

BY JOHN TRENT and RODNEY COX

IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENC

"No wonder the Lord put me beside that person!"

How understanding your God-given strengths, and the strengths of those close to you, can transform your church, friendships, and family.

IT IS 10:20 P.M. ON A PIERCING, COLD, winter night, and Kevin sits alone in the church office. Normally, this senior pastor of a growing church would have been home with his family hours earlier.

Not tonight.

Kevin sits at his computer and struggles with how to phrase things, but he's not wrestling with the wording for Sunday's sermon; he's working on his resume. In fact, he's seriously considering leaving pastoral ministry altogether.

What's the source of the problem?

"Irreconcilable differences."

At least that's what Kevin has come to believe. For three years he has struggled, prayed, even fasted in an effort to get along with Mark, his music director. For 12 years at his former church, Kevin got along with everyone. He built a great team, and the ministry thrived. Since coming to this church, however, every idea, dream, goal, plan, or vision Kevin shares is met with questions and direct opposition from Mark, at least that is the way it seems. Senior member of the staff,

ES?

Perhaps you struggle with relationships in your workplace, battle constantly with a child in your home, or lock horns frequently with your parents.

Mark has been at the church 15 years, and the congregation loves his music ministry. Mark's place in the church is very secure.

So Kevin sits alone in the church office, frustrated by their inability to see eye-to-eye. He is seriously considering what hundreds of pastors and associate pastors do every year, leaving for a place where things seem different and easier.

While Kevin struggles with his decision to leave the church, Sarah is going through a terrible internal battle as well. She sits at her computer and stares blankly out her kitchen

window, feeling her marriage is like the trees that look so cold and dead in the snow. For three years, Sarah has been married to a good, Christian man. The problem is, he seems exactly opposite to her. She is a saver; he is a spender. She likes to stay home; he wants to go out. She is left-handed; he is right-handed. She is a night person; he is a morning person. On this night, as her husband sleeps, Sarah feels alone, trapped by conflicting emotions. She loves her husband, and she loves the Lord. Still, as she watches the snow fall, she feels a

thousand miles away—even though she can hear him snoring in the next room.

What do Kevin and Sarah have in common? Both love the Lord and have struggled faithfully to build close relationships, yet both feel totally defeated by "differences."

Maybe you've been there. Maybe you're there now. Perhaps you serve on a volunteer committee at church that is nothing but frustration to you. Perhaps you struggle with relationships in your workplace, battle constantly with a child in your home, or lock horns frequently with your parents. Perhaps you find a huge gap between where you are today and where you want to be in your relationships.

Here's something you need to know.

"Irreconcilable differences" are actually grounds for a great ministry team, friendship, or family relationship. That's not a typographical error. It's biblical truth! It's also what Rodney Cox, my partner in ministry, and I teach to teams and families across the country, using the new *Leading From Your Strengths Discovery Kit* from Randall House Publications. Let me explain.

What if that "frustrating" person has been put in your life by "Divine Design"?

We'll come back to Kevin and Sarah shortly, but first, let me encourage you to do something. Take a moment to complete this exercise. You see two lines. One line is marked *left-handed* and the



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from *your*
STRENGTHS

JOHN TRENT, Ph.D. and RODNEY COX

TEAM-BUILDING DISCOVERY KIT

passive problem-solving style (deeper issues that require a complex solution). At times, aggressive problem-solvers can actually create more problems than solutions! In other words, both strengths (aggressive and passive) are key to any family or team. When this couple learns to view their contrasting strengths in a positive light, it will change their relationship.

When God places us with people who are different than we are, it is almost like a near-sighted person sitting beside a far-sighted person. Imagine what would happen if the two traded glasses. Everything would look out of focus because they see the world differently. But together, they can see near and far. They learn to balance their strengths.

You can find more guidelines for blending differences and building close teams and families in the *Leading From Your Strengths Team-Building Discovery Kit*. And let me issue this important challenge. If you're in a situation filled with frustration, don't give up! We've seen ministry teams, missionary teams, offices, families, and friendships around the world move from incredible frustration to a level of closeness and fulfillment they only dreamed of having. They learn to recognize and understand each person's strengths, and how those unique gifts actually protect, complete, and build a God-honoring relationship.

No wonder God "placed" us next to that person! □

Dr. John Trent is president of StrongFamilies.com, a ministry committed to stronger marriages and family relationships worldwide. Over the past five years, John has spoken to more than 600,000 people in 65 major cities at seminars and conferences. In addition to speaking, he has authored (and co-authored) more than a dozen award-winning, best-selling books that have sold more than 2,100,000 copies in eleven different languages.

Discover your
uniqueness

Develop unity
with your team

Gain a new
approach to
problem-
solving

Enhance
communication
skills



The Leading From Your Strengths Team-Building Discovery Kit is designed to help you and your team better

understand your unique strengths and how to blend and build those strengths in a way that helps you be more productive, efficient, and creative than ever before. This kit can be used in a corporate setting, small-group dynamic, management teams, and ministry groups. The lessons and kit content can be adjusted to meet the needs of a group of three to a larger group of a 100 or more.

ISBN 0892655216 Price \$249.99



Dr. John Trent, is a co-founder of Insights International and the Leading From Your Strengths on-line strengths assessment. In addition to being a nationally known author, family, and marriage speaker, Dr. Trent regularly enjoys speaking across corporate America on teambuilding, recruiting, and retaining outstanding employees.



Rodney Cox is President and CEO of Insights International, and co-creator of the Leading From Your Strengths on-line strengths assessment. He has co-authored a series of books entitled *Leading From Your Strengths* and currently speaks nationally and internationally, helping people understand the divine design for relationships.