

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY®

PRESENTS



**SEVEN  
TRAITS  
OF  
EFFECTIVE  
PARENTING**

**DANIEL P. HUERTA**  
MSW, LCSW, VP OF PARENTING



In *7 Traits of Effective Parenting* Daniel Huerta hits that rare sweet spot of “deep and wide.” Like a skilled conductor, he orchestrates the big sound of seven key movements but then spotlights numerous small instruments of practical, easily understood applications that make creating our own family symphony seem possible. You’ll be inspired and equipped as you listen to and then apply this fine work.

**GARY THOMAS**

Author of *Sacred Marriage: What If God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy?* and *Sacred Parenting: How Raising Children Shapes Our Souls*

Moms and Dads—this book is worth reading. The content won’t overwhelm you. Danny’s stories will encourage you, and his thought-provoking analogies, relevant and realistic exercises, and complete ideas will inspire you to grow. I also love his use of Scripture! Danny’s counseling background and love for God qualify him to write this important and empowering roadmap to parenting success. No matter the ages of your children or if you’ve experienced some major challenges or not, you’ll discover you can develop the 7 traits. You’ll want to!

**DR. KATHY KOCH**

Founder/President of Celebrate Kids, Inc., cofounder of Ignite the Family, and author of *8 Great Smarts: Discover and Nurture Your Child’s Intelligences* and *Screens and Teens: Connecting with Our Kids in a Wireless World*.

There are a lot of books out there on the topic of parenting. I should know, I've written a few myself! This one, complete with Scripture, is a good resource for Christian parents.

**DR. KEVIN LEMAN**

New York Times bestselling author of *Have a New Kid by Friday*

Every parent I know is looking for help in raising children. Danny Huerta coaches us as moms and dads with the profound insights he's gained from his years as a family therapist and the timeless wisdom of God's Word. I love how practical and accessible this book is!

**BOB LEPINE**

Cohost, FamilyLife Today

With personal anecdotes and applicable Scripture, Daniel Huerta lays out useful and realistic guidelines to better parenting. Not just another book on parenting, it looks deeper while providing practical ways to apply the wisdom that is, at times, right in front of our eyes. Great job, Daniel!

**MARK HANCOCK**

CEO, Trail Life USA

*7 Traits of Effective Parenting* is like family counseling, with all of the wisdom and none of the commute. I've already begun incorporating some of the exercises and illustrations with my own family, and I'm a better parent

for it. Whether you're a new parent or a seasoned veteran, you're sure to encounter some "aha" moments as you read this valuable resource.

JESSIE MINASSIAN

Author

As a parent, I am always looking for great tools to empower my parenting and to gain wisdom. If you can relate to me in this way, I would recommend Daniel Huerta's fabulous book *7 Traits of Effective Parenting*. With practical stories, relevant Scriptures, and truths he's learned from his very effective practice, Daniel provides encouragement and help for all parents in all stages of the journey!

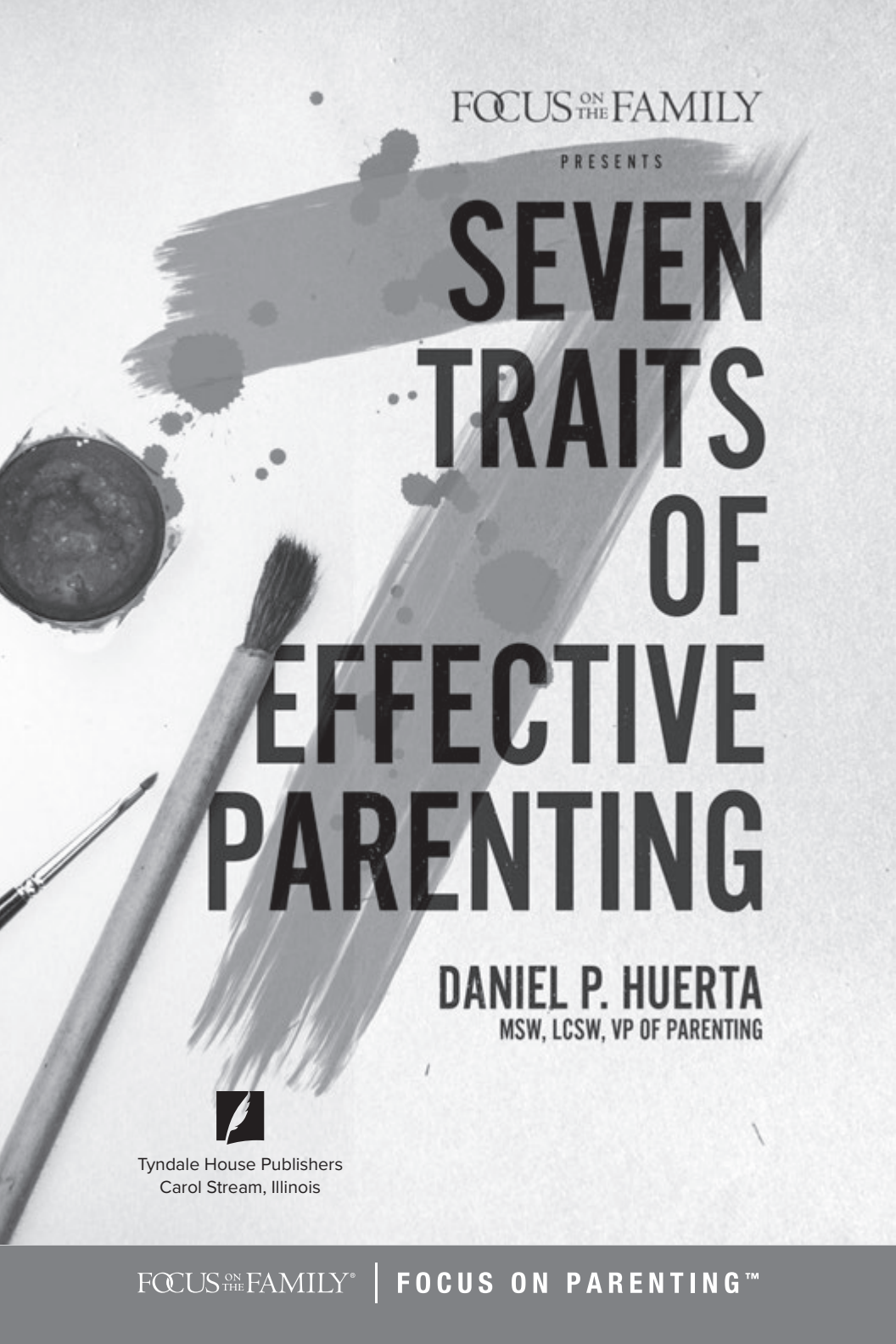
REBECCA ST. JAMES

Christian singer-songwriter and author



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Tyndale House Publishers  
Carol Stream, Illinois

*Focus on the Family Presents 7 Traits of Effective Parenting*

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A Focus on the Family book published by Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188

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Cover design by Mitch Bolton

Interior illustrations by Mitch Bolton and Michael Harrigan

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at [csresponse@tyndale.com](mailto:csresponse@tyndale.com), or call 1-800-323-9400.

ISBN 978-158997-978-9

Printed in the United States of America

26 25 24 23 22 21 20  
7 6 5 4 3 2 1



*I dedicate this book to my wife, Heather, who has loved me and come alongside me in this imperfect and exciting journey of marriage and raising our children. I love you and thank you for your hard work and dedication to a spiritual foundation in our home.*

*To my two kids, Alex and Lexi, who are truly incredible gifts from God. There are several stories in this book displaying God's transformation of us through you and you through us. What a joy it is for us to be your parents. I'm thankful for the many things we have learned and enjoyed along the way, and I'm looking forward to more.*

*To my parents, Carol and Ricardo, who worked hard at providing a spiritual foundation for our family growing up and faithfully prayed for each of us every day. Thank you for your love, sacrifices, guidance, and great memories.*

*To my mother- and father-in-law, Rita and Don. You have been patient, loving, and generous toward me. I love seeing how you love your daughters. Thank you for raising a daughter whom I love and for providing a spiritual foundation for her from the time she was a little girl.*



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## PREFACE

I'VE KNOWN DANNY HUERTA for many years now as a member of our team at Focus on the Family. As our Vice President of Parenting and Youth, he has lent his voice to our radio program numerous times and spearheaded important programs, including *Alive to Thrive*, a suicide-prevention resource for parents and youth leaders, and *Launch into the Teen Years*, a comprehensive primer for that critical stage, including the topic of sexuality, for parents and preteens. He has also been interviewed by Fox News, *Christianity Today*, and numerous other outlets, and has written for the *Washington Post*.

If you've never had the chance to "hear" from Danny through Focus on the Family or one of those other venues, I'm pleased that you'll now have the opportunity to do so within the pages of this, his very first book. There is great wisdom and practical application to be found here, informed by Danny's years of experience as a school social worker and licensed clinical social worker counseling families, and his ongoing pursuit of a doctorate in psychology at California Southern University.

Those are important credentials, but the title Danny wears most proudly is "dad." He and his wife, Heather, are the parents of two wonderful children, Alex and Lexi. More

than his extensive clinical and professional experience, what you'll find in this book are the honest and heartfelt words of someone who is in the throes of raising kids, just like you are. As you read, you'll likely find yourself nodding in recognition as Danny describes the joys and challenges he and Heather have encountered in their own parenting journey.

Although it is built upon a solid foundation of research and experience, *7 Traits of Effective Parenting* is not an academic, clinical textbook written by someone who is disconnected from the subject matter. It's more like a conversation—sometimes funny and always practical—with a parent and family therapist who is in the trenches *with* you, doing his best to raise children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4) and to counsel families through God's unending and trustworthy wisdom.

I can't think of a better recommendation than that, and I believe the combination of those two elements—clinical expertise and real-world practicality—makes *7 Traits of Effective Parenting* an indispensable resource for any parent. I hope you'll agree.

Jim Daly  
*President, Focus on the Family*

## FOREWORD

THERE'S SOMETHING AMAZING popping up on college campuses across the country. At UC Berkeley, students are lining up to take an “adulting” class. The same thing is happening at the “Adulting School” in Portland, Maine. Across the country, young men and women are looking for help filling in something that’s missing from their lives.

What’s missing are core skills related to growing up and doing relationships well—the kind of bonding and wise-living actions you’d think everyone would have seen in their homes growing up. But in today’s world, you’d be wrong. That’s because there’s a crucial thing missing in many homes today: *modeling*—that gift of watching someone, up close and personal, do life well.

Like so many, I was desperate for a model. My emotional balance sheet was heavily weighted toward brokenness rather than health. Without a father in the home and with my mother sick or gone a great deal of the time, I was left with television and other lost friends as my role models. This combination of circumstances left me, as a young man, feeling that there was no way I could ever be successful at marriage. Much less could I imagine being a father who didn’t totally

ruin his kids. It was like facing the future with at least one relational arm tied behind my back.

But then I walked into a home like Danny Huerta's.

Not literally *Danny's* home. You see, as I read this helpful, practical, encouraging book, I was reminded over and over again of an incredible gift God gave me, which was the opportunity to walk into the home of a family that modeled health and connection.

For me, that family was the Barrams. Their home was genuinely filled with light and love. It was a home with parents who lived with wisdom and related to their family members with honor and encouragement. Not perfectly. But there was humor, connection, and correction without shame or anger. I would walk away from each visit to the Barrams' home saying to myself, "So that's how you do that!" And at an even deeper level, "And that's how I'm going to do it one day with my family!" What a gift that was!

With this book, let me invite you to walk into the Huerta home. It's a visit (and book) based around seven words. He calls them "traits." Each is foundational for healthy relating. And each trait is based on Scripture, sound science, and great counseling insights from a master counselor. But it's not just the solid information I found so helpful. It's all the "Here's how the Huerta family lives this out" sidebars and examples that put a "can't miss" face on health and love.

If you're like me, the struggle isn't with the question "Are these traits true?" I'd love to have each trait reflected in my home and life. But rather, the difficulty is in "How do you



live out these traits in real life?” Figuring this out is what’s important if they’re to truly transfer to my home—and to yours.

So enjoy your visit to the Huerta family. Like the Barrams, they’re not perfect. But their story, and these seven traits, are perfectly timed for families like mine, and I think for your family as well.

*John Trent, PhD  
President, StrongFamilies.com*



# INTRODUCTION



*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.*

—DEUTERONOMY 6:5-7

THE JOB OF PARENTING IS especially difficult today because the adversity we face is complex. There seem to be more disasters, tragedies, temptations, distractions, and stress than ever before. And we have access to more information about these events than ever before in history. The more concerning thing is the way society is pushing God out of the center. Our culture today is trying to redefine just about everything, including love and truth. Our culture turns to knowledge, popularity, and academic degrees to find answers.

But God tells us that knowledge must be in step with

wisdom, otherwise it is useless. You can live by another man's knowledge, but not his wisdom. Wisdom is our own, and it ultimately comes from a close relationship with God. He is the Living Water and He is necessary for our survival. That's why He instructs us to desire His wisdom more than anything.

Parenting is a deeply transformative process. I believe God created family to provide us with opportunities for amazing growth and transformation. When we are transformed by our growth as parents, we become more deeply rooted in God's wisdom and will be more equipped to guide our kids toward God's original plan of us being contributors within His Kingdom.

From the beginning, God wanted us to be contributors within His Kingdom story and not consumers. The moment Adam and Eve chose to consume the fruit out of a lack of trust, we became consumers in a garden needing contributors. As we contribute to our kids through our parenting, we guide our kids toward becoming contributors to others and to the overall functioning of the family and society, thus fulfilling their role in God's Kingdom story.

Unfortunately, though, many parents strive too hard for perfection, somehow thinking that perfect parenting is a destination—that we “win” if we are perfect or have well-behaved kids. However, the Bible is full of less-than-stellar examples of parenting. Consider Adam and Eve. The very first parents display for us an imperfect and messy home. The truth is that all parenting is imperfect and messy.

In reality, we “win” as parents if our children see God’s transformative power, love, and influence in our lives. Effective parenting means learning to navigate and respond to the many imperfections that are a reality to all homes. Imperfections help us truly learn how to love and be loved. Imperfections help us learn the depth of our need for God.

We cannot control what our kids choose to do and what they will grow up to be, but we can certainly influence them through the minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour, and day-to-day interactions we have with them for eighteen-plus years, reminding them to be contributors rather than consumers. We cannot create perfect children, but we can certainly guide them along the way by how we live our own lives. We can leave imprints on their lives by how we communicate, interact, teach, guide, correct, and love.

This book is a practical journey through seven powerful traits that will help you be the most effective parent you can be. My goal is to provide a simple framework for you to grow in your parenting journey. As we grow in the seven traits of effective parenting, we can impart these same traits to our kids.

The seven traits of effective parenting are well researched and are based on the foundations provided through Scripture, my training and practice as a counselor serving families for more than two decades, and the great research surrounding the authoritative style of parenting.



Find out how you score in each of the seven traits of effective parenting by taking the self-assessment at [FocusOnTheFamily.com/7traits](http://FocusOnTheFamily.com/7traits).

The seven traits are:

- Adaptability
- Respect
- Intentionality
- Steadfast love
- Boundaries
- Grace and forgiveness
- Gratitude

My prayer is that this book is encouraging, practical, and helpful in your parenting adventure.

## CHAPTER 1



*You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*

—2 CORINTHIANS 3:2-3

HAVE YOU EVER SAT THROUGH the credits at the end of a film? While we may connect a particular movie with a big Hollywood star or a famous director, in reality hundreds, if not thousands, of people are involved in making a movie. The rolling credits of some films take ten minutes or more to scroll through because everyone involved in making the movie is mentioned in the credits, from the actors, directors, and producers to the people who created the special effects, created the costumes, and catered the lunches. It is awe-inspiring to think about the hundreds of people and thousands of hours of work that are required to produce a movie.

In a similar way, none of us is completely self-made. All of us have, in a sense, rolling credits made up of all the people who have made a difference in our lives. Perhaps a coach contributed countless hours teaching you to shoot free throws. You may remember the encouragement of a piano teacher as you struggled to learn a difficult piece. Maybe an elder in your church influenced you with his faithful service to God over the years. Hundreds of people have played a role in the shaping of you. All of them are part of your rolling credits.

### OUR ROLLING CREDITS BEGIN WITH GOD

God is the Master Architect of our lives. From conception to eternity, God has a plan for each of us. The Bible says that He formed us in our mothers' wombs. He knows the number of hairs on our heads and how many days have been allotted to us. He determined both the times and the places where we each live. He provides salvation for us and plans good works for us to do. He provides a great inheritance for us as coheirs of His Kingdom. He has gone ahead of us to prepare a place in eternity for us.

God provides opportunities for us to have contributors, influencers, and encouragers in this world—just as He did for the difference makers in the Bible.

- He provided David with an influencer named Nathan, who helped David open his eyes, spiritually speaking, to what he had done as he pursued Bathsheba.



- Josiah was positively influenced as a young child. That influence helped him remain committed to God when he became the king of Israel as a boy.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego almost certainly had incredible contributors, encouragers, and influencers in their young lives, judging by how they confidently lived out their faith and remained steadfast in their love of God.
- Mordecai contributed to Esther's life and encouraged and influenced her as she obediently followed the plan God had set before her.

## OUR ROLLING CREDITS AID OUR GROWTH

Picture a city that is growing. It is always under construction and has countless people who help it grow. In the same way, countless people help us to grow. Contributors pour resources into our lives that subsidize our development. Encouragers give us boosts of strength and courage that keep us moving forward despite disappointments and setbacks. Influencers cast a vision of what a well-lived life looks like and show us how to live that life in practical ways.

These people who make up our rolling credits help us follow the advice from 2 Timothy 3:14: "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it."

## OUR ROLLING CREDITS HELP US LIVE A LEGACY

In Hebrews 12:1 the author urges, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

The rolling credits of our lives stretch backward in time as we look to those who have lived faithful lives for God in the past. These are the ones who ran the race with endurance and passed the baton to us. But rolling credits also stretch forward in time as we look toward those we can contribute to, encourage, and influence. These are the ones to whom we must pass the baton as we run our own races of faithful endurance.

As a contributor, encourager, and influencer using the seven traits of effective parenting, you can help your child run the race that is set before him or her. And thus, the legacy continues onward until the Lord returns. A great way to prepare yourself for that task is to take a look at those you have listened to along the way.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Contributors are people who have poured their time, energy, talents, money, and attention into you. These people can include your spouse, coaches, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings, teachers, parents, friends, mentors, and life coaches. The Christian life is full of contributors.

- King Darius contributed to Daniel's life and gave him the highest position in the kingdom.
- Jesus contributed to the lives of His disciples to equip them for God's work.
- People all around the world contribute to missionaries as they carry out God's work and calling.

I recall the phone conversation I had as a sophomore with the tennis coach at my high school. He said I should try out for the tennis team. I remember laughing at his suggestion because I was awful at tennis. I shared with him that I had just gotten back from a trip to visit my relatives in Mexico and had played tennis with my cousin, Carlos. I had a difficult time keeping the ball in the court. At this particular club, a ball boy was assigned to retrieving the tennis balls for the players. Well, this ball boy got an incredible workout that day—not to mention a great tip. I had to bounce the ball to serve and I hit most balls off the rim of the racket. It really wasn't pretty.

But the coaches at my school invested a lot of their time and energy in teaching me how to improve my tennis skills. They saw something in me that I didn't see. I ended up as the third singles player on the varsity team my senior year. I was not an amazing player, but I came to be a decent player with a killer serve, and I received a tennis scholarship. I continue to play tennis with friends whenever I can. And I'm working to pass on my love for tennis to my own kids. The



## Date Nights

One way to contribute to your family is to plan special evenings together. Date night is a time for connection, conversation, and speaking truth into your child. Dates with your child may involve a walk or a bike ride together. You might draw together or go to a sporting event. Recently our family went to a restaurant. My daughter and I sat at one table, and my son and wife sat at another table. This allowed us to give special attention to each of our children.

Keep in mind that dates can be creative, simple, and inexpensive, but they can also be elaborate and expensive. Date nights are all about investing in relationships. The possibilities are nearly endless. You could

contribution of two men gave me something besides money for college: I've been privileged to pay it forward and teach the kids I work with to never say never.

Sometimes other people can see something in us that we can't see. Throughout my childhood, my mom and dad contributed their money, time, and energy toward my development. I didn't always see or acknowledge their contributions. But now I can see it. And now I can pass on that gift as I contribute my money, time, and energy to others.

If you look carefully, you will see that many people have contributed to your life. It's great to look back with gratitude. Now is your opportunity to look forward and contribute to the lives of your own children.

For every positive type of role model, there is a counter or negative role model. The opposite of being a contributor to someone's life is being a consumer in someone's life.

Consumers are people who tend to use you for their own gain. They

approach you with a personal shopping list in mind as they interact with you. Everyone has experienced having consumers in their lives. If we're honest, most of us have acted like consumers at one point or another in other people's rolling credits.

Being a consumer comes naturally in our instant-gratification, live-for-yourself, pursue-personal-success-and-happiness culture. We want to be loved, noticed, and admired without wanting to contribute to other people.

In a recent survey, 49 percent of teens said they post about their own accomplishments on social media.<sup>1</sup> Teens are thirsty to be known and recognized. In addition, in a different survey, 45 percent of teens said they are stressed all the time.<sup>2</sup> Teens need encouragement and help coping with demands and expectations they feel incapable of living up to or fulfilling.<sup>3</sup>

You can help counter these influences by sincerely contributing to the lives of the kids you know. Help

take some time to talk to your kids about people who have contributed to your life, encouraged you, or influenced you along the way. You can also ask them who they have seen as contributors, encouragers, and influencers in their lives so far.

kids find genuine encouragement rather than needing to seek it out. Through your own example, teach them to be noticers and celebrators of other people's accomplishments, skills, and talents. Looking beyond "self" helps to reduce stress. Help children be noticers of:

- people who are thirsty for God's love and hope
- people who are orphaned or widowed
- people who need encouragement or a listening ear

Your positive example in this area can help kids discern where to invest their own time, attention, skills, and energy. This helps to build a contributor mindset in your children.

## ENCOURAGERS

Encouragers are people who offer words of support and inspiration that build others up.

During my senior year of high school, I was walking in the hall when the principal stopped me and said, "You are going to be a great leader someday." I still remember that very brief interaction to this day. His words encouraged me then, and they still encourage me today.

My mom and dad have encouraged me along the way, for which I am very thankful. In fact, my dad continues to write me a letter of encouragement once or twice a year. His encouraging words have been like a cup of cold water after a hot summer run. My mom carefully selects cards for

my birthday or Father's Day to provide me with encouraging words on those occasions.

Encouraging words are always welcome! Why don't we offer them more often? My wife has sometimes said to me that she wants more encouraging words from me. It is so easy to forget to consistently speak encouraging words to my wife and my children. All I can say is that it is good that we get a new day every twenty-four hours so I can try again. It is like God built a reset button into each day. His mercies are new every morning! Go ahead and press your own reset button today.

The opposite of being an encourager is being a discourager. While encouraging words can be seen as building blocks in a person's life, discouraging words can be the destroyers. I vividly recall an incident that happened when my son and daughter were much younger. My son, Alex, was building with Legos when suddenly my daughter, Lexi, came by and, in an instant,



### *Journal Notes*

My teenage son and daughter enjoy getting notes. We each have a journal at our spot on the kitchen table. Anyone can write in anyone else's journal. I frequently will write a note or a quotation or draw something for my kids and my wife (though not every day). The notes don't have to be long. My son, daughter, and wife all love words of encouragement that are genuine and authentic. We all treasure these journals as we record encouraging words to one another throughout the year.



### *Filled Cup*

Gather a disposable cup, superhero stickers, and your child's favorite sweet beverage.

Explain to your child that the cup represents him or her. Read Psalm 18:29, Colossians 1:29, and Ephesians 3:20-21 from an easy-to-understand Bible translation. Tell your child that God says we can do amazing things with His strength. Discuss God's amazing strength. Encourage your child to decorate the cup with superhero stickers to represent God's strength in his or her life.

Read Ephesians 2:10. Talk about the good works (contributions) that God wants your child to do—these good works were planned by God specifically for your child. Discuss how this relates to being

half destroyed what had taken Alex a long time to build.

Encouragers and discouragers in our lives tend to run along similar lines. It takes us a long time to trust the encouraging words, while discouraging words tend to have an immediate and lasting negative impact on us. We tend to be more attentive to negative criticism.

Keep in mind, however, that discouragement is different from constructive criticism. Discouragement is meant to tear down, to demean, and to belittle. Constructive criticism is helpful for growth and building—it's a necessary, but difficult, part of parenting. When we offer constructive criticism to our children, we must keep in mind the apostle Paul's admonition to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

Consider your own words. Do you use your words to tear down or to build up? How can you more effectively and consistently encourage those in your family? Contributors build and consumers tear down.



Contributors want the well-being of the other while consumers desire their own well-being.

## INFLUENCERS

In the spring of 1983, my parents decided to move our family to the United States. I had lived in Mexico City, Mexico, my entire eight years of life.

My mom said, “You need to say goodbye to your friends. You won’t see them again. We are moving to Colorado.”

I didn’t know what that meant. I had never heard of Colorado, but I did know that my mom had tried to teach me English. She had been a persistent influence in my life as she and my dad prepared me for the transition to the United States.

The summer of 1983 was a challenging but powerful time in my life. I spent the summer with my English-speaking grandparents, uncle, and aunts in Minnesota while my parents moved to Colorado

a contributor rather than a consumer. Also discuss the role God might want your child to assume in the world. Explain that God fills us with His strength and goodness and helps us to serve others.

Fill the cup with your child’s favorite sweet beverage. Tell your child that as we read Scripture and have ongoing dialogue with God, our cups are filled with His love and strength. Explain to your child that once the cup of his or her life is filled with God’s strength and goodness, your child will be able to effectively serve others with the sweetness of God’s love. Discuss how your child can encourage and influence others with God’s love. Encourage your child to enjoy the beverage.

Springs with my older brother and sister. I couldn't really understand what people were saying and learned to listen carefully that summer. I watched as my grandparents knelt beside their bed together and prayed for people individually and by name. I remember them kneeling for a long time each time they prayed. Similarly, my parents faithfully prayed together before bed. I could hear them praying as I fell asleep across the hall. The examples of my grandparents and parents had a profound influence on my life. Today, prayer is a centerpiece in my home.

That summer, my grandpa taught me about gardening and loving God. My grandma loved the kitchen and served the family faithfully. There was no dishwasher, so we each had a responsibility. My time in Minnesota helped me learn how to help in the kitchen and with everyday chores. My grandparents had a direct and lasting influence on my life.

You *will* have a lasting influence in your child's life. But what kind of impact will you leave? I strongly believe that parents who grow in the seven traits of effective parenting will have a profoundly positive influence in their children's lives. Parenting is about contributing, encouraging, and influencing and not about being perfect.

The opposite of being an influencer is being a distractor. Distractors are those who have a negative effect on others' lives.

The world is full of competing influences at unprecedented levels. Some research suggests that kids turn to screens to get away from a chaotic world.<sup>4</sup> Wisdom is essential as you sort through the influences to figure out what is truly worthwhile

and what is simply a distraction. It is your privilege and responsibility to teach and model for your children what it means to navigate a world full of influencers and distractors. Though Solomon was wise, distractors lured him away from God's wisdom and call on his life (Nehemiah 13:26). He was swayed by a distracted consumer mindset rather than the focused, wise, contributor mindset God had called him to live out. The accumulation of little decisions we make ends up creating the overall direction of our lives.

Keep in mind that marital stress and children who act out can quickly distract us in our parenting. When there is marital stress, research suggests that dads tend to disengage and become avoidant, while mothers tend to become more controlling and strict.<sup>5</sup> It is also interesting that stress in the marriage makes parents less consistent in their parenting and support. The same research found that consistent involvement, boundaries, and support from parents resulted in



### *Rolling Credits Party*

Invite your contributors, encouragers, and influencers to a party to celebrate their impact in your life. It would be great for your kids to meet these builders in your life. Talk about ways they affected your life. Kids need to see that it takes many people—with God as the cornerstone—to build a life.

Another option is to write notes of appreciation to the many people who have been a part of your rolling credits.

fewer problem behaviors in teenagers. This positive influence helps keep teenagers on track during this turbulent and confusing time of life.



I was recently at the funeral of a man who lived out his role as husband, father, and grandfather the best he could. I enjoyed listening to the testimonies that were shared about his life. The common thread in what was said was not that he was perfect but that he tried his best to love his family by being as consistent as possible and spending time with them. He had taken the time to be a contributor, encourager, and influencer in the lives of others. He was a part of the rolling credits in many people's lives. I'm sure he wasn't always loving, respectful, grateful, adaptable, forgiving, intentional, or great with boundaries, but he clearly tried his best.

As you read this book and learn about the seven traits of effective parenting, may you

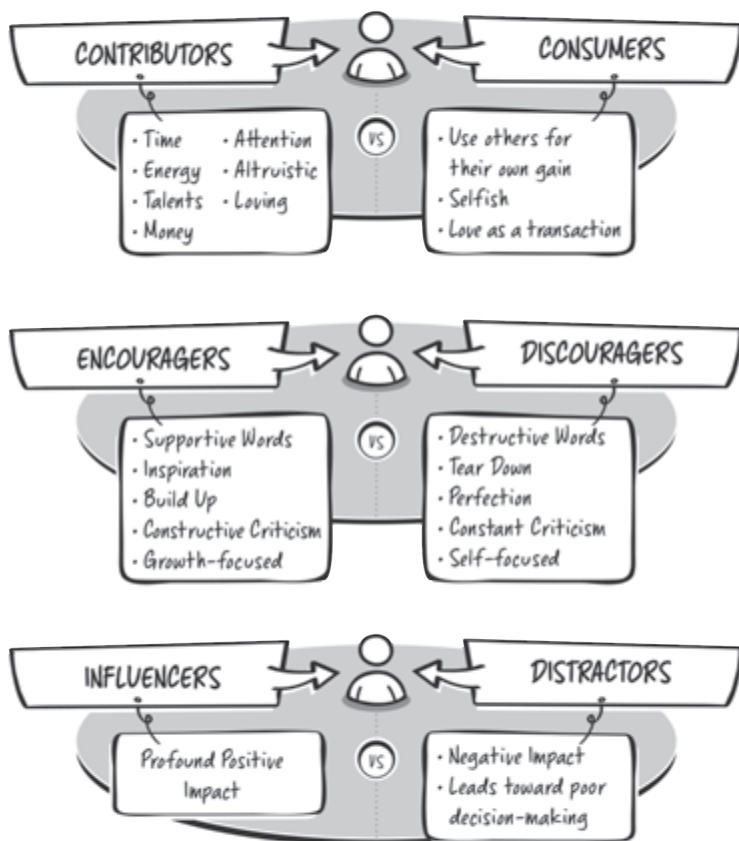


be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:16-21)

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## CHAPTER 1

### CONTRIBUTORS, ENCOURAGERS, & INFLUENCERS



#### BIG IDEA



As a parent, you get to be a **CONTRIBUTOR**, **ENCOURAGER**, and **INFLUENCER** in the lives of your children as you lead them toward becoming contributors within God's Kingdom story.

#### ACTIONS



Model taking the time to be thankful for the contributors, encouragers, and influencers in your own life. Also model an awareness of the consumers, discouragers, and distractors in your own life.

