

Chapter One

Live Memorably

"If you were to drop dead, would your epitaph be something that you could be proud of? Is your legacy something that would linger long after you?"

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"Do you recognize my voice?" the gravelly voice queried. Brian riffled through his yesterdays. No, the voice wasn't familiar. The man mentioned his name. The name wasn't familiar either. Finally, the man said the name of his son. Ah, yes, Brian, *did* remember. He'd taught the son a few basic guitar chords, C, G, A minor, at a summer camp many years before.

"Do you remember what you said to him?" the man asked. Actually, Brian did. "I told him to buy a guitar and to *never* put it that guitar in its case. "Leave it out", I told him. "I thought he'd be more likely to pick it up like when he was doing other things like watching television."

"Yes," the man said. "And my son did exactly what you said. That guitar became his life. My son went on to major in classical guitar going on to receive his Master's degree. Segovia, the greatest guitarist in the world, asked my son to be one of his last students. Segovia even came to one of my son's recitals...I am calling now to thank you." Putting down the receiver, Brian felt a smile stretch deliciously across his face. A simple act, creating huge implications.

I believe you too, could receive calls like that. I believe you are

perfectly poised to do things that change another's life. Would you like to personally open a door to someone's destiny? I think you might.

Consider this little book to be an invitation for you to live a life that outlives you. Are you bored with self-absorption, sick of affluenza, tired of all the toys and trips, and tepid passions? Perhaps your children are grown, perhaps you're looking for your next great challenge, your next big yes.

Let me whisper a word of wisdom in your ear... invest yourself in another generation. Can you see it? Imagine...you and an entire generation of people like you, embracing the next generation into greatness. You're still reading? Good.

You are perfect for this very thing. You were made to change lives, to open doors, to kiss a younger generation awake. I hope to convince you of it. There are people even now who are waiting for you. "Who me?" you say with incredulity. I know you have objections, everyone has, and we'll address them one by one. But you're perfect for this. It's not difficult. Right now, is a great time to start.

You were made for this. Have you ever asked yourself why am I on the earth? Have you wondered why you, *you very specifically*, are alive? Your story, your past, your personality, your treasure map of life deserves to outlive you. Would a gravestone that said lived and died, accompanied by relevant dates, satisfy you? I didn't think so.

Recently I took a phenomenal 85-year-old woman out for lunch. I said to her, "Jean, you can't die with all these astounding stories not passed on. It's not fair to the next generation. Make sure it gets passed on."

I know life is often just a habituated routine that tends to knock out all our inspiration. It's easy to get stuck in that routine and never discover the reason for which you were made. Often it takes an epiphany. My epiphany came unexpectedly on a weekend when we were doing something quite normal for us. We were extending hospitality to some friends from back East.

Shortly before their visit, some stellar friends had helped us build a beautiful home on a mountain overlooking the sea. Our house attracted a lot of friends around America who stayed with us. One

weekend while seeking to create a welcoming environment for my friends, I knew something without a shadow of a doubt. I knew in an instance, that I didn't want people standing around my grave remembering my life merely as a series of great moments of hospitality.

I knew even more in that moment. I knew *emphatically* that I didn't want people standing at my memorial service talking about books I'd written or that I was a memorable speaker. No, no, absolutely not. With great clarity I knew I wanted people standing around my grave saying one thing, and one thing only. I wanted people, particularly *young* people, saying I had changed their lives. Anything less would mean for me, a squandered life.

It was a tall order for a small life. I admit. My epiphany was crystal clear, and I hope yours is as well. I hope perhaps through the stories in this small book, that you'll come to know precisely what you want your life to be.

Perhaps your desires are different from mine. That's good. Whatever your dreams and gifts, (or even your perceived lack of them), *you* can live a life that outlives you. My dream is to awaken you and an entire generation to embrace a younger generation into greatness.

Of course, it sounds grandiose, like delusions of grandeur. But I hope you'll join me in this dream. It's utterly doable. I hope to show you in this little book that all it takes is a heart willing to engage. You yourself have seen the power of a heart that is willing. Simple, intentional moments can result in amazing outcomes.

"But I don't know how to teach someone guitar." you might say. "I am not musical, and there's nothing about my life, anyone would find interesting. I have nothing to give." May I gently reiterate? You, no matter who you are, can impact another person, even another generation's future.

Are you really raising your eyebrows or rolling your eyes? Look me in the eye friend. You are hardwired to bless. Your specific story, your personal heartaches and disappointments, your failures, your successes, your distinct brand of humor, your touch, everything you are, can like Brian, open a door of destiny to another person.

Let me tell you a marvelous secret, a secret few know. Hear it and mark it well. *We cannot unlock ourselves... each of us holds a key*

to another. You have in your hand a distinct and unique key. This key may not be immediately obvious to you. You might not feel it's cool steely weight or it's incredible potential. But it's your key. No one else on earth has this exact key.

On four occasions I have handed people rusty ancient keys, to symbolize that there is a door that they are to open. If I could I would put an ancient key in your hand. You hold a key that is yours alone. I hope to convince you of it.

When the Key is a Kiss

For Andor Foldes, the key was a kiss. Andor, actually remembers two kisses. His father kissed him when he was seven and thanked him for helping in the garden. Even though that kiss was over six decades earlier, Andor could remember it, as though it were yesterday. (Note to reader; spend all your kisses). But it was another kiss that changed Andor's life forever.

At age sixteen, living in Budapest, Andor was already a skilled pianist. But due to a conflict with his piano teacher, he was at an all-time low. In the midst of that very troubled year, one of the most renowned pianists of the day came to the Budapest to perform. Emil von Sauer was not only famous because of his abilities at the piano, he also enjoyed the fame of being the last surviving pupil of Franz Liszt.

Sauer requested that young Andor play for him. Andor obliged the master with some of the difficult works of Bach, Beethoven, and Schumann. When he finished, Sauer walked over to him and kissed Andor on the forehead.

"My son," he said, "when I was your age, I became a student of Liszt. He kissed me on the forehead after my first lesson, saying, 'Take good care of this kiss -- it comes from Beethoven, who gave it me after hearing me play.' I have waited for years to pass on this sacred heritage, but now I feel you deserve it."

Your friend may not be a renowned pianist, but you do have a sacred heritage you can pass on to another generation. One of my sacred heritages is story. My mom surrounded me with hundreds of books, many of them biographies of famous men and women. I know more stories than most people have ears to hear. I can pass on the kiss of story from past generations.

A Desire That Opened A Door

Do you remember the delicious feeling of being desirable to someone? I don't mean sexually desired, that's wonderful as well, but I am talking about times

when you knew someone desired your company. Billions of dollars are poured yearly into making you think that you are not desirable unless you buy a certain product, look a certain way, or smell like a particular fragrance. Desirability is an exquisite gift. Let me tell you about a teacher who gave that gift to a girl named Mary.

Author John Trent tells the Mary's poignant story. Born with a cleft palate, Mary's misshaped lip, crooked nose, and garbled speech, made her the brunt of cruel jokes.

With all the teasing, Mary grew up hating the fact that she was "different." She was convinced that no one, outside her family, could ever love her ... until she entered Mrs. Leonard's class.

Mrs. Leonard had a warm smile, a round face, and shiny brown hair. While everyone in her class liked her, Mary came to love Mrs. Leonard.

In the 1950's, it was common for teachers to give their children an annual hearing test. However, in Mary's case, in addition to her cleft palate, she was barely able to hear out of one ear. Determined not to let the other children have another "difference" to point out, she would cheat on the test each year. The "whisper test" was given by having a child walk to the classroom door, turn sideways, close one ear with a finger, and then repeat something which the teacher whispered.

Mary turned her bad ear towards her teacher and pretended to cover her good ear. She knew that teachers would often say things like, "The sky is blue," or "What color are your shoes?"

But not on that day. Surely, God put seven words in Mrs. Leonard's mouth that changed Mary's life forever. When the "Whisper test" came, Mary heard the words: *"I wish you were my little girl."* *2

Mrs. Leonard's key was just a sentence. But it was a sentence that unlocked a heart. A sentence that changed Mary's concept about herself.

Your voice my friend, can speak worlds into existence. I am sure there were things said to you that you, no matter how old you are this moment, still remember.

Words can crater into your heart and alter your entire topography. An affirming sentence can sculpt an extraordinary future. You need no talent, charm, beauty or riches to give the gift of a sentence filled with tenderness.

I remember a sentence a teacher gave me in 6th grade. I was moving far away, and my teacher made a handmade card that said; "As you move south, your friends to the north will miss you." My childhood was filled with moving, and I rarely had friends. It never occurred to me anyone would miss me, not in a thousand years. I read that card over and over and kept it as a treasured possession for years.

A Sentence That Opened A Door

Consider another teacher Dr. Howard Hendricks, and his pupil Bruce Wilkenson. Bruce handed in a paper in graduate school, and Dr. Hendricks graded it "A+". But he didn't stop there, with red ink he wrote across the top of the paper, "An absolutely outstanding paper. I believe you have the potential to become one of our countries greatest teachers!" Bruce went on to become the author of the best-selling book Prayer of Jabez. Bruce says of Dr. Hendricks; "He has an incredible passion to believe you into greatness. He never stops believing."

Professor Hendricks himself was believed into greatness by Professor Merrill C. Tenney. One day Tenney put his arms around the young Hendricks and said; "Howie, I believe in you. God has a great future for you and I want you to know I am 100% on your team."

You might be protesting, "But my life is so busy, I don't have time to think about kissing, believing, encouraging anyone into greatness. I have no idea what distinctive key I hold. I don't think I have anything to offer. I don't know how to teach guitar, or say significant sentences, or even grade papers. All I have is a very small life that couldn't influence anyone. I have to shout over the television to even be heard." This is a common objection but let me gently say it again. *You*, yes you, are perfect to open a door into some person's heart that unlocks their future. Let me prove it to you.

History is chock full of examples of folks with very ordinary lives and professions whose simple actions dramatically changed the future. Ever heard of a woman named Pua? I imagine not. Pua lived many thousands of years ago in the Middle East. She served Pharaoh as a midwife to Jewish slaves. Now being a midwife doesn't sound like it has much potential to dramatically impact history does it?

Pua probably didn't get out of bed in the morning and say "I think I'll change history today." Pharaoh, Pua's boss, was a little paranoid that his slaves might have more children than the Egyptians and then rise up in revolt. Pua's job was to deliver baby girls...no boys, only girls.

Boys were to be smothered at birth. But Pua decided that killing baby boys at birth was not right. So, she allowed them to live. One day she and another midwife name Shiprah, allowed a certain baby boy born to Aram and Jochebed to live. That baby, Moses, grew to become the greatest human leader in all of Jewish history. Pua's simple key of civil disobedience, unlocked the future freedom of 1.5 million slaves insuring the future of the Jews.

Brian, Saur, Mrs. Leonard, Professor Hendricks, Pua, illustrate the power of great big word called generativity. Even as I type this word, my spell checker doesn't recognize it. It gives it the spell checker equivalent of a scarlet letter, it underlines it in red. I agree generativity sounds peculiar, certainly not something one should write a book about. Or should they? Generativity's foreignness, and six syllables might keep it permanently off your tongue. But I hope not. I hope this marvelous word becomes a word you learn to love and live.

Generativity is defined as *the intentional care, guidance, and establishment of the next generation*. Notice the first word, *intentional*. Nothing of consequence ever happens to the unintentional. You got out of bed this morning because you were intentional. You did unpleasant tasks today because you were intentional. You didn't just sing Que Serra, Serra, Whatever Will Be, Will Be...You didn't expect to be levitated to your destiny by some cosmic force. You were intentional, and it made a difference.

Intentional care...is the operative dynamic to generativity. My husband got up at 5:30 this morning to get our son to school. Our son attends a school some miles from our home, and it takes intentionality to make sure he's there on time. We intentionally care for Joel, because he is our beloved son, and he has an astonishing mind, and needs to go to school appropriate to his gifts. I am not for a moment pretending that intentional care, guidance and establishing the next generation is easy. Intentionality costs something, in our case, it cost us sleep, gas, and tuition. But we're intentional because we see a bright future for Joel.

Envisioning the future for your child might be easier than envisioning a bright future for someone unrelated to you. Our lives are busy, compact, dense, full of unceasing demands. Option rich, we often start our days thoroughly exhausted. We have little energy to think about future generations. Success is sometimes just getting through our to-do list and plopping fully spent into bed.

May we not be like the famous king in history. A wise man went to him and foretold a disastrous future. "Your sons and grandsons will be eunuchs in the house of the King of Babylon. All your possessions and people will be carted off". The King hearing this disastrous news said; "It's a good word, because it won't happen in my lifetime."

The king makes my blood boil. But before I put my hands on my hips and yell, "How dare you be so flippant about the future?" I have to realize that the king's response is often exactly my response about the environment, about future generations, about the long- term ramifications of political decisions. As long as our personal prospects are secure, I really don't want to serious think about creating a bright future for others.

Decades ago with video camera's new on the market, my husband and I decided to start a new business called We Present You. The idea was to film people telling their stories to a generation who would be born after they had lived. You probably guessed how the company fared. It was an embarrassing and utter flop. Our equations were wrong. Naively, we hadn't factored in the fact that no one wants to face their impending mortality no matter how close it might be. Needless to say, we had very few customers.

This very human tendency to not consider the future, explains much of why the world is what it is today. Because our ancestors felt much like we do. Live for the moment, let the future take care of itself. It's hard to spend today's tax dollars on things that don't benefit the people who paid the tax. Just survive today. Get all you can, any way you can and let future generations deal with the aftermath

Everywhere you look you see the effects of our shortsightedness. Life crumbles to dust when generativity is not embraced. Culture disintegrates and goes feral. Corrupt leaders around the world siphon off monies that could pull countries on to their feet. Desolate cities, environmental wastelands, poverty and illiteracy ravage entire regions.

The consequences are enormous. If you look at much of the evil of the world, you can often trace it back to a loss of generativity. Chances are there were very *few* people intentionally caring, guiding and establishing the next generation. Little thought was given to a preferred and bright future. Children were left to grow on their own, like weeds. There was no cultivation, no watering, no nutrient rich environments, no intentionality in guidance, little encouragement, very little if any, believing and embracing someone into greatness.

This truth was recently driven home to me, at a foster camp for abandoned teenage girls. This camp served just a tiny segment of the 518,000 foster children in America. The girls were poignant, beautiful in wistfulness. Their stories stretched my mind past credulity. Were there really parents this clueless, this self-absorbed? Yes, there are. Unfortunately, there is no shortage of parents who live entirely for themselves and their own addictions. One mother paid her young daughter to stay home from school, and baby-sit her younger siblings, so the mother could party all night and sleep all day. One mother introduced her daughter to drugs before she was a teenager.

Can a cure be found, strong enough to heal a generation of children who have been devastated by a parent's poor choices? I believe there is, and I believe you are part of that cure. Picture an entire generation embracing a lifestyle of generativity. Imagine a generation moving from success to significance, finding and using their personal keys to unlock the destiny of someone else.

It's been said that graveyards are the wealthiest real estate in the world. In them, lie symphonies never heard, books never published, art never painted, scientific solutions never discovered. Graveyards are a sad depository of things never attempted, risks not taken, visions unseen. Cemeteries hold much more than dead bodies. They contain dead dreams, dead gifts, dead possibilities. It's real estate full of unused keys, people who died never discovering the key they held to unlock the future of others.

Graveyards should make us weep not only for the loss of loved ones, but for the unrealized future buried among them.

It doesn't have to be this way. The good news is that there is a gentle revolution underfoot of generative people. It's a global phenomenon. Retirees are feeling an urge to move from success to significance. Insightful people are starting to passionately care

about the future. Our generation is engaging the next, people are stepping forward. This is a revolution of action and intentionality. May I recruit you?

Ponderings;

1. Could I be described as generative (taking care to establish and guide the next generation), or am I self-absorbed?
2. What are some simple specific ways I could engage young people?
3. What adult influenced me most in my childhood?
4. Why does generativity matter?

Endnotes

1. Costco Connection Magazine, June, 2008
2. John Trent, Ph.D., Vice President of Today's Family, *Men of Action*, 3. Winter 1993, p. 5