

Chapter One

Live Memorably

"I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know; the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve." 1. Dr. Albert Schweitzer

"Do you recognize my voice?" the gravelly voice queried. Brian sped 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, Am, at a summer camp years before.

"Do you remember what you said to him?" the man asked. Actually, Brian did. "I told him to buy a guitar but never put it 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. The

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guitar became his life. My son even majored 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. Such a simple act, such huge implications.

What about you? Would you like a call like that? Would it bring you joy to have someone call you to say that something you did changed their life? Would you like to hear that you personally opened a door to someone's destiny? I think you might.

You may become a part of a very large movement of people who are beginning to live a life that outlives themselves. A movement of people bored with self-absorption, satiated with affluenza, men, and women

willing to invest themselves 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 people awake. I hope to convince you of it. There are people even now who are waiting for you. It's not difficult. Right now, is a great time to start.

You were made for this. Have you asked yourself what's your purpose? Have you asked yourself why you, you very specifically, are alive? 2

Would a gravestone that simply said lived and died, accompanied by relevant dates, satisfy you?

A few years back some friends from back East were visiting us in Southern California. We had just built a home full of windows revealing sweeping views of the ocean and the mountains. We loved sharing the spectacular view. Blessed with friends all over the world, people found their way quickly to our door.

My Epiphany

While our friends from D.C. were with us, I had one of the most important epiphanies of my life. *I knew without a shadow of a doubt that I didn't want people standing around my grave remembering great moments of hospitality with us.*

I knew emphatically that I didn't want people remembering that I wrote books that made them think, (hopefully, this one will do that), I wanted to become a memorable speaker, but that was not what I wanted people to remember most. 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 wasted life.

I admit, it was a tall order for a small life. Living a life that outlives you... by embracing a generation into greatness sounds a tad grandiose. But 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 it. Simple, intentional moments can result in amazing outcomes.

"But I don't know how to teach someone guitar." you might say. 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 generation's future.

Did I just catch you raising your eyebrows and 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 generation.

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.

A Kiss That Opened a Door

For Andor Foldes, the key was a kiss. Andor 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; be sure to 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. During that very troubled year, one of the most renowned pianists of the day came to 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."

You 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 thousands of books, many of them biographies of famous men and women. I know more stories than I could ever tell. I can pass on the kiss of other generations because I know their stories.

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 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

You friend can speak worlds into existence. I am sure there were things said to you that you, no longer 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 fly south, your friends to the north will miss you."

My childhood was filled with moving, and I never had real 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.

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 country's 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."

Provoking People Into Their Future

As you live a life that outlives you, you might find yourself like Sherwood Anderson pushing and provoking people into greatness. Anderson, an author who was well known for less than a decade, pushed and prodded a stellar cast of writers into their destiny.

Anderson began by putting his arm around a brash young ambulance driver fresh from fighting WWI in Italy. For two long years, Sherwood bloodied and bathed the young writer's work in red ink. He pushed, prodded and provoked, until the young man's words sprang to life off the page, vivid, sharp, and full of immediacy.

In 1926, the young man, claiming everything he ever learned about writing he learned from Sherwood, published his very first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*. Ernest Hemingway was on his way to literary fame.

After Hemingway, Sherwood went on to provoke authors you were probably made to read in school, William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, and John Steinbeck. Three of Sherwood's young men went on to earn Nobel prizes for literature, and four of them won Pulitzers.

Someone commenting on Sherwood's life said he was the only author of his day to reproduce his style and vision into the next generation of writers. Sherwood's fame as an author only lasted a brief decade but the men, he believed into greatness will be read for decades to come.

Doctor, sailor, candlestick maker, when it's all said and done you have two choices; try to unlock yourself or unlock the destiny of the generation after you. We choose daily. The consequences of our choosing are extraordinary and eternal.

You might be protesting, "But my life is so busy, I don't have time to think about kissing, believing, encouraging or provoking anyone into greatness. I don't have anything to offer. I don't know how to teach guitar, or grade papers, or mentor authors. All I have is a very small life that couldn't influence anyone. I 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 embrace a generation into greatness.

Let me prove it to you.

History is full of examples of people with very ordinary lives and professions whose 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 that 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 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 leader in all Jewish history.

Pua's key unlocked the future freedom of 1.5 million slaves insuring the future of the Jews.

Generativity

Brian, Saur, Mrs. Leonard, Sherwood Anderson, Professor Hendricks, Pua, are just a few of thousands of people who illustrate to the power of generativity. I imagine you weren't talking about generativity the other day with your friends. It's six syllables and foreignness could seriously be off putting. But I hope this wonderful word becomes word millions learn to love and live.

Generativity is defined as the intentional care, guidance, and establishment of the next generation.

As humans we tend to not give too much thought about the future. Our lives are busy, compacted, dense, full of unceasing demands. Option rich, we approach our days with serial exhaustion. We have little energy to think about future generations. We just want to get through today.

We're like a 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."

Before your blood boils over at his cluelessness, realize that is our response about the environment, about future generations, about the long-term ramifications of political decisions. If our personal prospects are secure, we really don't want to seriously think about creating a preferred future for another generation.

We Present You

Decades ago, with video camera's new on the market, my darling husband Joey 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. Naively, we hadn't factored in the fact that no one wants to face their impending mortality no matter how close it might be. We had 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. 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 shortsighted-ness. Corrupt leaders create chaos leaving the next generation with ruined environments and desolate cities. When generativity is not embraced, culture disintegrates and goes feral.

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. There were very few people intentionally caring, guiding and establishing the next generation.

Little thought was given to an outstanding 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 a generation into greatness.

Foster Children

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 424,000 foster children in America. The girls were poignant, beautiful in wistfulness.

Their stories stretched my mind past credulity. Were there really parents that clueless, that self-absorbed? Yes, there are 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. Another's mother introduced her 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 keys to unlock destiny in others.

Research is conclusive, the strongest predictor of a child at risk succeeding, is the presence of a caring non-relative in their life.

Graveyards The Wealthiest Real Estate

Author Miles Monroe says 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. 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?

1 Albert Schweitzer; Albert Schweitzer, quoted in John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Indispensable qualities of a Leader* (Nashville; Nelson, 1999), 139

2 John Trent, Ph.D., Vice President of Today's Family, *Men of Action*, Winter 1993, p.