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# Dispensers of Hope

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## FAMILY TIES

# Dispensers of Hope

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. —Jeremiah 29:11 NIV*

**B**alcony people are those, living or dead, who show us we can live above the petty, discordant levels of life. They give us hope, suggests Ross Campbell, author of *How to Really Love Your Teen*. Balcony people are those we can admire and trust wholeheartedly, the ones we know will love us no matter what.

Balcony people are in contrast to what Ross calls “cellar voices” — those voices that distract, and make us question our own confidence and worth. They are voices of discrimination, anger, criticism and negativity. Cellar voices can suck the joy right out of our lives. Our children will encounter both balcony and cellar voices in life.

We need to build confidence and trust into our children’s lives so they can be open to positive influences from positive people. We need to be sure our children are in environments where they can come to really know other positive adults and develop relationships with them. They also need to understand, from a biblical perspective, that there have always been people who are loyal to God’s Word and have chosen to follow and serve him.

During family worship, exploring verses such as Romans 8:28, Isaiah 41:10 and Psalm 34:19 can be a powerful part of this journey. Hebrews 11 is a roll call of people who proved that faith is workable in spite of negative, difficult circumstances, and that life can always have positive meaning.

Of course, we want to be balcony people for our own children, and we can be. Sometimes, however, we are pessimistic about our children in one way or another. Sometimes we are preoccupied with our own personal challenges.



Sometimes our children need more than us. As parents, it is our privilege and responsibility to prepare our children for life outside the home, to introduce people and experiences that broaden their horizons, and introduce them to different perspectives. One way we can do this is to be sure they have other, non-parental adults, to whom

they can look for inspiration, instruction and trust. This includes relatives, neighbors, those in our church congregations, teachers and school administrators, coaches or family friends. God has placed many among us who can be balcony people for our children.

Most of us learn from our experiences, but it takes a wise, mature person to learn vicariously from the experiences of others. In many ways, our children face a troubled, confusing world. They need hope, confidence, courage, moral strength, a sense of responsibility, and a relationship with Jesus. Balcony people can help provide these things. They are often the dispensers of hope! They help our children find positive experiences and relationships, even in the middle of an uncertain and negative world.

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