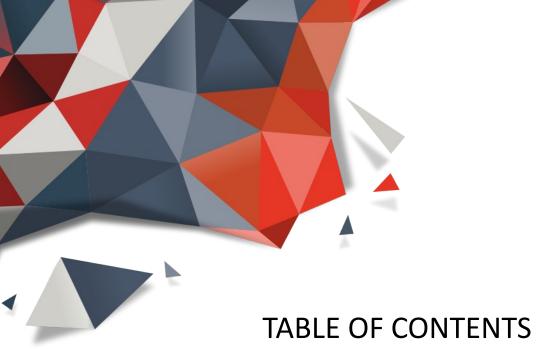


A story-based guide to understanding a parent's influence

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

Thank you for choosing to read this short e-book on the power of a parent's influence. We hope that you will find what we have written in these pages helpful and that it will inspire you to be the influence your child, children or grandchildren need you to be.

To start we would like to engage your imagination. We want to present to you a story with three different outcomes, and we want to encourage you to do your best to live yourself into these outcomes, and especially pay attention to the one that you, as a parent, can identify with most. If you identify with the first one, please do not stop reading as there is great value in reading through all of the outcomes. We ask that you honestly evaluate where you are as a parent in order to get the most out of this e-book. We will describe each of the outcomes separately. In each outcome, there will be a child and there will be a parent. We will refer to the child simply as "Child", and to the parent as "Parent". We deliberately did not assign a gender to the child or the parent figures in these scenarios. The only reason we did this is so that you will be able to relate to the scenarios more easily as a father OR mother (and hopefully both as a married parenting couple) reading this. We also want you to be able to relate to this with a son or daughter in mind.

We'll start off with the first paragraph which will be universal for the story, after which will follow the three outcomes of how the story could unfold differently depending on the variables in each outcome.

# **THE STORY OF CHILD**

As Child grows up, Child keeps bumping into doors. These doors are everywhere. Some of the doors open with the slightest push, but others require Child to learn how to turn the knob and push at the same time. Throughout life, Child discovers keys that can be used to open the doors which are locked. Still Child finds a couple of doors that remains locked and simply will not open. These doors do not respond to pushing, turning the knob or the the keys Child already holds in hand. Not even kicking opens them. The secret to opening these locked doors lies with Parent. Parent holds keys that were handed over when Child was born.

#### Outcome 1:

Parent forgot about the keys and the importance to use them. Parent is very busy and hardly notices when Child bumps into doors that will not open. Parent is too occupied with life, work, and preserving self and never talks to Child about the doors which need to be opened. When parent was a child there was no one to open the doors and the keys were never mentioned. Parent found other ways of getting past the door, and subsequently, Parent doesn't realise the significance of the keys and that they were given to assist Child to open certain doors. Parent believes that Child needs to find a way of opening the doors, much like Parent did. Parent is oblivious to the power power of the keys available to



unlock certain doors for Child that would open to understanding, provide security, and let in blessing in the areas beyond the doors.

One day, as Child walks past one of the locked doors, a sound can be heard coming from the other side. It is the voice of one of Child's friends. Friend invites Child to come through the door to the other side. Child replies, "I can't. The door is locked." Friend responds with, "That did not stop me from crossing over." Child, a little confused, asks, "How did you get through the door?" "I didn't", comes the reply from Friend. "I found a different way.

Stand back and I'll show you." Child takes a step back. Suddenly a thudding sound comes from the other side of the wall. The thudding grows more intense and soon the plaster starts to crack and fall off the wall to the right of the door.

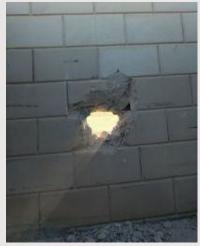
A small opening appears, as well as the head of a heavy hammer. With every thud the opening becomes bigger, and a thin ray of sunlight breaks through and illuminates the dust particles floating in the air. When the opening is big enough, the familiar face of Friend appears in the opening in the wall, followed by an outstretched hand inviting Child with a "come here" gesture. Child hesitates, then walks slowly towards the opening. Eventually, after a second gesture from Friend, Child climbs through the opening and is stunned by what becomes visible on the other side. Child never could have imagined the beauty that was behind the door. Child looks back at the door, feeling a little guilty for breaking through the wall and wonders, "What was that door there for any way, and why is it locked?"

The guilt soon gives way to feelings of entitlement, accomplishment, and rebellion. Child begins to enjoy the new "freedom" found beyond the door, but with the freedom Child learns some painful lessons. After some time, Friend leaves and goes off in a new direction, leaving Child alone in the new world. In time Child learns that circumventing the door into this unknown world, was a grave mistake and the wonder in this world will eventually turn into wounds, pain, and disappointment. Child finds it strange and saddening that the blessings that some fellow travellers on this journey experience, are elusive and hard to come by.

It feels as if something is constantly keeping the blessing out of reach, yet bad things multiply — like an open door through which comes the iciest draft that chills and causes pain in bones and joints. Later, Child feels confused, unprepared, uneducated, disoriented, unhinged, at sea, and as if things are out of order. Child thinks, "Why are so many blessed in here, but I feel cursed?" Child turns around, and far in the distance, through the smoke, sees the image of a locked door with a whole to the left of it. Child silently wonders, "Could it be..."

#### Outcome 2:

Parent is a good parent. Parent loves Child. Parent cares for and provides for Child. Parent even at times showers Child with gifts and spends quality time with Child. But Parent, because of experiences as a child, finds it difficult to apply the keys to the doors of life. The negative and hurtful experiences make Parent believe that the available set of keys are missing some pieces and will not be able to turn the locks and open the doors for Child. Parent feels ashamed when noticing that Child keeps on bumping into certain doors that simply will not open. Because of the relationship Child has with Parent, Child sometimes asks Parent about the doors and why they are closed. Because Parent never self quite learned how to navigate the doors of life, the discussion always gets side-tracked to some other subject matter. Parent realises that Child needs help with the doors, but Parent feels silly and unprepared to deal with and open the doors. Even though Parent knows that the unlocking of those doors would open to understanding, bring security, and release blessing for Child in the areas beyond the doors, Parent remains unresponsive and never engages the keys in hand.



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A small opening appears, as well as the head of a heavy hammer. With every thud the opening becomes bigger, and a thin ray of sunlight breaks through and illuminates the dust particles floating in the air. When the

opening is big enough, the familiar face of Friend appears in the opening in the wall, followed by an outstretched hand inviting Child with a "come here" gesture. Child hesitantly walks closer, then stops. "Are you sure this is ok?", Child asks Friend. Friend stares at Child, and then again motions with the hand encouraging Child to come closer. Child walks closer again, then stops and puts another question to Friend, "What about the door? Should I not go through the door?" This time Friend looks at Child puzzled, but the puzzled look soon turns into a look that says, "I dare you." Child carefully puts one foot through the hole in the wall, then pauses and mumbles, "I don't know about this". Eventually, Child worms through the hole and is stunned by what awaits on the other side. Child never imagined it was so beautiful on the other side. Child looks back at the door, feeling a deep sense of guilt and betrayal for breaking through the wall. Child stops for a moment and wonders, "What was that door there for and why was it locked?" Friend beckons Child to follow, and slowly but surely Child starts to follow Friend into this new unknown world.

As Child experiences more of this new world, the feelings of guilt and betrayal turn into feelings of entitlement, accomplishment, and rebellion. Child begins to enjoy the new "freedom" found beyond the door, but with the freedom Child learn some painful lessons. After some time, Friend leaves and goes off in a new direction, leaving Child alone in the new world. In time Child learns that circumventing the door into this unknown world, was a grave mistake and the wonder in this world will eventually turn into wounds, pain, and disappointment. Child finds it strange and saddening that the blessings that some fellow travellers on this journey experience, are elusive and hard to come by. It feels as if something is constantly keeping the blessing out of reach, yet bad things multiply – like an open door through which comes the iciest draft that chills and causes pain in bones and joints. Later, Child feels confused, unprepared, uneducated, disoriented, unhinged, at sea, and as if things are out of order. Child thinks, "Why are so many blessed in here, but I feel cursed? Why do I feel so guilty, filthy, and as if I am missing out on something even though I am in this incredible place?" Child turns around, and far in the distance, through the smoke, sees the image of a locked door with a whole to the left of it. Child silently wonders, "Could it be..."

#### Outcome 3:

Parent is a good parent. Parent loves Child. Parent cares for and provides for Child. There is a good and open relationship between Parent and Child. Parent is well aware of the locked doors and the need to help Child navigate through those doors. Parent fully understands the importance and value of the keys because of positive experiences Parent had growing up as a child, as well as wisdom gained over the years.

After doing some homework on the subjects of the doors, and after being equipped through parenting courses and teachings, Parent feels confident to use the keys to open the doors for Child, and usher Child into the fullness of what lies beyond it. Parent wants to see Child walk through the doors with understanding, security, confidence, and the ability to experience the full blessing in the areas it provides access to. Parent is ready to engage when the moment calls for it. Because of this awareness and readiness, Parent notices when Child starts to bump into closed doors. With confidence, and because of a good relationship with Child (and vice



versa), Parent steps forward and initiates a conversation with Child about the doors, explaining why they are closed, and the need for special assistance to open them.

One day Child walks past a locked door. Child is familiar with this door because there have been meaningful conversations with Parent regarding this door. Child knows the name of this door, has a good idea of what lies behind it and has developed a deep respect for the reason this door is currently still locked. Child has learned from Parent that there will be a time when this door needs to be opened. Child comprehends that stepping through this door prematurely and without the blessing of Parent, can spell disaster and bring much pain and wounding. Parent has given the assurance that when that time comes, Parent will be there to open the door and lead Child through it to the beauty that waits on the other side.

Passing by this door today is different though. As Child passes by the door, a voice can be heard coming from the other side. It is a voice Child recognises. It is the voice of one of Child's friends. Friend is calling Child to come through the door to the other side. Child replies, "I can't. The door is locked." Friend responds with, "That did not stop me from crossing over." Child, a little confused, asks, "How did you get through the door?" "I didn't", comes the reply from friend. "I found a different way. Stand back and I'll show you." Child takes a step back. Suddenly a thudding sound comes from the other side of the wall. Realising what is happening, Child shouts at Friend, "STOP!". The thudding stops. From the other side of the wall comes the voice of Friend, "What's wrong?" Child responds, "Please don't break down my wall."

"Walls are restricting, you know", comes the comment from Friend. "Maybe", Child responds, "but I believe it is safer going through a door than through a wall." After an awkward silence, Child hears the reply from the other side, "You must be crazy. Who told you that?" Child searches for the answer to a question that sounded very confrontational and challenging.

Finally, Child gets the words out, "My Parent told me so." Before Friend can respond, Child adds, "I love my Parent and I trust my Parent to know the best for me. I'm going to be rather safe than sorry." There is a long pause and Child can hear footsteps on the other side growing softer as Friend walks away. Friend turns around, looks at the closed door, and the crack in the plaster on the wall to the left of it. "Suite yourself. It's your life." Child thinks for a moment, and then with confidence replies, "Yes, it is my life, and I plan to make the most of it." Concerned, Child adds, "Be careful out there, Friend!"

Sometime later Parent and Child stand at the door. Everything that can has been discussed about the door and what the future behind it holds: opportunities or disappointments; success or pitfalls; life or death; blessing or cursing. The moment has come. It is time for Child to step across the threshold into a new phase of life never experienced or seen before. Child will walk through the door with innocence and wonder. But Child will also enter through the door with wisdom and understanding. Parent steps forward

towards the door, takes the key, and puts it in the lock. As Parent turns the key, Parent looks at Child standing there waiting, and a tear forms and rolls over a smiling cheek. "Why the tears, Parent?", Child asks. Parent looks Child in the eyes and says, "I am so proud of you for waiting patiently for this door to open. I bless you and release you to experience the fullness and the beauty of it. I love you Child."

With these words, Parent turns the knob and pushes the door open. It swings all by itself and comes to a slow stop on its hinges. Child looks through the door and smiles. It is beautiful. It is huge. It is also intimidating. Parent takes Child by the hand and ushers Child into the new world beyond. A few steps

Child by the hand and ushers Child into the new world beyond. A few steps beyond the door, Parent lets go of Child's hand. Child looks around and sees Parent smiling, "You'll be alright. You have everything you need for the journey. I will be here if you need me for advice or just to chat about what you find out there. This door will remain open and will never be locked again." Now it is Child who feels a tear forming and rolling over a lightly speckled cheek. "Thank you, Parent, for believing in me. But most of all, thank you for being a strong influence in my life and for teaching me to be patient and

giving me the reason why." In Parent's shadow, slightly to the left of the door, Child sees a crack in the plaster on the wall. Child silently whispers, "I'm so glad I didn't..."



## THE TRADITION OF GIVING A KEY

Key pendants or gold key souvenirs are customarily given as a present on someone's 21st birthday. Traditionally this date from the times when at twenty-one, a young person was considered old enough to be a key-holder to your family's home, and thus hold a symbolical 'senior' position in the family. How times have changed. Children today are learning at a rapid rate and many 15-year-olds know more about life than 21-year-olds back when a golden key was the custom as a 21st birthday gift.

In the Jewish tradition, children have for centuries, been called into adulthood at a much earlier age. At age 12 a Bat Mitzvah is held for a daughter and at 13 a Bar Mitzvah is held for a son. They are not given a physical key as a symbol, but they receive a set of symbolic keys calling them to adulthood and responsible living in the home, towards others, in the law of God (Torah) and the living out of their faith or beliefs. In the Western world this kind of transitioning from childhood to adulthood has been largely, or in most places completely lost.

But handing a child a key at 21 or even having a ceremony (as powerful and needed as it is) at whatever age, will not have the desired result if not accompanied by the continuous training of a child in the way he/she needs to go. Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This training, however, is not a once-off moment of impartation or even a big event announcing with pride the "coming of age" of a child. The training required in Proverbs 22:6 speaks of a dedicated, constant, and focused education for life. The word used for "train up" in the original Hebrew text, is the word ( nɔu) or chânak (pronounced khaw-nak) and it means "to dedicate, to consecrate, to guide, or to introduce to". These concepts certainly imply a lot more than just handing a child a key, whether a house key, a car key, or a symbolic key. It requires a parent or parents to be engaged in the dedicated guidance of a child and proper equipping for life. This kind of training requires not one but numerous keys for the different doors children will face in life.

The scenarios used earlier in this e-book, aim to provide some indication of what could happen in a child's life depending on the influence of the parent, especially in those times when the child needs to navigate the more crucial and challenging doors of life.



## PARENTS HOLD KEYS TO UNLOCK THE FUTURE

As a child grows through various stages of life, parents potentially have the most amazing vantage point. Parents can see a child come into the world; grow up and learn the first lessons in life; watch the body and mind of that child develop over years; witness the incredible and often confusing time of puberty - nudging a child to step up and into adulthood.

Parents were intended to be present in and at every one of these stages of a child's life. Parents were intended to give impartation and guidance at these stages a child grows through. Parents were intended to influence the life of their children and lead them in the way they need to go.

Parents hold keys to lock or unlock the future for a child. But if parents do not realise this, it can have dire consequences for a child. The growing up years of a child are filled with moments in which they will learn, get instructions, and develop the skills that they need for the road ahead. But those learning moments can be compared to doors with mechanical closing mechanisms.

Mechanical doors tend to close and need to be opened intentionally and while countering the designed resistance. Only once the force of the mechanism default closing action is countered, can one walk through the door.

## THE INBORN RESISTANCE IN LIFE

Life has a way of closing on us if we do not intentionally turn the knob and push back. Life does not just happen by itself. Success, accomplishment, and prospering in life are not given...it needs to be fought and worked for. Parents

were designed by God to be the influencing agents in a child's life to help them open the doors they need to walk through. This includes teaching them which doors to try, preparing them for walking through those doors, and then lending weight to help open those doors with them.

But apart from helping a child push through the doors of life, parents have a specific role to play in dealing with certain doors. Some doors in the life of a child are not only spring-loaded but locked to start with. Parents alone hold the keys to these doors.

## **IGNORANCE KEEPS DOORS CLOSED**

Parents hold special keys in their hands which can unlock certain doors for a child. Unfortunately, many parents are not even aware of the keys they hold in their hands. Consequently, many doors remain closed for many children as they grow up, not because their parents were evil, but because their parents were ignorant.

It may happen that those doors eventually open later in life, but normally at a cost. If those doors do open, it will often be accompanied by suffering, hardships, or some sort of trauma resulting in forcing open of the door/s. The breaking down of doors was never part of God's design for life. His plan from the start was to put a child in a family with loving parents, who would help to navigate life and assist in getting through the doors and obstacles in the way.

## **MOTHER KEYS AND FATHER KEYS**

Apart from the fact that parents alone hold keys to certain doors in a child's life, there is another dynamic that God designed into the family unit. God's

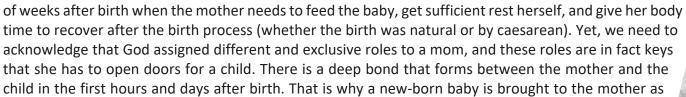
design for the family included that a father would hold a unique set of keys and a mother would hold a unique set of keys.

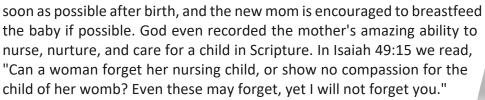
#### **MOTHER KEYS**

The keys a mother of a child holds include birth, nursing, nurturing, comfort, and early childhood development.

A father cannot give birth, nurture as a mother can, and he cannot nurse (breastfeed) a child. Having said that, the father can and needs to provide crucial support to the mother before, during, and for some time after birth. The father's involvement in helping the mother raise their infant child, even into early childhood development, is of great value.

Fathers who help with chores at home, run errands, and help with older children in the home, can free up the mother so she can focus on her role to nurture and care for the child. The father's involvement is especially needed during the first couple





While ministering to people over the years, we have found that when a lack of this kind of attention from a mother was experienced by a child, it becomes like a locked door in life, affecting him or her deeply in relating to other people, and they end up struggling to relate in

meaningful ways to those close to them.

So, mothers hold vital keys in the forming years of a child's life. If mothers do not apply these keys (due to ignorance, neglect or not being available to do so), her child gets robbed of critical life skills, and development is hindered or compromised.

#### **FATHER KEYS**

On the other hand, a father holds unique keys in his hand with which to influence his child. The keys the father holds are quite different from that of the mother. The time when the influence of a father is most felt also differs from the time of most influence by the mother. Where the mother influences mostly in the early childhood years the child, the father influences mostly as the child approaches adolescence or puberty. Yes, dad is needed in the early years, and yes mom does still play a role in adolescence, but the importance of each parent's role is magnified at certain stages of life more than others.



The father builds on the foundation the mother laid in the early years of childhood and further equips a child for dealing with the challenges to be faced in life. The keys the father holds in his hands can open



doors in the critical areas of boundaries, values, honour, responsibility, identity, calling, and destiny. The father helps a child to discover his or her potential, gifts, and abilities. He then proceeds to place the target out for a child to aim for, and then lovingly calls a child to action. The father lays the tracks, so to speak, for a child to safely navigate the world the start to face beyond the safety of home.

Let us stress here also, that we do not intend to say that the mother cannot play a role in the abovementioned crucial influences in a child's life. The mother can certainly also set boundaries and teach on the various aspects like identity and destiny, and she needs to. But we need to stress the importance of the father as the primary figure to provide a strong conviction in the heart of a child on these essentials for life. It is exceedingly rare to find children or adults in prison who will tell you that they never had a mother in their lives. But we have personally heard the stories of prisoners saying (and bemoaning the fact) that they never had a relationship with their fathers.

We have ministered to people who did not have a father figure giving them clear direction in these areas. They became like wanderers going from one place to the other trying to find peace and purpose. If a father, for instance, does not confirm the identity of a child (including gender identity), that child will go in search of answers and may find him- or herself searching in all the wrong places. We have seen first-hand the effects when fathers are absent from homes and a child's life. Society is poorer for it when fathers do not use the keys entrusted to them by God to unlock the doors for their children and send them forth into the world secure and confident to face the world.



## **DOORS PARENTS HOLD THE KEYS FOR**

Here are a few examples of the doors parents hold the keys for.

- Doors of character formation (teaching on things like honour, respect, manners, etc.)
   As a river needs strong and secure banks for the current to flow controlled and safely, so character formation aims to put in place character banks so the velocity of life can flow controlled and safely, to produce life and not cause destruction (flood).
- Door to identity (including gender identity) knowing who I was created to be.
  - Personal identity
  - Physical identity
  - Emotional identity
  - Spiritual identity
- Door to destiny (calling and purpose) knowing why I was created.
- Door to puberty (understanding what is happening and why, and that it is good)
- Door to relating to the opposite sex (how not to get lost on the other side)
- Door to sex (sex education at home remains the best education IF PARENTS TALK ABOUT IT)
- Door to manhood or womanhood (releasing a son or daughter into the next phase of life)
  - Understanding and stepping into my role as a man or woman
  - ☐ Taking responsibility for life and actions
  - ☐ Healthy boundaries for men
  - ☐ Healthy boundaries for women
  - ☐ Marriage and choosing a marriage partner
  - ☐ Marriage as a covenant (commitment) vs marriage as a contract (agreement)

•	Door to responsible living
	☐ Stewardship of resources (including and specifically money) God puts in my hands.
	☐ Career choices and ethics in the workplace
	☐ Starting and raising a family
	☐ The dangers of substance abuse and addiction

All of the above must be done from a Biblical world view, because the blueprint of life is locked up in the Word of the One who created it all. Therefore parents need be aligned with the Word of God in order to open these crucial doors for their children in a way that will make them prosper as they enter through each door.

It is important to understand that the abovementioned doors are where children need parental influence. Parents tend to slack down after the years of early childhood development or when children reach the so-called teen years, thinking they have done their part and that children can now fend for themselves. The problem is that children are not capable of making the tough decisions in life without the valuable insight and direction of parents. It has been scientifically proven that the prefrontal cortex of the human brain (the part responsible for judgment) is only fully developed around the age of 25.

"One key part of that trajectory is the development of the prefrontal cortex, a significant part of the brain, in terms of social interactions, that affects how we regulate emotions, control impulsive behavior, assess risk and make long-term plans. Also important are the brain's reward systems, which are especially excitable during adolescence. But these parts of the brain don't stop growing at age 18. In fact, research shows that it can take more than 25 years for them to reach maturity."

www.bigthink.com/mind-brain

From the above-quoted statement, it is clear that the doors we have listed earlier are key concepts in life that need to be carefully accessed. Judgment errors in those areas can be costly mistakes and lead to heartache, disappointment, emotional trauma, behavioral problems, poor ethics, immorality, bad choices, and even physical harm. If left to their own devices, children will, unfortunately, be influenced by the interpretations, views, and voices of others who may not have the best track record themselves. Those voices may be like that of the "Friend" in the story we shared at the start of this e-book. The "Friend" will come up with a solution or "way of doing it" that he or she has found, but it will break your child's heart even if it looks to them as fun and freedom at the time.

# **CONCLUSION**

We live in a world in desperate need for fathers and mothers to rise and do what God has gifted and called them to do. We are entering the fourth industrial revolution characterised by rapid change, artificial intelligence, robotics, and faceless interaction. People, relationships, the sense of value, and the significance of individuals will come under increasing pressure in the coming years. Children are in desperate need of parents standing up and in relevant ways guide and usher them into this big unknown. They need a benchmark for a solid faith in God, a deep sense of significance, and a deep desire to contribute with their uniqueness.

If you are a parent reading this, we implore you to please be the mother and father that God created you to be. Please will you step up and fulfill the God-given roles in your family? Your child/ren need you to be all that you were made to be. You have what it takes. No one else can be a parent to your child. This is your responsibility. This is your moment to shine. Yes, we will all make mistakes along the way, but rather make some mistakes and learn from them, than not acting at all and leaving your child with a fair amount of locked

doors - the keys of which you clutch tightly in your hands - depriving them of their intended destiny and life-purpose.

Remember that no one can influence your child as much as you can. No one else has the platform in and the access to your child's life like you do. See the keys in your hand get up and go unlock some doors to make your child prosper and excel in life.

#### THANK YOU FOR READING THIS E-BOOK

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To learn more about being intentional about opening the doors for your child, look out for information on the Parent's Blessing Online Course and other resources.

#### **About the authors:**

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