

THE CORE CAPACITIES OF YOUR DAUGHTER

God created women to reflect His ezer nature, as one who comes alongside and lends strength and support to those in need. A woman's calling is relational in nature; they were created to be allies, corresponding strength, or essential counterparts. While Genesis 2 discusses the ezer nature of a woman within the context of marriage, that is not the only way in which women embody this unique call. Every woman, regardless of age or personality, has a unique energy and drive to connect with others; it is part of her design.

This energy is God's good design and is meant to be channeled in such a way that others are blessed, even nourished by it. However, this energy can turn in on itself, becoming self-focused and self-serving in self-protection and self-promotion. Therefore, as parents, it is important that we learn to help young women channel their energy in ways that honor God and serve others in love.

There are three distinct ways, or capacities, in which women display attributes of God's character. The first is through invitation. Inviting means to welcome others into an unselfish relationship with you, through which they may find respite, safety, rest, and strength. Inviting is being open, approachable, and inclusive of those around you. An eleven or twelve-year-old girl can display this in many ways:

- Looking others in the eye when talking to them
- Showing interest in other people by asking them questions about themselves
- Befriending the new student at school
- Being kind, polite, and courteous to adults
- Not waiting or expecting for others to approach or include them
- Including their siblings in activities or conversations

A sixteen-year-old woman invites in much the same way. As she channels her energy toward others in such a way that they are blessed, she is imaging the inviting nature of God. She can do this by:

- Being inclusive of others—not using exclusive talk like inside jokes
- Refraining from gossip
- Reaching out to those whom others have rejected
- Being open to all people rather than her own clique
- Engaging in conversation with her parents or siblings, not just going to her room and closing the door, escaping into her phone, or giving one-word answers
- Being modest in how she dresses and expresses herself in all areas of her life (e.g., social media, clothing, how she talks, etc.)

A young woman who is inviting is delightful, pleasant, and easy to be around. However, this energy can easily get turned in on itself, and it becomes all about her. Inviting gets corrupted when she has to be the center of attention. She can become a “here I am” person rather than a

“there you are” person. It is especially easy for a young woman to get caught in the corruption of the inviting capacity when the approval of her peers is a significant idol in her life. She may fight significant temptations to fit in through wearing a specific style of clothing, gossip, excluding those different from her, or using social media to gain affirmation, approval, and status.

If a young woman allows her inviting nature to become dominant to the detriment of the other capacities, she may fail to speak truth for fear of alienating herself or others. She may draw others to herself through immodesty and flirtation because the attention of others makes her feel good. Rather than being a source of life and strength to others, she feeds off of them.

A second attribute or capacity is nurture. Nurture is life-giving; it is to care for those in a position of vulnerability, frailty, or need in such a way that they become stronger, independent, and capable. A woman can nurture another by bringing all of her strength, energy, experience, and resources to the relationship so that the other person may benefit and grow strong.

A young twelve-year-old girl has many opportunities to nurture:

- Recognizing when her parents are tired from work and offering to help around the house
- Taking time to listen to other people
- Speaking encouraging words to friends

As she matures in age, she has even more opportunities to display God’s nurturing nature:

- Speaking truth to others, not just what she thinks they want to hear or what makes her look good
- Challenging others to do hard things
- Standing up for or defending those who are being bullied or excluded
- Teaching someone how to do something that comes easily to her or tutoring a friend at school who is struggling

Nurturing is about bringing strength and life to someone in need so that they can become more of who God designed them to be. Nurturing is corrupted when she places herself at the center. She may fish for compliments by complimenting others in a way that they will return it to her. She may avoid relationships with others she sees as weak or be unwilling to sacrifice her time, energy, or comfort to help someone else. She may also position herself to be the one everyone runs to in times of crisis because it is affirming to be “needed” by others.

If a young woman has a strong capacity for nurture, she may fail to develop strength in others, making them more dependent on her rather than independent. For example, doing someone’s homework for them rather than showing them how to do it. She may be tempted to give someone answers to a test, rather than helping them develop good study habits and telling them she believes in them. In the end, she is not helping the other person become stronger or better; she is feeding her desire to feel needed.

Partnering is the third capacity. A woman can partner by owning someone's cause and helping them accomplish a mission by bringing all of her gifts and talents alongside. Regardless of age, young women have the resources of time and energy to contribute toward helping someone accomplish a goal. They must learn to channel their time and energy in ways that aren't self-serving. For example:

- Offering to help a sibling with their chores when they are overloaded with homework or extracurricular activities
- Offering to babysit siblings so parents can have a much-needed getaway
- Handling responsibilities in a timely and cheerful manner so that she does not become an obstacle or burden to her parents
- Offering to do more than what is expected of her in order to alleviate another's load
- Being a contributor around the house rather than a consumer and expecting everyone to serve her
- Partnering with a coach by staying after practice to help clean up or showing up early to help set up
- Serving at church, school, or in her community

Young women can be significant contributors in aiding others toward accomplishing a goal, but this can devolve into controlling or dominating others, bossiness, nagging, or trying to get her own way. Partnering is also corrupted when a young woman is unwilling to help someone in need or to sacrifice her comfort, desires, or resources on behalf of others. For example, the young woman who believes she shouldn't have to dress differently in order to aid of the young men in her life in their quest for purity: she is unwilling to sacrifice her own comfort or freedom of expression for the benefit of someone else. Rather than helping them, she despises them for their weakness and abdicates her calling as an ezer.

A young woman with strong partnering capacities may be eager to help, but needs to be taught wisdom and discernment on how to bring her resources to bear in such a way that she is not dominating and controlling those around her.

God has entrusted women with unique strength and influence. It is important that parents begin teaching young women that this influence is not for their own benefit, but for the people God places in her life. A young woman who has not been taught how to manage her strengths and weaknesses in this way is likely to become arrogant, entitled, divisive, and demanding that everyone meets her on her own terms.