

Children's Ministry Blessing or Burden on the Church?

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- Children's ministry usually serves as one of the largest ministries of most churches in both size and scope.
- This reality is further accentuated as one considers both the number of families served as well as the number of those who sacrificially serve within this field of ministry.
- However, the size of a ministry does not necessarily equate to a fruitful or biblically faithful ministry.
- Furthermore, the nature of this ministry is often more exhausting than edifying to those who serve.
- Thus, for many churches, Children's ministry is seen as a burden and not a blessing; something that hinders rather than helps the church's mission.
- In order to ensure that your Children's ministry actually serves your church rather than strangles life from your church, you must be equipped to answer some critical questions...

*** Can you articulate an accurate perspective concerning Children's ministry?**

*** Do you have a biblical philosophy of Children's ministry that is clear and concise?**

*** Can you answer with biblical conviction why you have a Children's ministry?**

*** Do you clearly understand the full scope of Children's ministry?**

*** Have you contemplated the tremendous potential, both positive and negative, that a Children's ministry can have upon your Church?**

- Thus, the goal of this seminar is to provoke you concerning the necessary nature and inseparable link between perspective, philosophy and productivity within a strong Children's ministry.
- This reality will assist you to develop a Children's ministry that effectively spreads the gospel, supports families, and strengthens the Church.

I. Perspective of Children's Ministry

- What do I mean by perspective?
 - Mindset, outlook, assessment, evaluation, understanding, and viewpoint.
- You see outlook will often help determine outcome. The way I see this ministry will have a direct impact on how I serve within this ministry.
- Your perspective will feed your philosophy and thus it needs to be lucid, logical, and biblical. Your perspective will serve as a springboard for the guiding principles that will help protect, promote, and propel your Children's Ministry.
- **Therefore, perspective is a critical matter when developing a Children's ministry that is Scripturally sound, family friendly, and servant supported.**
- In order to help us gain a proper perspective on Children's ministry, I want us to consider three critical facets: the reality, the identity, and the validity of and for a Children's ministry.
- This will help us better understand the nature of this field of ministry and the necessity for a biblical philosophy for Children's ministry.

1. The Reality/Potentiality of Children's Ministry

- We begin our perspective with this facet so that we can gain a broad and general overview of the nature of Children's ministry.
- Contemplating the reality of Children's ministry will help us get the big picture or the bird's eye view.
- While this reality correlates to many churches, it does not completely connect to every church in actuality.
- However, it is undeniable that what I will declare is directly connected to every Children's ministry by way of potentiality.
- Therefore, before we can ever develop a complete philosophy of ministry it is imperative that we embrace a clear and realistic view of this ministry.

A. A large ministry in most churches

- Usually the largest number of people being served within one ministry.
- Usually the largest number of people serving within one ministry.
- Usually the largest amount of space used within a church campus.
- Usually the most active ministry within the church calendar.

B. A large and consistent evangelistic ministry

- Largest weekly gathering of unbelievers at most churches.
- Largest weekly gathering of unbelievers desiring to listen to the gospel.
- Largest weekly gathering of unbelievers consistently confronted with the gospel.

C. A large discipleship ministry

- Largest group of people serving from one ministry within most churches.
- Largest group of servants systematically interacting with the Scriptures.
 - Children's workers must study the Scriptures.
 - Children's workers must meditate on the Scriptures.
 - Children's workers must teach the Scriptures.
- Largest group of people consistently providing leadership within most churches.
- Thus, Children's ministry provides the largest group of people where discipleship can happen practically rather than programmatically.

D. A large support ministry

- Pulpit support
 - Children's ministry directly minimizes distractions within the sanctuary.
 - Children's ministry directly provides more seating space within the sanctuary.

- Children's ministry directly provides parents with the opportunity to attend worship in the sanctuary.
- Fellowship group support
 - Children's ministry provides quality child care so that parents can attend fellowship groups, Sunday Schools, and Bible studies undistracted.
 - Children's ministry provides numerous opportunities for Fellowship groups to enlist their people into active ministry which further accentuates spiritual growth and shepherding.
- Family support
 - Children's ministry provides parental encouragement.
 - Through reinforcing and repeating the spiritual truths that should be primarily taught within the home.
 - Through providing child care so that parents can attend worship or serve within a ministry.
 - Through providing times where parents can fellowship and interact with one another.
 - Through sacrificially caring for, ministering to, and instructing their precious children.
 - Children's ministry provides parental education
 - Parenting classes are offered where the biblical principles of godly parenting are taught and practically exemplified.
 - Marriage classes are offered where the purpose, priority, and practices of a godly marriage are clarified.
 - Solid resources are recommended and made available to further heighten parental education.
 - Godly examples of faithful parents who serve in Children's leadership make themselves available to counsel and comfort.
 - Children's ministry provides parental exhortation

- Pastoral exhortation for those neglecting their parental responsibility to raise their children in the ways of the Lord.
- Pastoral counseling is available for those struggling in their roles and responsibilities in the home.

E. A large impacting ministry upon the Church

- Children's ministry has the potential to negatively impact the Church.
 - Manipulating the gospel
 - Spreading false teaching
 - Providing false assurance of salvation
 - Discouraging and usurping parents
 - Exhausting rather than edifying those who serve
 - Depleting the church's finances
 - Distracting the church's focus
- Children's ministry has the potential to positively impact the Church.
 - Faithful evangelism of the true gospel
 - Fruitful discipleship for continual growth
 - Family support that further encourages and equips parents
 - Ministry assimilation that provides enormous opportunities for believers to proactively use their giftedness
 - Church growth that actually extends the church spiritually and has the potential the expand it physically

Problem: *We have seen that realistically / potentially that Children's is: a large ministry, a large evangelistic and discipleship ministry, a large support ministry, and a ministry that is sure to leave a large impact upon your church. However, Children's is also, far too often, the ministry that receives the least amount of preparation, promotion, and prayer! Thus, the actual impact of this type of ministry tends to be more negative than positive and that is unacceptable.*

2. The Identity of Children's Ministry

- If we are going to gain a clear and correct perspective on Children's ministry then it is critical that we have a complete identity of this type of ministry.
- What do I mean by identity? Properly identifying, pinpointing, determining, defining, and describing those who are served by as well as those who serve within this type of ministry.
- This may seem over simplistic but an incomplete identity will most assuredly yield an incomplete and inconsistent ministry that is marked by frustration and confusion.
- The reason why many churches struggle with recruiting and retaining Children's ministry workers is partially due to an incomplete identity of this type of ministry.

❖ *This ministry serves...*

A. Children birth through 12 years old

- Consider the length of this ministry.
- Consider the foundational nature of this ministry.
- Consider the shepherding opportunities in this ministry.

B. Parent(s) / Families

- Children's ministry is ultimately and primarily a family ministry.
- Therefore, it is imperative that families be respected and not replaced through Children's ministry activities.
- Children's ministry must always seek to support and never usurp the God ordained parental role.
- **This type of ministry finds its greatest joy in serving and uniting families not separating them.**

❖ *Those who serve within this ministry...*

C. Leaders / Servants

- This is the most vital facet of Children's ministry. This army of volunteers faithfully seeks to advance and fulfill the church's mission every week.
- The strength of a Children's ministry is inseparably linked to the spiritual vitality of those who lead and serve within it.
- Yet, these people are often the most overlooked and forgotten aspect of Children's ministry.
- **Thus, for many, Children's ministry is seen as exhaustion without edification, duty without delight, a sacrificial pursuit without a Scriptural purpose.**

3. The Validity for Children's Ministry

- Discovering the validity for a Children's ministry is essential for gaining a correct perspective.
- What do I mean by validity? The veracity, authority, legitimacy, rationality, reasoning, and substantiation for having a Children's ministry.
- Thus, at the heart of this part of the perspective of Children's ministry is the answer to the most important question of why a church should have this type ministry.
- Therefore, one cannot properly develop or implement a Children's ministry until he has thoroughly investigated and personally delineated the biblical support for this ministry.

A. The commands of Scripture

- While there is no specific command given for the instigation of a Children's ministry there are many commands given which provoke this kind of ministry.
1. Church commanded to evangelize the lost (Mt 28:18–20; Lk 24:46–48)
 - The Great Commission is the greatest mission of the Church.
 - The ultimate reason the Church remains in the world is so that it may reach out to the world with the gospel.

- This was Christ’s ultimate ministry and as His representatives it should be our ultimate mission (Lk 19:10).
- Children’s ministry provides the Church with the ripest recipients for the gospel.
- Peter declared the promise of eternal life was for everyone, including children (Acts 2:39).
- Paul declared that he sought to present everyone mature in Christ (Col 1:28), admonished everyone with tears (Acts 20:31), and taught both publically and privately as he went house to house (Acts 20:20)...no doubt there were children present.
- Christ declared He came to seek and save the lost which would include children (Lk 19:10; Jn 3:16).

“...you (Children’s Ministry) are doing the greatest and most consistent evangelistic ministry this church has. This is the primary evangelistic emphasis in this church...You (Children’s Ministry) are an evangelistic force and in my mind you are the greatest evangelistic force we have at Grace Community Church” (John MacArthur speaking at the Children’s Ministry Worship Night, Grace Community Church, 10/19/12).

2. Church commanded to equip the saints (Eph 4:12a,16)

- Leaders have the primary role of preparing others for the work of ministry.
- Thus, one of the main jobs of a pastor is to see that his people are sufficiently prepared for works of service.
- This happens most thoroughly through the consistent and faithful teaching of God’s Word.

3. Church commanded to enlist the saints (Eph 4:12b; 1Pet 4:10–11)

- The whole purpose for equipping the saints is so that they might serve and build up the Body of Christ.
- Just as we were saved to serve (Eph 2:10), so the Church is also strengthened through serving (Eph 4:12c) as the Body is built up and knit together as believers serve one another.
- Equipping the saints and enlisting the saints are inseparably linked as you cannot have one without the other.
- Therefore, the job of equipping saints is not finished until they are actively serving within the Church.

- Thus, Children’s provides the Church with many opportunities where believers can move from ministry preparation into ministry productivity.
- 4. Church commanded to edify and encourage the saints (1Thess 5:11; 1Cor 14:26; Heb 10:24–25)
 - The church is commanded to instruct and build up one another.
 - This regularly happens as believers interact, help, and sacrificially serve each other.
 - It must be understood that no formal ministry is explicitly needed for the Church to faithfully fulfill all of these commands.
 - However, formal ministry, or better yet, programs, serves as an effective means, conduit, or vehicle through which the Church can efficiently and proactively pursue this mission to evangelize, equip, enlist, edify, and encourage the Body.
 - Therefore, if a Children’s ministry is constructed so that it coalesces with these commands it will prove to be a tremendous blessing and not a burden on the Church.

B. The calling to faithful pastoral ministry

- Is it possible to completely and faithfully fulfill a pastoral calling without proactively seeking to minister to children and their families?
- Consider this description of a pastor:
 - He is a shepherd (1 Pet 5:2–4)
 - He rescues
 - He protects
 - He comforts
 - He feeds
 - He leads
 - He serves
 - He is a preacher (2 Tim 4:2)
 - He is a teacher (1Tim 4:11–16)
 - He is an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5)

- He is a steward (Titus 1:7)
- Contemplate how ministry to children and their families is directly connected to completing one's call to pastoral ministry.
- Consider the example of Paul (Acts 20:18–31; Col 1:28)
 - Warned everyone
 - Taught everyone
 - So that he might present everyone mature in Christ

“The preacher is after people, their children, their friends, their families!” (Steve Lawson, “Preaching Mechanics Lecture,” The Master’s Seminary, Winterim, 2013).

Problem: *The pastor must be convinced, convicted, and committed to Children’s ministry or it will be a burden not a blessing on the Church!*

“I have to give an account to God for how I take care of anybody that is committed into my care. And we have always had that perspective here, from the Children’s ministry right on up that this is a stewardship and the greatest way I can love parents is to love and instruct their children in the truth...” (John MacArthur speaking at the Children’s Ministry Worship Night, Grace Community Church, 10/19/12).

C. The commitment to an effective Church

- No one wants a church marked by compliancy, mediocrity, and futility.
- Yet, these are the manifestations of many ministries and the potential for every ministry and church.
- Therefore, it is imperative that leaders within the church follow God’s blue print for the church in order to ensure a biblically sound and effective church.
- Consider how an effective church will always... (This list is selective not exhaustive)
 - Involve active, spiritually gifted servants (Rom 12:3–8)
 - Involve evangelism (1Thess 1:8–10)
 - Involve discipleship (Matt 28:18–20)
 - Involve leadership development (2 Tim 2:2)
 - Involve developing solid families (Eph 5:21–33)
 - Involve serving one another (Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 4:10)

- The marks which make an effective church are also the marks which make an effective and faithful Children's ministry.
- All of these marks will always be present and growing in a Scripturally sound Children's ministry.

Problem: *The evangelical church is often marked by people who...*

→ *Sit and listen to sermons*

→ *Soak up sermons*

→ *Swell on the knowledge of sermons*

The effective church is marked by people who...

→ *Sit and listen to sermons*

→ *Soak up sermons*

→ *Serve on the knowledge of sermons*

D. The connection to Children

- Many people unwittingly dismiss the validity of serving in a Children's ministry in part because they have forgotten or never considered the special connection or spiritual capacity of little ones.

1. Children have a special connection

- To God

- He intimately created them (Ps 139:13–16)
- He ultimately owns them (Ez 16:20–22)
- He personally has compassion on them (Jonah 4:11)

- To Christ

- He received them (Mt 19:13–15)
~ *He rebuked those who tried to keep them away!*

- He had regard for them (Mt 18:1–4)
~*A child is the best illustration of the redeemed!*
- He prayed for them (Mt 19:13)
~ *He made time for them in His busy life!*
- He blessed them (Mk 10:16)
~ *Jesus never blessed the cursed or the damned!*
- He cared for them (Mt 18:5–6)
~ *The spiritual analogy is heightened by the natural reality!*
- He readily accepts them into heaven (Mk 10:14)
~ *Christ cherishes Children!*

“...it is presumption and sacrilege to drive far from the fold of Christ those whom He cherishes in His bosom, and to shut the door, and exclude as strangers, those whom He does not wish to be forbidden to come to Him” (John Calvin, Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelist, vol.1, 389-91).

Problem: *In our contemporary culture do we follow the example of Christ or the disciples when it comes to our attitude toward ministering to children in the church? Do we see children as a blessing or burden on the church? Do we see children as problematic and an obstacle to ministry or as a phenomenal opportunity for ministry?*

- To your families
 - They are a tremendous blessing (Ps 127:3–5)
 - They are a tremendous stewardship (Eph 6:4)
 - It is the parent’s responsibility to raise their children.
 - Thus, parents must be the primary evangelists and spiritual trainers of their children.
 - Therefore, the Church has no right to replace this God ordained parental role through the ministry’s practice.
 - However, the Church must proactively and purposefully seek to support and strengthen the family in every way (Eph 5:21–33).

- To your church
 - Children can serve within the church
 - Children bring life to the church
 - Children are the future leadership of the church

2. Children have a spiritual capacity

- They can understand spiritual truths (Ps 34:11; Mt 21:15–16; 2 Tim 3:14–15; Eph 6:4).

“Don't hold back teaching your children because you think they aren't ready. Though they may not fully understand some of the more difficult spiritual concepts, children can grasp the essence of almost every truth. In fact, they are better equipped now to assimilate spiritual truth than they will be when they are older” (Phillip R. Johnson, “Teaching Your Children Spiritual Truth,” <http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/articles/children.htm>).

- They can be converted (Jn 3:1–16; 2 Tim 3:14–15; Acts 2:39).

“I hold that children are capable of salvation. He who, in Divine sovereignty, reclaimed the grey-haired sinner from the error of his ways, can turn a little child from his youthful follies. He who, in the eleventh hour, finds some standing idle in the market-place, and sends them into the vineyard, can and does call men at the dawning of the day to labor for Him. He who can change the course of a river when it has rolled onward, and become a mighty flood, can control a new-born rivulet leaping from its cradle-fountain, and make it run into the channel He desires. He can do all things—He can work upon children's hearts as He pleases, for all are under His control. I will not stay to establish the doctrine, because I do not consider that any are so foolish as to doubt it. But, although you believe it, I fear many do not expect to hear of children being saved. Throughout the churches, I have noticed a kind of abhorrence of anything like child- piety. We are frightened at the idea of a little boy loving Christ; and if we hear of a little girl following the Savior, we say that it is a youthful fancy, an early impression that will die away. I beseech you, never treat child-piety with suspicion. It is a tender plant—do not brush it too hard” (Charles H. Spurgeon, *Come Ye Children: Practical Help Telling Children About Jesus*, <http://www.spurgeon.org/misc/cyc.htm>).

- They can have eternal impact (Col 3:20; 1 Cor 10:31; 2 Tim 3:16–17).

“But these dear boys and girls—there is something to be made out of them. If now they yield themselves to Christ, they may have a long, happy, and holy life before them, in which they may serve God with all their hearts. Who knows what glory God may have from them? Heathen hands may call them blessed. Whole nations may be enlightened by them. If a famous schoolmaster was accustomed to take his hat off to his boys, because he did not know whether one of them might not be Prime Minister, we may justly look upon converted children, for we do not know how soon they may be among the angels, or how greatly their light may shine among men. Let us estimate children at their true valuation, and we shall not keep them back—but we shall be eager to lead them to Jesus at once” (Charles H. Spurgeon, *Come Ye Children: Practical Help Telling Children About Jesus*, <http://www.spurgeon.org/misc/cyc.htm>).

II. Philosophy of Children's Ministry

- Developing, defining, and delineating a biblical philosophy is the most pivotal part of preparation for a productive Children's ministry.
- Because of its size and scope this type of ministry has a natural tendency to become a ministry where everyone does what is right their own eyes.
- Therefore, a solid philosophy is a must as it will provide the clear parameters needed in this type of ministry in order to contain it, channel it, and propel it in the right direction.
- Furthermore, a Scripturally sound philosophy will help preserve, protect, and promote the validity and future vitality of every Children's ministry.
- What do I mean by a philosophy of ministry?
 - *"It is a set of NON-NEGOTIABLE biblical principles that guides all the choices and decisions in your ministry"* (Dr Busenitz).
 - It is the grid or funnel through which every decision, choice and plan is sifted and evaluated.
 - Basically it answers the most critical question of why you should have this ministry.
 - A solid philosophy will be based on a careful investigation of the Scriptures.
 - Including principles and commands that are explicit.
 - Including principles, patterns, and methods that are implicit.
 - A solid philosophy will also spring from an objective and informed perspective concerning Children's ministry including both the positive and negative potential of this endeavor.
- Calculate the critical impact of a philosophy as it creates a cause and effect collision within ministry...
 - *What leads to Why which directs the How of ministry*
 - The proper framework for every ministry

- **Theology** (Biblical Information) = What you believe.
- **Philosophy** (Personal Assimilation) = Why you believe.
- **Methodology** (Practical Manifestation) = How you serve.

Problem: *It is a common error in Children's ministry to jump from Biblical Theology to Practical Methodology without ever wrestling with Personal Philosophy. This will yield a ministry marked by confusion, inconsistency, and a lack of clarity and personal conviction from its leadership, which will be propagated among its servants. Therefore, it is imperative that all ministry methodology spring from leadership that has grappled with a personal philosophy that is rooted in a Biblical theology.*

1. The Results of a Children's Ministry Philosophy

➤ Contemplate the ramifications of a Children's ministry philosophy...

A. Clarity (people are more likely to come and serve)

- In communication
- In direction
- In motivation

B. Unity (people are more likely to stay)

- In purpose
- In planning
- In practice

C. Proficiency (people are more likely to grow)

- In evaluation
- In incorporation
- In protection

2. The Requirements of a Children's ministry Philosophy

A. It must be Biblical

~ Biblical mandates promote a Biblical methodology!

B. It must be Clear

~ Clarity breeds confidence but confusion breeds fear!

C. It must be Concise

~ If it is concise it will be consumed!

D. It must be Complete

~ If it is complete it will strengthen the church!

3. The Articulation of a Children's ministry Philosophy

Our Mission Statement

The Children's Ministry of Grace Community Church exists to glorify God through evangelizing children, encouraging parents, and edifying servants so that the gospel may be spread among our children, families may be supported, and the church may be strengthened.

Our Purpose

God's glory is the ultimate purpose of all things (Rom 11:36) and is inseparably linked to redemption (Eph 1:12) through which regenerate man has the desire and ability (2 Cor 3:18) to please and praise God in everything (1 Cor 10:31). The church was established for God's glory and is a primary means through which He is exalted (Eph 3:21) as she shares, defends, teaches, and embodies His truth. This reality is manifested as the local church embraces its commission to evangelize the lost and its call to equip and encourage the saints, including parents. Therefore, Children's Ministry serves as an effective vehicle through which the church is strengthened as she glorifies God through sharing the gospel, supporting parents, and strengthening the saints.

1. Evangelizing Children

A. The Mandate

~ The church has a mandate to take the gospel into all the world and to share the good news of Christ with every person (Mt 28:18–20; Lk 24:46–47). Therefore the motivation for Children's Ministry must begin with God's command to evangelize the lost, which also includes children (Acts 2:39). Thus, Children's Ministry is a practical feature of our church's desire to obey Christ as we participate in this facet of the Great Commission.

B. The Mindset

~ We understand that a child's greatest need is regeneration because children are dead in their sin and without hope of salvation (Rom 3:23). Yet, children, as well as adults, can receive forgiveness of sins, a relationship with God, and purpose in life through trusting in Christ as Lord and Savior (Rom 10:9–13). This reality is the cornerstone of our ministry to children as their greatest need for the gospel is our greatest opportunity for eternal impact (Rom 10:14–16).

C. The Mission

~ Therefore, the target of our ministry is heart preparation as we cultivate the soil of children's hearts through sowing the seed of the gospel. This includes teaching children the fear of God, humility over weakness, penitence over sin, facts about the gospel, and an appreciation for Christ. Furthermore, since salvation is of the Lord, we avoid soliciting salvation professions but encourage the fruit of genuine repentance as demonstrated through a life of submission to Christ's lordship.

2. Encouraging Parents

A. The Mandate

~ Parents have a mandate to raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21). Thus, parents are to be the primary evangelists and spiritual trainers of their children. This is a continuous command that is actively fulfilled by the parent while being a godly example, giving personal exhortation, and specific edification for the spiritual well being of the child.

B. The Mindset

~ However, the church is called to encourage parents in their God given task of raising godly children. This is clearly implied through the household commands (Col 3:18–21) and the church's mandate to equip, edify, and encourage believers (Eph 4:12–16). Furthermore, the Scriptures call for strong Christian families that are growing and being molded through the ministry of the Body of Christ (Eph 5–6). Therefore, our church seeks to support and enhance the spiritual vitality of the home while never usurping the parental role and responsibility.

C. The Mission

~ Therefore, our mission is to support parents in their God given role of raising children to love Christ. We seek to accomplish this through edifying parents with classes, Bible studies, resources, and personal shepherding geared to elevate their effectiveness. We also provide encouragement through offering quality childcare so that parents can attend worship, Bible studies, or a ministry undistracted. Lastly, we seek to lovingly exhort

those parents who may not have fully embraced their God given responsibility to raise their children in the Lord.

3. Edifying Servants

A. The Mandate

~ The church also has a mandate to edify and equip servants for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11–16). This happens as pastor-teachers provide spiritual leadership and resources provoking people to grow in Christlikeness. Thus, this practical preparation “for ministry” is inseparably linked to actually placing saints in the ministry. This further accentuates spiritual growth as saints exercise spiritual giftedness *through serving the Body, which ultimately strengthens the Body!*

B. The Mindset

~ Children’s Ministry is an effective link in the chain of equipping and enlisting saints into productive ministry that promotes the spiritual growth and vitality of the church. This ministry serves as an appropriate place where believers can embrace their mandate to minister while also being ministered to through continual edification. Thus, Children’s Ministry provides a plethora of opportunities for saints to sacrificially serve and grow while simultaneously strengthening the church.

C. The Mission

~ Therefore, our mission is to also provide a place of constant edification for our faithful servants who minister every week. We desire that they would continue to be equipped even though they are already enlisted into the ministry of the church. In order to accomplish this we seek to provide opportunities for growth and encouragement through pastoral oversight, Bible studies, and enriching curriculum that takes them deeper into the Word. Also, we provide events designed for ministry wide worship and fellowship that are always uplifting. These servants are also edified as they communicate God’s truth to children and each other on a weekly basis.

When it comes to your philosophy of ministry, Dr. Busenitz says...

“Develop it...absorb it...live by it...and teach it to your people.”