

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 Christian School Management motto)
- creates its mission carefully and delivers it with excellence, and
- 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, your will be done.

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. Don’t be overwhelmed; within that context, the Christian school’s role is to carry out its mission – and that is enough. The Christian school should not harbor ambitions that make the mission too bold. The mission should have authority, and it should be humble. The mission articulates clearly the purpose of the school and the purpose must be 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.

Consider these slightly edited examples from real schools:

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, XXXXXXXX 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. XXXXXXXXXX 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 standard 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, and 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.

It's hard to imagine the Christian school committing to a standard of mediocrity. But we have to understand that truly doing our mission at a standard of excellence comes with significant investment. Let's consider that by turning parts of the above mission statements into questions with possible partial answers suggested.

- How do we invest in “academic excellence”? For example, our children work hard in class and devote hours to further study; our teachers provide engaging, faith-filled, relevant, practical, meaningful lessons – the work of a lifetime of application and study; our buildings nurture the mind in a healthy environment conducive to imaginative and creative study.
- What is the investment in “empowering students for leadership and service”? For example, it is clear that leadership is not easily learned; our students practice leadership in many situations, reflect upon their experience, are mentored by those who themselves understand and exemplify leadership; we take risks so that children can take on these tasks – we accept a loss of control, imperfect outcomes, mistakes; we provide resources to support the service outcome.

- How do we invest in “an atmosphere of love, concern, and mutual respect”? For example, we require consistent and persistent modeling by people whose actions are authentic and grounded in a firm understanding of the love of Jesus; our students are trained to put aside their natural self-centeredness and practice a different way.
- What is the investment that empowers children “to fulfill their God-given potential”? For example, we each have a willingness to explore and understand ourselves and to discover what gifts God has given us; we hire teachers who delight and continually expand their own potential; we want each child to fulfill a potential that may not have been 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. CSM has worked with schools that think of their mission statement 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
 - a. Through the school’s Strategic Academic Plan
 - b. Through each teacher’s Professional Learning Journey

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