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CULTIVATING INDEPENDENCE

"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward" (Psalm 127:3, ESV). I can clearly remember the day I heard our eldest child's first cry and held him in my arms. As you look into the face of your child you can't help but wonder, "What then will this child be?" (Luke 1:66) The days turn into months and the months into years and it seems that all of a sudden, they are grown and getting ready to leave home. As a parent, your mind is full of questions, doubts, and concerns. Have I taught them everything they need to know? Have I prepared them to be independent and to make their own way in this world? This reminds me of my oldest son learning how to walk. I would hold his little hands in mine and walk backwards as he took each wobbly, unsure step. He would laugh and keep walking as long as I held his hands. But if I let go, he would get really upset. Sometimes he would just drop down and cry. Then one day,

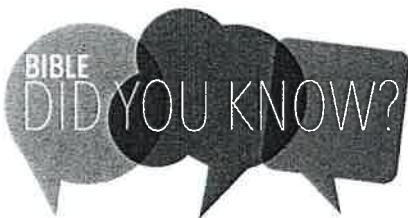
I let go and stayed just out of reach. He fussed and cried but kept moving towards me. I kept moving back and before you know it, he was walking all on his own. God is the giver of every good thing. I am continually amazed at how much the Lord entrusts to each of us (Jas. 1:17). He not only entrusts us with our own lives and souls, but by His grace and mercy He has chosen to entrust those who undertake the task of conceiving and bearing children with the task of preparing the next generation of precious souls to love and serve Him. As parents we must cultivate independence in our children and learn to let them go when the time comes. But how do we that? "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). As parents, we have been charged by God to bring our children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4; cp. Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6:7). When we stop and really consider what

that means, it encompasses a lot since God is the Lord of all of life. We have to teach our children that there is a God and they need to seek and serve Him (Heb. 11:6). We have to teach them about sin and salvation, about good and evil, and about how to discern between the two (Heb. 5:14). We have to teach them what it means to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37-40). We have to teach them about putting the needs of others before themselves (Phil. 2:1-4). We have to teach them to do what is right (Heb. 12:5-11). We have to teach them about priorities (Matt. 6:33). We have to teach them what it means to be a true disciple of Christ (Eph. 4:17-5:21). This amounts to our having to teach them about how to be a good child, friend, spouse, parent, employee, etc. (Eph. 5:22-6:9). It also means giving them practical hands-on instruction in the seemingly mundane tasks of everyday life, such as chores, money and finance, driving a car, and a host of other things. A lot of time must be spent throughout the days and years repeatedly instilling these and other vital truths and emphasizing not only the what and the how, but why we should do things a certain way. We have to teach our children to reason things through on their own with God and His word as their guide. However, it isn't enough just to teach them all these things. We all know the proverb, "Like father, like son" and "Like mother, like daughter"

(Ezek. 16:44). We have to model independence for our children. We have to go beyond teaching the principles and precepts that govern life and show them in action. We have to give them a pattern to follow and imitate (1 Cor. 11:1). This means letting them see us succeed but also fail and, hopefully, how to recover when things go wrong. But if we really want to cultivate independence in our children, we are going to have to let them do things for themselves. This can be a real struggle. It is so easy to just do things for them instead of letting them do them for themselves. It is so easy to be overbearing or overprotective and not let them struggle. Children need us to trust in them to give them the confidence to be independent. That means we must let them have the freedom and opportunity to make choices. Of course, this is something we do gradually. But from an early age there are a lot of things they can do for themselves. As they demonstrate they can be trusted in small things, we should allow them more freedom in more and more areas as they grow older (Luke 16:10). Even if they fail and make mistakes, they can learn from them. In fact, allowing them to fail while they are still under our watchful care and protection is a great kindness that can safeguard them in the future. It may keep them from making catastrophic choices later in life. Learning the value of heeding wise instruction and the consequences of not doing

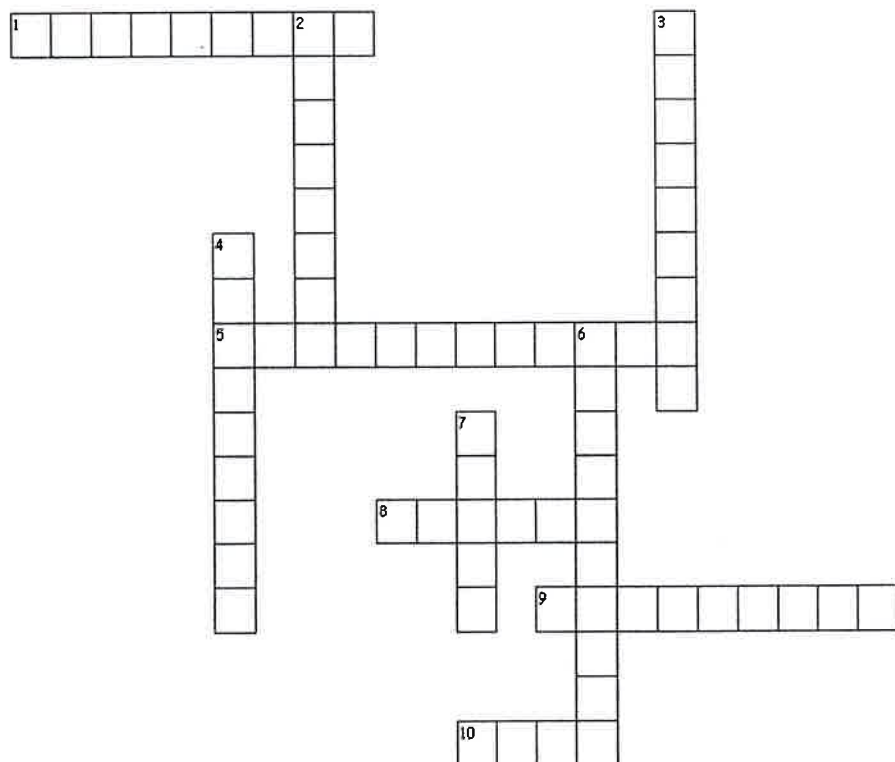
so is a valuable lesson that children can begin learning from a very early age (Prov. 1:8-9). Again, as a parent our goal is to help them mature and put away childish ways, to be able to reason things out for themselves, and to make the best choices they can that will please God and do the most good (1 Cor. 13:11; Heb. 5:14). At some point, the time will come when your children are grown and are ready to leave your home and start their own (Gen. 2:24). Helping them make this transition will require both you and your child to change. On the one hand, you will always be their mom or dad and they should always respect and honor you (Eph. 6:1-2). But on the other hand, they are no longer a dependent child and you no longer have the same authority over them as you did when they were living under your roof. They have to start interacting with you more as peers and equals in many ways. Having open and honest conversations with them about this new stage in your relationship is key. Talk about mutual respect and proper boundaries. This summer, when our oldest came home from college, we talked about our expectations of him and his expectations of us. We try to extend to him the same courtesy as we would any other adult who stays with us, but we ask him to extend that same courtesy and respect to us (Matt. 7:12; Eph. 5:21). Let them know you trust them to make wise choices, but let them know advice and support are

always available if they need it. Remind them about how God expects all of us to consider the advice and counsel of those that are older and more experienced (Titus 2:1-4; 1 Pet. 5:5). – Phillip Stuckey



***“Do not be envious
of evil men, nor
desire to be with
them; for their minds
devise violence, and
their lips talk of
trouble. By wisdom a
house is built, and by
understanding it is
established; and by
knowledge the rooms
are filled with all
precious and
pleasant riches.”
Proverbs 24:1-4***

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ACROSS

1. Name of field where Judas hung himself. (Acts 1:18-19)
5. Those chosen for apostleship were witnesses of _____ (Acts 1:22)
8. Jesus presented Himself alive by many convincing _____ (Acts 1:3)
9. Jesus wanted the Apostles to be His _____ (Acts 1:8)
10. They drew _____ to see if Joseph or Matthias was an apostle (Acts 1:26)

DOWN

2. The lot fell to _____ to replace Judas. (Acts 1:26)
3. The Apostles asked Jesus if he was _____ the kingdom to Israel. (Acts 1:6)
4. One put forward to replace Judas was called _____ (Acts 1:23)
6. When Judas hung himself his _____ gushed out (Acts 1:18)
7. Jesus was taken up to Heaven in a _____ (Acts 1:9-11)