

# Christian School Management The Kingdom Principle

*“For Jesus; Through Mission; With Students.”*



## The Christian School – The Kingdom Principle

Matthew 6:10

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew 22: 36 - 39 (NIV)

Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

The Christian School is one that:

- Intends for its children to bring God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven (the CSM motto).
- Creates its mission carefully and delivers it with excellence.
- Recognizes Jesus as the Master Teacher.

In its simplest terms, the Kingdom Principle states that God gives us good work to do right here and now. This work is not menial nor does it merely fill in time until we go to be with the Father. Rather, God intends for us to do his will on earth which has many rich possibilities and is individual to each one of us in our schools. Many scholars believe that "on earth as it is in heaven" applies to each of the three preceding phrases i.e., hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, as well as on earth as it is in heaven.

In a Christian school, this principle is made concrete through the mission of the school. Certainly, theologically, from a church perspective, we could discuss the beautiful implications and applications of this prayer given to us by Jesus as the paradigm of prayers (including the injunction not to "babble like the pagans"! ). But we are not theologians and our interest is in what this means in the life of a Christian school.

God's holiness, God's kingdom, God's will are made manifest in the Christian school through its mission. We know and acknowledge that this is not the fullness of what one might imagine in these phrases. But within time and space and people, the Christian school can only carry out its mission, and that is enough. It should not stretch beyond that. It should not harbor ambitions that make the mission too bold. The Christian school's mission should have authority and it should be humble. By this, we mean that the mission articulates clearly the purpose of the school and that it is limited because we have limited money, people, facilities, land, students. We cannot do everything, and we are not called to do everything. We are called as a Christian school to do our mission.

Let's consider some examples or real schools that have been only slightly edited:

1. The mission of XXXX Day School is to assist the Christian family by providing an education marked by a biblical worldview and academic excellence so that students are equipped to be salt and light for God's glory.
2. XXXXXX Academy empowers students for leadership and service in our global society.

3. Within an atmosphere of love, concern and mutual respect, XXXXXXX Preparatory School is committed to instilling Christian values, to developing future leaders, and to preparing students for college and lifetime learning through academically challenging programs and affirming competitive experiences.
4. XXXXXXX School develops in students a love of learning, respect for self and others, faith in God, and a sense of service to the world community.
5. The purpose of XXXX School is to enlighten the understanding, shape the character, form the habits of discipline, and prepare young men and women to fulfill their God-given potential.

We note here that CSM does not judge the mission of a school. We recognize it as the human attempt of each school to bring God's kingdom into the lives of children here on earth, we respect it as such, and we hold the school accountable to do what it does to a level of excellence.

We can see that these missions are very different from one another. Based on the school's founding history, its journey to this point, the challenges it sees and wishes to address, the children it wishes to serve, its resources, the Christian school makes and must make a determination about its mission by both being bold and far-seeing in its vision and humble and limited in its reach. We have neither the money nor the people to do everything and we must do what we do to a standard of excellence. It's interesting that in Philippians 4 it says:

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you." (New International Version)

It's hard to imagine the Christian school committing to a standard of mediocrity. But we have to understand that to commit to truly doing our mission at a standard of excellence comes at considerable cost. Let's consider that by turning parts of the above mission statements into questions:

- What is the cost of "academic excellence"? As we watch our children work hard in class and do hours of further study out of class, we realize that the cost is high. Similarly for our teachers, to provide engaging, faith-filled, relevant, practical, meaningful lessons is the work of a lifetime of application and study. The cost of buildings that can nurture the mind in an environment that is conducive to study is in the millions.
- What is the cost of "empowering students for leadership and service"? Leadership is not easily learned. It must be practiced in many situations, reflected upon, mentored by those who themselves understand and exemplify leadership. There are significant risks that must be accepted in order for children to take on these tasks. Service takes time that could be devoted to "academic excellence"! If we are committed to service, that service time cannot be devoted to some other worthy objective.
- What is the cost of "an atmosphere of love, concern, and mutual respect"? At the least, it requires consistent and persistent modeling by people whose actions are authentic and grounded in a firm understanding of the love of Jesus. It requires consistent and persistent calling to action students who must put aside their natural self-centeredness and practice a different way.

- What is the cost of “to fulfill their God-given potential”? This might mean a willingness to explore and understand yourself and to discover what gifts God has given you. It means teachers who delight and continually expand their own potential. It means the school’s willingness for the child to fulfill a potential that was not in the school’s plan, and maybe in a way that was not in the teacher’s plan.

These are not simple things to talk about, let alone do. We work with schools who think of their mission statements as words rather than as God’s call to bring His kingdom. We urge the Christian school to:

1. Prayerfully examine its mission and ensure that it truly represents the school’s witness in the world.
2. Believe that the mission is sufficient i.e. that the school cannot and is not responsible for everything.
3. Understand the mission in the light of the Kingdom Principle.
4. Ensure that the mission is embedded in the daily life and practice of the school.

When the Christian School takes its mission seriously, commits to its fulfillment at a level of excellence, and makes it meaningful on a daily basis, it will be in the best position possible to provide God’s children with a glimpse of His kingdom.