Jesus set this in front of His disciples to illustrate humility (Mt. 18:2-4)
9. Jesus spoke this Aramaic word to a deaf man to open his ears (Mk. 7:34-35)

DOWN

1. This tradition was a way to avoid helping parents financially (Mk. 7:11-12)
2. Instead of speaking, God told Peter to do this to His beloved Son (Mt. 17:5)
3. Peter thought he should only do this 7 times to his brother (Mt. 18:21)
4. The one forgiven 10,000 talents had none of this for another (Mt. 18:33)
7. This happened to Jesus on a mountain with 3 disciples (Mt. 17:2)
8. These, handed down by the elders, were observed carefully (Mk. 7:3-5)