

WIDEN THE CIRCLE

Posted by [Parent Cue](#) | [Blog](#), [Widen The Circle](#) | [3](#) |



We believe there are five principles that will help you as a parent navigate through a variety of different seasons and help you parent beyond your capacity. Parenting can be intimidating, and you weren't meant to do it alone.

Regardless of your stage of parenting, here's a promise: *A time will come when your children will need another adult in their lives besides you.*

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So . . .

#1 WIDEN THE CIRCLE

WIDENING THE CIRCLE...

INVOLVES PURSUING STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS FOR YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER.

Parents should become intentional about finding spiritual leaders and mentors for their kids. Every son and daughter needs other adults in their lives who will say things that reflect what a parent would say.

One of the smartest things moms and dads can do is to participate in a church where they can find the right kind of adult influences for their kids.

I have observed a lot of teenagers. From the time they hit middle school, they start moving away from home. They are not doing anything wrong; it's just the way they are made. They are becoming independent, and they begin redefining themselves through the eyes of other people who are not in their immediate family.

The older they get, the more important it is for them to have other voices in their lives saying the same things but in a different way. Teenage sons and daughters need to have other voices speaking into their worlds.

Parents who do not understand this principle have forgotten what it was like to be a teenager.

I cannot count the times my kids would quote something a teacher, our student pastor, or a coach had said. They would act like it was the first time they had ever heard it. I wanted to blurt out, "I have been telling you that for sixteen years!" They were hearing it in a different way because they were at a different stage, and they just needed a different voice.

Related: [How to Invite Others to Invest in the Lives of Your Kids](#)

WIDENING THE CIRCLE...

TRANSITIONS YOUR CHILD FROM A "ME" APPROACH TO A "WE" APPROACH.

When you widen the circle, you not only recognize the need for others to influence your children, but also the need for your children to be a part of something that is much larger than just your family. A wider circle gives them not only a place to belong but a significant role to engage in a bigger story.

Seth Godin makes this observation: “Human beings can’t help it; we need to belong. One of the most powerful of our survival mechanisms is to be part of a tribe, to contribute to (and take from) a group of like-minded people.”

Don’t miss this point. The right community is not only important because of what it gives to your children, but also because of what it requires from your children. Children need more than just a family that gives them unconditional acceptance and love; they need a tribe that gives them a sense of belonging and significance.

Something powerful happens when you partner with other influences who desire to instill a sense of mission into the hearts of your children. You give them a different view of their place in the world, and you transfer a different kind of passion to them that your family alone cannot give them.

Related: [You’re Not Enough \[Podcast\]](#)

NEXT STEPS:

- Look for a church that values community (use our [church finder tool!](#))
- Work with other leaders to find opportunities for your kids to serve
- Search for mentors in your community

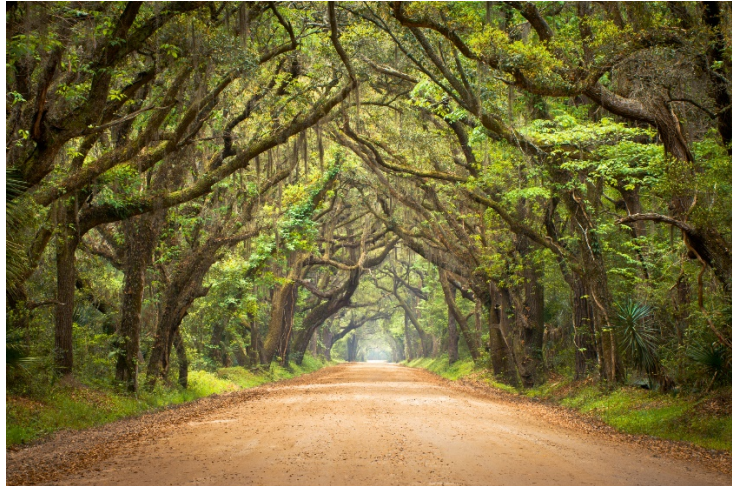
God never intended life to be lived in isolation, and what’s true of individuals is also true of families. We have been called to live as part of a much wider circle and God-engineered community to help all of us parent beyond our capacity.

This is an excerpt from [Parenting Beyond Your Capacity](#) written by Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof.

Read more about

IMAGINE THE END

Posted by [Reggie Joiner](#) | [Blog](#), [Imagine The End](#) | [1](#) |



Most parents can't give their children a lavish inheritance, but every parent will leave a personal legacy.

With the excess that surrounds most of us, a lot of families get sidetracked from what really matters. We become so preoccupied with giving kids an inheritance that we forget the significance of leaving a legacy. Sometimes I just have to be reminded that what I give *to* my children or what I do *for* my children is not as important as what I leave *in* them. Isn't it interesting how "stuff" can distract us from what is really valuable?

Too often, parents believe the end goal is to make their kids happy. There are moments when I will buy anything, do anything, and go anywhere if it will just make my kids *happy*.

Parents don't like it when their kids are in a bad mood. Things are just easier when everybody is happy. You are happy when they are happy, so you'll watch a blue dog on television, eat McNuggets, buy pet turtles, listen to the Wiggles, and mortgage your house if their happiness is at stake. You don't want them to be spoiled; you just want them to be happy.

An entire marketing industry is built around the idea that parents want their kids to be happy. The advertisers know that we will sign them up for anything and everything to make sure they are socially adept, experientially rich, and academically well-rounded. We will recruit coaches, tutors, instructors,

and mentors to make sure they can dance better, sing clearer, jump farther, throw faster, hit harder, and test higher than other kids.

Whenever we define a child's happiness as our ultimate goal, we settle for something far less significant than what God has designed for them or what He has designed them for.

I have learned that some things are beyond my capacity. I have lived through several stages of parenting. I remember walking into my office one day and looking at the rows of books I had collected on family issues. One of my daughters had been through an extremely difficult situation, and I was panicked and frustrated. As I grabbed books off the shelf, I recall saying out loud, "The problem I'm dealing with right now is not in any of these books!" That day I was overwhelmed with the kind of uncertainty and fear that sometimes paralyzes parents. The only way I got any clarity was in realizing that my only comfort, my only hope, my only source for direction was God. Sometimes there are no simple solutions, no clear paths of action, no quick fixes; there is just God.

I learned to lean on a principle we refer to as "imagine the end." The fog usually begins to lift when I mentally fast-forward to the final chapter of my children's lives and ask a pointed question: Who do I really want them to become? I know that in the middle of that answer is an understanding of who God is. Then I imagine the end and remember that God is writing His narrative.

When it comes to my children, the most difficult thing I have ever done is to admit my limited capacity and trust God to show up and do what only He can do. Some days I just need to be reminded that my family is a part of a bigger picture and that God desires to demonstrate His redemptive power through us.

This is an excerpt from *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity* written by Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof

FIGHT FOR THE HEART

Posted by [Reggie Joiner](#) | [Blog, Fight For The Heart](#) | [7](#) |



Hannah is our first-born daughter, and she has a lot of leadership potential. That’s just another way of saying that she challenged the process a lot growing up in our house.

I distinctively remember having a conversation with her one night when I was tucking her into bed. It was one of those days when there had been a lot of conflict, and she had gotten in about as much trouble as a five year old can. For some reason I was compelled to ask her a question right before I turned out the lights. I said, “Do you think I love you more when you’re good, or more when you’re bad?”

She immediately responded, “You love me more when I’m good!” My heart sank when I realized that was her perception of our relationship. I tried to apologize to her for my reactions as a parent. I remember telling her that night (and for several months afterwards every night), “I hope you will always remember that I love you the same, when you are good or bad.”

It’s so easy for us to make the rules more important than the relationship. It’s in the tone of our voice, our body language, and our eyes. If we are not careful, disappointment in our kids’ behavior can be translated into their hearts as rejection. The truth is our children will always challenge the rules and debate our reasoning, but we should strive to parent in a way that they can never question how much we love them.

Looking back, I realize that I have never explained the rules so clearly that my children agreed and said in unison, “Oh, now we understand, Father! You have explained it so well. We will do exactly what you say.” It is natural and normal for kids to challenge the process. As they move toward independence, it will happen more frequently. That’s the problem with rules—you can always debate their rationale, but you can’t debate a trusted relationship. Unfortunately, most of us parents are better skilled at fighting to win the argument than we are at fighting to win the heart.

It’s not that parents shouldn’t give answers when kids ask, “Why?” It’s just that the answers carry more weight when combined with a healthy relationship. One of the most powerful things a parent can do is learn to communicate in a style that values the relationship.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

Posted by [Parent Cue](#) | [Blog](#), [General](#), [Make It Personal](#) | [2](#) |



A crucial link exists between your ability to parent and your personal growth.

This parenting value—making it personal—is going to challenge you as a parent in a way the other values don't. This one will *benefit* your kids, for sure. But it's not directly about them, it's about *you*. In a very real way, making it personal will help every other step you take as a parent.

When it comes to character and faith, your kids are *watching* you in a way they might not watch you in other pursuits. Because it's so personal, you can't *do* faith and character *for* your kids. There's another factor at work. If it's not in you, they know it. When it comes to spiritual and character formation, your journey impacts them deeply. If you want it to be in them, it needs to be in you.

As you read this, your anxiety level is probably rising. You feel like you can't possibly measure up. If you were to level with your kids about your fears, your inconsistencies, or even how shaky your faith is on some days, you'd feel like you were admitting defeat.

But that's a perfect picture mindset. God is interested in writing a bigger story, and your personal growth is part of the plotline. In fact, your developing story may be more influential than you think. That's why parents need to let their kids see them struggle to grow. They need to see your authenticity and hear your transparency. Most of all, they need to observe up close that your spiritual, moral, and relational growth is a priority in your life. This is not about a perfect model, just an honest one. Whatever you want your children to become, you should honestly strive to become as well.

Your kids already have a front-row seat to your life. The question is, what are they watching? Is it just show? Or is it a real-life adventure where they see courage and passion to overcome personal obstacles? What if your personal growth was a front-row seat to the bigger story God wants to write in your family?

If you want your children to have it in them, they have to see it in you.

Your kids need to see you . . .

struggle with answers.

face your weaknesses.

deal with real problems.

admit when you are wrong.

fight for your marriage.

resolve personal conflict.

Your children need to see you make relational, emotional, and spiritual growth in your life a priority. If you don't make it personal for yourself, it may never be personal for them.

Is it possible that you're the kind of parent who feels guilty if you take a break? Maybe you run a long time because you have more capacity than most. It is possible to be close to empty and not know it. The question is, what kind of consistent deposits are you making in your personal life, for the sake of your family life?

Excerpt from *Parenting Beyond Your Capacity* by Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof

CREATE A RHYTHM

Posted by [Parent Cue](#) | [Blog](#), [Create A Rhythm](#) | 0 |



Time.

It's moving fast.

It's limited.

We will never have more of it than we already have.

So the issue is not how do we get more, but how do we become more intentional about what we have?

How can we manage our time strategically to parent beyond our capacity?

How about taking a look at your family rhythm? Every family has one. Rhythm is how we arrange our time.

As we go from day to day, we establish and shape a rhythm that in turn shapes our kids.

Rhythm establishes value. Things that become part of the daily rhythm are the things our families will come to believe are most important. Rhythm silently but significantly communicates value.

There are some things that may be conceptually very important to us as parents, but if we never include them in our families' rhythms, our kids will perceive them as having little value. For example, exercise might be important to a parent in principle, but if no one ever plays baseball in the backyard, takes a trip to the park, throws a Frisbee, jumps on a treadmill, or heads to a soccer field, why would the kids come to value exercise? If it's not part of their rhythm, it's not part of their reality. The same is true for faith. If you want to instill an everyday faith in your kids lives, you have to incorporate faith in the daily rhythm.

Every family rhythm is different, but on a basic level, everyone wakes up, eats, travels, and sleeps. In

Deuteronomy 6, Moses taps into this natural rhythm when he encourages his people to nurture lasting faith in

their kids. “*Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*”

He was essentially saying, if you are going to impress these truths in the hearts of your children, you will have to be more deliberate about *creating a rhythm* within your home.

Have focused discussions during meal times.

Have playful and informal interactions while driving or walking.

Listen and have intimate conversations while tucking your kids in bed.

Encourage the hearts of your kids when you get up in the morning.

So think your family’s weekly rhythm. What does it look like?

Which nights do you tend to eat together?

What do you do when you first get home from work?

What is your nighttime routine to get ready for bed?

What do you do every Saturday morning?

How do you spend Sundays?

What can you do this week to be more intentional in your interactions with your kids during those moments?

Parents have an advantage when it comes to the issue of time. At least until your children are old enough to drive, you have a window of opportunity to maximize a relationship with your children by the way you handle time. The time you spend together as a family should be both interactive and intentional. When both are true, you increase the capacity and influence of your time with your kids.