

Rules that Guide Us
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President's Briefing
Wednesday, December 07, 2005

I recently had an opportunity to attend a leadership conference hosted by the University. The conference featured Bill Swanson, the CEO of Raytheon Corporation, a manufacturer of aerospace technology. Bill, who leads an 80,000 person workforce spread out over 76 countries, has written a little book on management that has become all the rage with CEOs. It is called Swanson's Book of Unwritten Rules and contains 33 short pieces of advice for managers. This vest pocket volume offers suggestions like, "strive for brevity and clarity in oral and written reports" (Rule #14) and "Don't ever lose your sense of humor" (Rule # 24). It also offers more strategic tips like, "if you are not criticized, you may not be doing much." (Rule #3) As a lunch time exercise our large group divided up into small groups and tried to come up with our top 5 favorite rules from Mr. Swanson's little book. As each table reported out on their favorites it was interesting to note that many if not all of the tables included rule number 26 in their top favorites. It reads, "Treat the name of your company as if it were your own." As Bill Swanson mentions in the text accompanying Rule #26, "My father always said: you were given a good name when you came into this world, return it the way you got it."

The notion that each of us has the opportunity in our daily work to be ambassadors for the university is well implied in Rule #26. On one level, this means: be a good citizen when you are out in public. Don't do anything that would embarrass the university or place it in a bad light. But it really means more than that. It means speaking intelligently about this place. And that means not only being able to recite the mission but owning the mission as a personal credo.

In practice, this means being able to talk about who we are and what we do in a way that makes clear our distinctiveness as a Christian university, "committed to the highest standards of excellence and Christian values, where our students are strengthened for lives of purpose, service and leadership." For us to treat the name of our company as our own, we need to know something of our roots, our history, our development and where we are going.

But what does it mean to make the mission personal? Isn't it enough to come to work each day and teach or administer to the best of our God given ability? Aren't we, through these actions, doing our share to uphold the good name of Pepperdine University? Or is there more? How, for example do we articulate to others the unique nature of our mission, especially our focus on the integration of faith and learning?

University of Virginia professor Ken Elzinga notes in a recent article that Christians in higher education, for the most part, can be placed in two different categories, one group is the privatizers and the other the evangelicals. His categories suggest the difference between those Christian educators who are either more out spoken and overt and those who are more private, concealing, self-effacing, quiet and even perhaps fearful.

It seems to me that if we are to 'make personal' our mission that we certainly can't afford to be private about all that we are doing here to build leaders for tomorrow.

But on the other hand how do we clearly articulate to those with whom we come in contact the things that we are doing?

This past weekend I ran into a friend who I haven't seen in a while. He asked me what I have been up to and I have to say it took me a while to answer. After some time I replied, "raising my daughter." I think a few years ago I would have listed a number of hobbies and projects, but as a new parent, I have really only one big project, my daughter. If I examine more deeply what this means I quickly discover that into the bucket of parenting falls such tangible actions as teaching her hold a fork, to say her prayers at night, to jump, and to sing the A.B.C song-- in short -- all of life's important skills.

In a similar sense, if we are living a mission that we proclaim as our own, we should be able to articulate tangible actions that best express the ethos of Pepperdine. I would offer that as we enter the advent season, a reflective period marked by waiting, hope, and anticipation which plays out in Scripture through the annunciation, the visitation and the birth of Christ, that we take time to ponder ways in which we might make known the manifestations – the fruits as it were -- of our identity.

It might be interesting for example, to reflect on how it is we instill the value of 'purpose' in our students. What sorts of programs or curricular elements do we offer that stress 'purposefulness'? How do we frame the conversation and how do we place the issue before our students? What manifestations of our mission do we see in the area of service to others? Christ taught us to serve the poor and needy. How do we 'own' this and in what ways do we place it before our students?

Surfacing the things that each of us do to support and advance our mission would help create a living genealogy of what Pepperdine is in this modern world. It would in turn help us to understand how we might be more effective ambassadors.

In thinking a bit more about Bill's unwritten rules, it may be that through this kind of exercise that we come up with our own set of observations. While one could argue -- quite rightly perhaps--that we needn't go any further than the 10 commandments, it would be fascinating to see what each of us could come up with as our own unwritten rules. Rules that guide us in our walk as citizens of this community of faith and learning.

I think that George Pepperdine and the founders of this university got it exactly right when they anticipated that we would be thinking about this question of identity and so rightly selected our founding rule, 'Freely You Received, Freely Give.' (Matthew 10:8) This guiding principle is perhaps the most poignant expression of *agape*, or unselfish love. Boston College professor and theologian Michael Himes, posits that the notion of *agape* underpins Jesus' sermon described in Mathew 25:31-46 in which he separates the goats from the sheep at the last judgment. At least as far as this one parable is concerned, Himes writes," not one word [is mentioned] about whether you belonged to the church, whether you were baptized, whether you celebrated the Eucharist, whether you prayed ...indeed there is nothing specifically religious at all mentioned. Not one doctrine, not one specifically religious act of worship or ritual turns out to be relevant to the criterion for the last judgment. The only criterion for the final judgment is how you treated your brothers and sisters." In short, Himes concludes, "the ground for final judgment is *agape*. The only relevant judgment is: did you give yourself away to those who needed you?" Did you freely give?

As we think about the ways in which our mission is manifest within our community, and perhaps compile a mental inventory of the programs and initiatives that

reflect ways in which we strive to prepare students for lives of purpose, service and leadership, I encourage each of us to insert ourselves into the equation and to reflect on the ways in which we might personally advance these good works.

I once had a music teacher who said “you should always strive to make the sounds of your fellow musicians more beautiful with your contribution.” I have always thought that a pretty good piece of advice. It might even be one of my top choices for an unwritten rule. Along this line I would invite all of us to ponder ways in which we might freely give of ourselves, our time, our energy, to make more visible the many manifestations of our mission. In doing so we will not only return the name of this fine place called Pepperdine the way we found it, but we will return it more glorified than when we adopted it as our own.

Psalm 121

I lift my eyes to the hills- from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber
He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.
The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forever more.

Amen