The Power of One: How a Single Connection Can Shape a Life

Resilience, Relationships, and the Inspiration Behind, *The Book of David*, by Dr. Michael Gordon

Yesterday, I was out on the golf course with some friends—yes, I golf occasionally—and our conversation drifted into family dynamics. One friend shared something unexpected. "You know," he said, "sometimes I feel lucky I don't have parents."

It was a jarring thing to hear at first. But as he opened up, I learned he had been placed in foster care at just six months old. Over the course of his childhood, he cycled through more than 14 or 15 placements—never finding a permanent or safe home, never forming a bond with someone he could truly call "family."

What struck me most was how this man—after all of that early instability and trauma—had gone on to become a teacher, a father, a husband, and a respected member of his community. So I asked him something rooted in the research I've spent years immersed in: "If you think back, was there *one person* who made a difference?"

He paused. Then he said, "Yes. There was."

It was a fifth-grade student teacher. Not the lead teacher, who he described as harsh and damaging. But a young student teacher who told him not to take the negativity to heart. Who looked out for him. Who told him he was a good kid with a future. It didn't take long. She was only in his life for a short time. But it was long enough to change everything.

"She saved my life," he said. "I've never been able to find her again, but I think about her every day."

Resilience and the Power of a Single Relationship

This conversation reminded me of something I discuss in *The Book of David*—the role of resilience, and the incredible influence just one caring person can have on a life. The *Maui Studies*, which I reference in the book, showed this clearly. Researchers found that children who grew up in adverse conditions and still managed to thrive almost always pointed to *one person* who made them feel seen, loved, and valued.

For my brother David, that person has come in many forms—friends, caregivers, community members who recognize his worth despite (or perhaps because of) his differences. David, who lives with developmental and medical challenges, may not have the life that I or others do. But what he *does* have is the deep and undeniable knowledge that he is loved.

And he thrives because of it.

The Joy in Being Seen

That's what *The Book of David* is ultimately about: caregiving, yes. But also community. And the life-affirming power of being *seen*—not as a burden, not as someone to fix, but as someone who matters.

David brings joy to those around him, even if he moves slowly, knocks over wine glasses at dinner (often dramatically), or leaves a trail of chaos in his wake. The joy is *real*. And so is the impact of the people who love him for exactly who he is.

One Person Can Make a Difference—Be That Person

Whether it's a sibling, a student, a neighbor, or a stranger—being someone's "one person" doesn't take much. It takes presence. Compassion. A willingness to see their worth, even when the world doesn't.

That fifth-grade student teacher may never know the life she changed. But she did change it. Just like so many in David's life have quietly shaped his.

If you've ever wondered whether caregiving matters, whether love counts even when it's messy, or whether *you* can make a difference—*The Book of David* is for you.

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