

Leaving a Legacy

What are you leaving behind?

As leaders, I believe we own the responsibility to consider those who will follow us and take the leadership role we now hold. In recent years I have seen several Teen Challenge leadership changes where there was no succession plan in place and no one was mentored to take the leader's place should they retire or something tragic happen.



Jerry Nance

Peter Drucker, one of the great consultants and writers on leadership asked a major corporation a fabulous question; he calls it a "Mega Question."

"Are we building a legacy or living off a legacy?"

Drucker says, to ensure long-term viability and significance, every organization must answer its own "Mega Questions." Here are some of those questions:

What are our roots?
What are our core values?
Are we living these values out?
Is our leadership capable of taking us to the next level?
Does our staff have the training and tools they need?
Are our students getting all they need to face the world?
What are we currently doing that we are very good at?
What are we missing?
How could we improve?

It is important to take some time and consider these questions. It's important that you, the staff and students know the roots of this ministry. Some staff and students have no clue regarding the history of Teen Challenge. They just think this place has always existed, and have no idea that the Teen Challenge organization is a world-wide ministry with 1,170 centers in 82 countries of the world.

Let me give you a little history of Teen Challenge that you may not know.

Do you know who Michael Farmer is? He was a young boy that had polio which left him permanently handicapped. He was a slow runner. He and a buddy slipped under a fence at the park pool to have an early evening swim. As they were coming out, a gang of boys met them and began beating them up and stabbing them. Michael's friend who was faster got away with cuts and bruises, but Michael was killed in cold blood. Murdered.

Well, that doesn't seem out of the ordinary in a city of 9 million people. What's the point? Michael Farmer didn't die in vain. The boys who stabbed him were on trial for murder when David Wilkerson read the story and God touched his heart and told him, "Go to New York and help those boys."

David went to NYC and God gave him favor with the gangs and drug addicts. In time David opened the first Teen Challenge. They focused on evangelism, street meetings, soul winning, chapels where the power of God falls, altars where men, women, boys and girls can find Christ, the Change Agent.

Evangelism – That’s the heart of our ministry and what blesses God. We can’t get away from winning souls. We must never get away from the heart of God—souls.

Our critics are correct when they say, the program of Teen Challenge is “Faith Saturated, Conversion Oriented, Bible focused.” Yes, guilty on each account and that is why after 51 years TC is the largest ministry of its kind in the world.

Let’s not forget the roots, but as leaders let’s prepare for transition. Let’s develop a succession plan and work to make our organization one of the best models in the world. We want every boy, girl, man and woman who enters the doors of our centers to find life transformation through the power of Jesus Christ.

Ask yourself the hard questions, keep the mission of Teen Challenge in focus and never forget our roots.

“What are you doing to prepare for leaving a legacy?” and “Who are you mentoring as a successor?”

As leaders with the responsibility for steering our organization, we own the responsibility to plan for the future. Now, it is easier to just let each day come and go as they may and just get by. Some leaders say, “ We’re just walking by faith and letting God lead us.” Now don’t get me wrong, I believe in trusting God and walking by faith, but I sure like to know that I am walking in the right direction with some purpose.

We are living in days when overnight it seems that everything changes. Our computer gets outdated, the phone we bought yesterday was replaced with a better version today, technology supersedes your ability to fund the change, personnel challenges and governmental regulations continue to cause change.

As we enter a new year let me recommend that you forget what is in the past and challenge you to press onward with your goals. Paul had a good perspective Philippians 3:13-14, “ Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are ahead. 14I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Paul was looking forward toward the end goal. What is your end goal? Let me ask another question. What are you doing to prepare for this year? What would you like to accomplish this year? How far down the road would you like to be on completing your goals?

Let me share with you a Moose Hunting Story:

A friend was telling me the other day a story about a couple of his friends who had gone moose hunting in Northern Canada. They had to be flown in by a pontoon plane. The pilot landed on a lake in this remote area. He told the hunters as he was about to leave, “Remember you can only get one moose, because that’s all the plane will hold. I’ll be back Friday afternoon to get you.”

When the pilot arrived back on Friday and taxied the plane over to the shore, he saw that the two hunters had two moose. He said, “I told you guys one moose!”

The hunters responded, "The pilot last year flew out with two moose."

The pilot asked, "Was it the same kind of plane and same size lake we landed on?"

"Yes, same size plane and the same lake, but the pilot last year, he was a younger man and we guess he had a little more nerve and courage than you."

The older pilot's pride was challenged and he said, "Well, if he did it, I can do it, too." So they strapped one moose on each of the pontoons and went to the end of the lake. The pilot revved the engine and they took off. Just as they were about to get beyond the trees, a pontoon struck a tree and sent them crashing to the ground. Both wings were torn off, the two hunters were thrown out of the plane and the pilot, being strapped in, went to the ground with an awful crash. The pilot was fine, and the two men luckily were OK. One hunter woke up and asked the other hunter, "What happened?" The other answered, "We crashed." "Well, where are we?" "We're about 100 feet further than we were last year."

Question, How far would you like to go this year, a hundred meters or so further than last year? Or, would you like to make some real progress? It's up to you.

Pray and ask God what He wants you to do this year.

Jerry Nance
President
Global Teen Challenge

This article was originally published in the Global Teen Challenge newsletter "Leadership Link" December 2009 and January 2010.