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ST ANDREW'S SCHOOL
BLOEMFONTEIN

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Issue 140 | 22 January From 'Skivvy' to 'Skippie'.

Every person who climbs aboard a fishing vessel of a seasoned skipper is sure to go on a journey, a transformation of person and character, perhaps best summed up as a rite of passage.

The deckhand 'affectionately' known as the 'skivvy' is responsible for all the menial tasks, and undesirables, such as packing bait, scrubbing the deck and cleaning the boat, pulling the anchor, the fishing, the 'entertainment' and everything else the skipper deems necessary to ensure the effective functioning of the vessel and the safety of the crew (and of course the skippers comfort as well).

The life of a skivvy is tough to say the least. It is the entry level to a life of fishing. For all intents and purposes, any rational person would aspire to move up the ranks as soon as possible. There are of course those who's aspirations fail them and are then doomed to a sun beaten and drunkard state of hardship as long as their bodies can hold it. Their tanned leather skins, ripped and stained clothing, and their wondering of streets whilst waiting for fair weather and the call of the skipper, is a dead giveaway of a soul caught up in the movie 'Groundhog Day' - reliving the same day over and over.

I have a good friend, principal by term and skipper by holiday. The end of term signals our call to the water, and we inevitably find ourselves making our way to our holiday harbours. My enthusiastic and passionate son has come to experience the call in his veins, setting in motion the holiday migration. He, like me before, has found himself on the water as part of the crew for a variety of vessels. Daniel started his career on fishing vessel Skedonk, a West Coast 'Kreef Bakkie', where he still serves as crew for his Grandpa. There he learnt the basics of sea fare in a protected environment, a type of 'joyride' if you wish. Nestled safely at the centre of this Kreef Bakkie, Daniel would partake in the joys of fishing, as Skedonkie would putt putt out to the nearest reef and engage in fishing for a variety of species. After being anchored for a short while, the now pale-faced, and dizzy Daniel would start 'negotiations' of a return to land with his Grandpa. The 'luck' (success) of the mark which had been carefully chosen by his Grandpa, is inevitably used as mitigating factors for any consideration of a move to land or trying another mark. Having 'fed the fish', the young skivvy inevitably intensifies the urgency of the now life-threatening situation and the so-called violation of his human rights... Skippie usually pushes on just long enough to have satisfied his own need to fish and is eventually convinced by the sight of a beleaguered and lifeless body of his grandson. A war of words shared in jest, and bragging as to who caught the most and biggest fish, around the fireplace in the evening, inevitably reconciles skivvy and skipper, just to be repeated the following day - weather permitting of course.

Skippie having done his bit to 'break' the young stallion in, and Daniel himself growing in confidence, Daniel also joined the crew of fishing vessel, Miss Lucy, an 18-foot weathered Skicraft. This of course meant that Daniel could access the fish, when Skedonk was not available. Little did Daniel know, the experience would be the equivalent of comparing an old WW2 Harvard aircraft to a F18 fighter jet. After launching from the safety of the harbour, the skipper (only friend by land) almost instantaneously engages the afterburners thrusting the Skicraft forward, sending crew scampering to secure a hold. Any unsecured lunch boxes are flung open as the vessel rams through the approaching swell. On achieving maximum speed after only a couple seconds, it would seem the skipper takes great pleasure in trying to shove your tailbone through your mouth, as he gleefully sails several meters through the air, with the impact of a semi-controlled crash landing, sending a shock reverberating through every bone in your body. It's a crude awakening and sure to substitute any caffeine deficiency you may have from not having your morning coffee. No negotiations entertained about an early return, you fish. No mumbling about the comfort of the ride, you just hold on. You feed the fish, and on return you kiss the land. Your body aches and world spins about you for the next 12 hours as you recover from effects of seasickness and blunt force trauma. You get up the next morning, and you do it again. Crazy stuff.

It's a journey, it's a rite of passage, the one of which the importance cannot be underestimated. The skivvy does not simply take the helm. There is a steep learning curve the skivvy must first undergo before enjoying the privilege and comfort, along with the daunting responsibility that comes along with being a skipper. Watching the skipper do what he does, the basics may seem simple, but in reality, it is so much more complicated. Think of it as being no different to a learner driver taking the reins of their parent's vehicle for a first time. They may have watched you for 17 odd years, but it makes it no easier for them to travel 100m down the road or even safely reverse out of the yard. The nerves of the

seasoned parent navigator are soon also frayed whilst attempting to pass down the basics to the new driver and keep you both alive...

Having received a new cohort of learners on Wednesday, I could not help but liken their journey that awaits them over the next 12 years as that being one of a skivvy, in terms of experience and growth. Faces beaming with enthusiasm and the school environment being a lot more friendly and nurturing than that of a rag tag vessel of course, these learners will be moulded, sculpted and equipped with the necessary skills to take up the reigns and allow them to happily, safely and enthusiastically navigate life's journey (even when it becomes bumpy and they are faced with inclement weather).

We have all experienced this journey in our own way. Old Skipper always said to me "You cannot buy experience".

It is my wish that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 141 | 28 January **My Shoe, Your Shoe, Our Shoes.**

One cannot help being moved when travelling down the N2 in Cape Town. The national highway is engulfed by informal housing and settlements on both sides. There you will almost certainly come to find children of varying ages playing on the shoulder of the road. The vastness of Khayelitsha and Guguletu engulf you on either side for kilometres. One is shocked into reality when a Boeing passes narrowly overhead landing at Cape Town International, a stark reminder of the disparity between informal and first world.

In 2018, as head of soccer whilst ploughing my trade at Wynberg Boys, I was gifted several soccer balls for discretionary use. The Service Committee had just completed their Easter Egg drive, and were busy distributing their donations daily. The feel-good factor associated with giving, gets one thinking. Having watched the barefoot kids playing soccer along the highway on several occasions, the obvious dawned on me. I was going to take the balls and pass them on to the kids who were playing games. I packed the car and off I went.

Walking up to these kiddos, they immediately stopped their games probably wondering what on earth this man was doing approaching them. Displaying the ball, I gestured to the kids that I wanted to give them the ball. I was immediately surrounded by a rag tag motley crew excited at the prospects of their new ball. As more and more kids poured out of the shacks, the volume and excitement increased. I was soon joined by the barber who offered a to take a little off the top for me, as well as the butcher, who happily engaged with me inviting me to try some walkie talkies whilst brandishing his cleaver.

As the stars would align, I received a message from Kevin Grant, an old family friend, who after having seen the work being done, asked if I would be interested in distributing some shoes. Kevin now located in the UK had visited South Africa with friend and colleague, Ciaran McHugh. They had similarly been moved by the overwhelming sense of need for having seen young children walking to school barefoot. They hatched a plan to convince some neighbours to assist them in getting some used and no longer needed footwear to South Africa. Having successfully 'smuggled' in 500 pairs of used shoes, I was contacted and asked to put them to good use. The impact made by the kindness of this gesture quickly snowballed, as photos of the smiling faces made their way back to the UK. What started as an idea on a road trip, quickly expanded to an annual collection in Ireland of around 50 000 pairs of shoes. The project just keeps growing with the aim of bringing in 100 000 pairs annually.

Having worked closely with the Our Shoes team, my PA approached me to launch a similar campaign for the start of the year that she dubbed "Equip a Friend for School". If you, like me, were shocked with the cost of getting your child sorted for the new school year, then you have an opportunity to make a difference. Your used and unwanted shoes, school and sports equipment will go a long way to equipping children with the necessary to tackle the start of the school year with dignity. The things we so often take for granted are seen as luxuries by others. Rope your son into assisting you clear out the closet and bring your donations to school from 27 January. In return Our Shoes will match the donations to the tune of 5000 pairs of shoes for children in need in and around the Free State. Encourage your friends and family to join in.

Whilst my child can wear shoes daily, and tackles the school year with brand new equipment, there are many who are not in the position to do so. The need itself is not far removed either. Our reality in South Africa is that it could be your next-door neighbour. One of my most vivid memories as a child was playing soccer in the 'sticks' against hard as nails barefoot opponents. The one field we arrived to had been freshly burnt to ensure a level playing surface, for lack of a lawnmower. Smouldering tufts of grass, shards of glass and rocks as field markings, proved all too much for our 'protected' upbringing. Our scantily dressed opponents made quick work of us. The privilege of a boot was afforded to a player taking a free kick or penalty, as there would be a quick switching of foot attire for the designated player before he unleashed a thunderous shot at goal.

In South Africa with its vast disparities, we are surrounded with things that much of the developed world simply are not able to comprehend. With these disparities come opportunities. The opportunity to show empathy, the opportunity to care, the opportunity to make a difference, and the opportunity to act. Be it near or far, you can make a difference by getting involved and supporting this worthy cause. The memories of the experiences have moulded and sculpted much of my views pertaining privilege. Exposing our children to worthwhile opportunities such as giving will go a long way to producing empathetic individuals with the power to change the world.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk humbly with God".

Issue 142 | 4 February **How's your hair?**

On Monday morning a typical Cape storm swept through the Garden Route. Mossel Bay located front, and centre was not spared. The parking garage was fully occupied forcing us to park a considerable distance away from the entrance to the hospital. As we made our way to the hospital, having departed our cars at the same time, I embraced the cool touch of the typical Cape rain, whilst my mother firmly clutched her handbag over head to rescue the last vestiges, of what was her morning her preparations. On entering the hospital, I chuckled at how many women immediately moved to compose themselves, by attending to their hair, or any makeup that may have run in the wind and rain. This was in stark contrast to the men entering the hospital. Like me, I just wanted to get to the coffee bar.

It got me thinking about a conversation we have picked up with boys over the last couple days at school. At our Grade 8 camp, I joined Mrs Zietsman in addressing the boys about how to treat women. The conversation quickly took on a life of its own, and with each new group we were expanding on what was said previously. Mrs Zietsman said to the boys that women have a sixth sense. They know before we know. If men are standing in a group, a woman immediately knows when they are talking about her. The same can be said for the way a class looks at a female teacher in the class. Men are truly simple creatures. Mrs Zietsman sighted examples about the boy's mothers knowing they had done something, before the boys even had a chance to tell them. Mothers do this by just sensing the vibe or reading the body language of their son. I found myself reminiscing this special ability of my mother as well. She would stare me down, and I would just blurt out the truth. So yes, I can confirm that women do indeed have a sixth sense. They know, before you know.

I spoke a little more directly with the boys. I sighted the example of boys indulging in fantasies about a pretty young lady that happens to enter their realm or the beautiful mother that drops her son at school. Quickly the thoughts of the young men go haywire and quickly get talking about how hot the lady in question is, sighting legs, waist and breasts. It happens almost naturally for the boys. It is however interesting to watch how offended the boys become if you ask them how they would feel if it was their sister or mother that the boys were talking about. Almost every boy instantaneously aired their shock and anger for the unappreciated comments. How dare anyone make comments like that about their sister or mother. The point to the boys being, why is it ok if it is someone else's sister or mother...

Mrs Zietsman asked the boys who knew how to drive. To my surprise a fair number of them raised their hands in agreement. She went on to ask whether it was legal to do so and went on to explain that whilst the boys could drive if they wanted, it was not legal. A discussion followed around the

reasons why, and ultimately it was decided that with driving came responsibilities that children are not able to deal with like for example an accident leading to the death of another. The impact would be immeasurable on a young person just starting out in life. The same can be said for pornography. The boys are exposing their minds and emotions to things they are not able to handle. When I was younger, the only glimpse we could get at a naughty picture was sneakily peeping at the top shelf magazines in the corner stores or somehow getting hold of 'Die Son' koerant... Now the boys can access a plethora of material at the push of a button and the boys simply don't have the driver's license for what they face. The same could be said for alcohol. Their developing brains are stunted by using alcohol or drugs and thereby killing brain cells and ultimately their potential. I would argue pornography stunts their emotional and psychological development. Over and above this, no young man should be under the illusion that they can look at pornography and then come home and say they respect their mother or sister. The same can be said for an adult man. You cannot be dabbling in pornography and then come home and say that you respect your wife or your daughter.

Mrs Zietsman went on to remind the boys that in many instances the girls they meet at school will most likely not be the girl they marry one day. Therefore, the boys were reminded that in most cases they were dating someone else's wife, and that someone else was likely dating their future wife - so it was on them to treat the lady they would expect their wife to be treated by another. At the end of the day when one gets married one day, you want a 'clean' wife or husband. Clean in terms of body, mind, and spirit. It works both ways.

We are blessed at St Andrews's that we have females across the school occupying various positions. These ladies are critical to educating well-rounded young men. We speak of gentlemen at St Andrew's, and that we strive to be - gentlemen. Men who value, respect, and appreciate the females we keep company with. As Mr Hobson once put it; " In terms of our female staff, we expect 100% of our boys 100% of the time. Not 100% some of the times." Treating women with respect 100% of the time is what we strive to make part of our DNA. Be it the young or more mature ladies, we love you all and we thank you for your patience and care (even if we don't always show it).

Ladies, come hell or high water, you need not worry about your hair, makeup, or anything else. You are beautiful just the way you are, and no South Easter will tell us otherwise.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 143 | 12 February **Go play outside!**

Having heard a story of a young man, shared with me by my deputy Mr Schneider, whilst at the grade 6 camp, it got me thinking.

If you were born in the 80s like me or even earlier, you could relate to the instruction "go play outside". In what some would claim to be the "good old days", children were to be seen and not heard... Whilst many would claim that when they were younger they did not sit in front of the TV or play on their phones, the advent of these devices have simply changed the game. Don't get me wrong, I am certainly not a proponent of sitting in front of the TV or playing on your phone or game console for hours on end. I would however, like to offer another perspective.

Growing up on a school campus I had the privilege of having abundant facilities at my disposal. I can understand why my parents would say to me that I needed to go and play outside. Soccer fields, rugby fields, hide and seek, and many friends in the form of hostel boarders meant that there was always action in the form of outdoor activities in one way or another. I could access opportunities that many others could not. My brother and I spent hours outside and were only required home when a specific light in our yard went on.

My parents of course, had the insurance that we were able to play outside in a relatively safe environment, the biggest risk perhaps being injury from a touch rugby game gone wrong. Yes, we were able to wonder freely about the campus and get up to mischief. Having checked in at home at the appropriate time, we were often granted the opportunity to head out in the evening about the campus looking for "action". Time that we could terrorize the residents on the campus by playing

games like Tok-Tokkie. If found out, the resident in all likelihood a teacher, would meet out the appropriate punishment in the form of a hiding, thereafter, followed by phone call to my parents, and another subsequent hiding.

Listening to stories of my friends, their childhood whilst not campus bound, shared many similarities. Stories of venturing out to the play parks for an afternoon of fun, street cricket or soccer, and similar antics in terrorizing the grumpy old auntie or oom of the neighbourhood, meant that our growing up as children was similar. I contrast my childhood memories to the reality's children face these days. I count myself blessed that my children can experience something similar to what I did when I was younger in that they too can experience growing up on a campus, where one is essentially part of one big family.

Adults are the first to admit that times have changed, and probably idealistically, we tend to forget that the norm when we were younger is not compatible with life today as we know it. We want our children to be children like the children we were, but the reality is that children of the 90s, 80s and earlier are actually aliens in a foreign environment. In many instances our children are better geared for survival and success in a space that we now barely recognize. Think about it. Where can children wander the streets at night in relative safety whilst playing Tok-Tokkie on their neighbours doors, or walk to the mall without being accosted, or play street cricket without being at risk of a drunk unlicensed driver crossing their path. It is no longer as simple as saying go play outside. The outside as we knew it, and the rules of that game have changed. A balanced approach to being outside is what is needed.

There's nothing wrong with wanting to hold on to the innocence of childhood, and I am self a great proponent of keeping kids, kids, but their reality is so much different to our experiences at their age. Today requires of us as parents, to be wide awake to potential pitfalls and more involved than ever before. By involved I mean present and accessible, and not being a bulldozer parent who clears the way for their child, or a helicopter parent who is constantly hovering. Your presence in your child's life is the most important thing that you can do.

I can't but help think to myself that in many ways when children were told to go play outside it was a subtle way for some parents to get rid of them, or perhaps an undercover manner of shirking responsibility. The reality is that the environment back then probably allowed more for this than it does today. In many ways that old phrase of children should be seen and not heard is a dead giveaway of the inherent fault of the parenting norm back then. I also recognize that the counter argument could be that children are less respectful, less driven, more opinionated and in many instances babied beyond what would be considered acceptable for instance. However, that argument is used by every prior generation.

I enjoy the fact that I can engage in conversation with my 11 and 15 year old. I also enjoy the fact that they have an opinion and can share that opinion with me. It is sometimes frustrating having to reason with or explain ad nauseam why something is the way it is, but it has definitely made me a better parent for it. The reality is that in many instances my children know more than me. You can ask teachers how often that happens in the classroom as well. That is the reality of the generation we are dealing with. A lot can be said for negative attributes of this generation. But let me tell you this generation will go on to right many wrongs of the past. This is also the generation we are relying on to bring the world back from the tipping point pertaining global warming and the far-reaching consequences that come with it, something previous generations have ignored and obliviously compounded.

Getting back to the story of the young man on the grade six camp. On returning home daily he's told to play outside. The young man knows that the requirement to play outside is a convenient excuse under the guise of wanting the best for him, but in reality it is so that his stepfather does not have to entertain him. See what I mean about the youth of today. They see us and are not afraid to call us out or offer their opinion. Imagine taking that stance back in the 80s, 90s and earlier as a young man.

Whilst playing outside is fun, it is not nearly as fun as interacting with your father or mother. Nothing beats your father or your mother being your best friend.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do has the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy, and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 144 | 19 February

A balancing act...

When I was younger, I used to love playing video games. Often, I would visit friends, and could never understand why something like a game console would stand unused... I imagined and wished for my own console. I knew that if I ever got my own console, it would never meet the same fate. Save to say, my parents did buy my brother and me our own Nintendo console (probably one of the best gifts of my childhood). As with everything in life, too much of a good thing is bad. As much as I loved gaming as a child (and still do), not even I could manage playing a game 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

The quote, "What do they know of cricket who only cricket know?" from the book *Beyond a Boundary* by C.L.R. James, speaks to overemphasizing a particular aspect of one's life. So many of us get it wrong in that we become so driven and singularly focused on a particular activity, that we miss out on so many other experiences that would add value to our life (and to the activity that we love).

I recently penned a letter encouraging parents to encourage their boys to involve themselves in a variety of activities, and not 'hyper' focus on a particular activity at the expense of others. In the case of the letter, I spoke of sport. A growing trend in schools is early childhood specialization. Any hint of talent in a particular area in some instances sparks a series of events whereby children are almost forcibly 'encouraged' by adults to 'hyper' focus on that activity. Parents see stars, spotlights, fame and fortune. In doing so the individual is deprived of a myriad of experiences and educational, psychosocial, emotional, and physiological developmental gains that they would be exposed to if involved in other activities. I am not only talking sport here. This is applicable to the musician, the actor, the artist, the mathematician and the sportsman etc. You know that saying "All work and no play make Jack a dull boy". The same can be said for over emphasizing a particular area of interest / activity at the expense of a balanced approach.

I'm a great believer in encouraging and allowing a child to get involved in and try as many activities as possible. Experiences in the one area inevitably inform experiences in the other (physical, emotional, social, psychological etc.). A child must use the opportunity at school to get involved and try their hand at art, music, culture, drama, sport, and even give back to the community through service. They must dabble and experiment. A child should not only focus on sport or only do music or only do academics for instance. It is through exposure to multiple experiences that manifest by trying different activities, that hidden talents are discovered and that the love for one inevitably and naturally grows or wanes. The range of experiences create a balanced individual, who is better informed and equipped to succeed at life.

As adults we must guard against wanting to live our 'successes' vicariously through our children. Too many times, a parent's wants, desires and aspirations are not that of their child. The parents force it down on their child, and that often results in unintended destructive outcomes – which are so unnecessary. The child resents the parent and hates the activity, leaving the parent frustrated and in conflict with their child. Take for instance subject choice at school. Forcing a child to take a certain subject package because the parents did it at school, or because the child needs a package to access careers viewed as 'important' or 'viable' is a 'prickly' issue. This, like in many other instances, if not addressed, is like adding fuel to the fire, through added parental pressure. We all want our child to excel at something and we all want the best for our children. Often, we hope they share our talents and passion. The reality is that they are their own Individual, with their own hopes and dreams, and the best we can do is stand by them and support them in their endeavours. Forcing them into a particular mould is not the answer. No one said parenting would be easy right?

As adults we also need to remember that success in the early years is certainly not a predictor of success in the later years. The same can be said for specialization. An interesting study on the throughput of u13 Craven Week rugby players to u19, highlights the fallacy of early success supposedly determining success later. Many of these u13 players don't feature in the provincial teams at u19, and even less so at SA Schools level. Factors that play a role are that other boys have caught up in size when they fill out at around grade 10, so the size difference is eliminated (and we all know what roles size plays in rugby). In addition, the players who do feature at u19 level have inevitably

had to develop multiple ball and handling skills as well as understanding that they play as part of a team, and not simply just bulldoze the opposition. You have probably seen that junior monster who does nothing but run through the whole team... Later in life this counts against him, as he has not learnt important skills and is then overtaken by his counterparts. Importantly, the late 'developers' had to learn to overcome setbacks and disappointments, like not making the A team, or the Craven Week team, and in doing so they learnt to have grit and determination. The young achievers at u13 level conversely had no need to learn these skills and life lessons, and so later in life, when they start losing or the going gets tough, they are found to be wanting.

Exposure to multiple fields and participation in a variety of activities are key to your child finding their niche, discovering their talents, and developing a passion for what it is that they love. We walk such a fine line in wanting the best for our children. We need to guard against our wants for success versus our child's want for success. We need to guard against pushing them too hard and getting them focus on a particular activity at the expense of other activities at a young age. It is only later into their lives that it is ok for the scale to tip in favour of specialization. We don't want to ruin adolescent love for an activity/interest, and we want to turn out balanced individuals.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 145 | 25 February **Just be a 'lekker' person.**

One of the most underrated skills / attributes one can have is being a 'lekker mens'.

Often when people are interviewed, they are shortlisted based on the content of their CV's. A paper picture to colour in all the skills and attributes someone possesses. A short while later that person undergoes a 30-minute interview and based on this interaction you are likely appointed (or not). It is usually only then that one comes to get to know the person. Think of it as a marriage. They generally say you only really get to know each other after the honeymoon period had come to an end. Yes, in that honeymoon period no one can do anything wrong. But thereafter they talk of 'saam sewe sakke sout eet'. It is either going to work, or it is not. Give and take to make things work.

At work there are those who are just easy to work with / get along with. You know that colleague. The person you can always rely on, the one you can call at 1am in the morning, the one who will always put up their hand when help is needed. Not only that, but they are also the kind of person that you will similarly go out of your way to help because of who they are and what they do. You can disagree on matters, but once settled you can bet on their support. They make life easier for those around them because of their attitude.

Then there is the other side. The person who could in many instances be highly educated and very good at what they do, but are just an 'unplayable' person. You know that person, the one who lacks EQ, or put more bluntly bedside manners. Where they can add value is often counterbalanced to being unmanageable / unplayable. They often come across as being single-minded, stuck in their ways, a know it all, opinionated, and in many ways singularly focused on themselves, their wellbeing, and their interests.

In many instances, when afforded the freedom of being able to speak to references, what I most want to know is whether the person is easy to work with and whether they buy in / are a team player. This does not mean that the person is a push over of course, it just means that irrespective of opinions and wants, they can pull together in the same direction. They understand that there is an unwritten understanding of working together for the benefit of something bigger than themselves (as individuals), which ultimately at the end culminates in the success of the individuals as well. It is circular and reciprocal effect, and they can slot in quite seamlessly.

I often sketch this ability to buy in and add value / or be easy to work with, as a sliding scale with a tornado on either side. One tornado in the form of a spiral points up and one down. You then have a

choice to tip the scale in favour of the positive or negative. As you get sucked in either direction it becomes harder and harder to escape the tornado and make your way back to the middle or even cross over to the other side. That's right, if you make the choice to move towards the positive, it becomes increasingly difficult to be negative and vice versa. That is when the environment you work in and the colleagues you work with, is either something you enjoy or not. Your attitude comes to determine your upward or downward trajectory.

On the playground, children are told to play nicely. The expectation is that they are kind to each other, that they don't tease or hurt others, that they share with each other, and that they play nicely together. This is something we need to constantly reinforce with our children, so that when they leave the playground, they grow up to be adults who 'play nicely' as well. The school playground in many ways sets the tone for the type of adult that emerges. What happens at home is equally important. Parents play an important role in the type of person you get to encounter in the later years. Everything you do sends a message. As the years progress, it becomes increasingly easy to identify what your playground and home looked like.

EQ (emotional intelligence) is increasingly the most valuable attribute / skill one can possess. In a workplace, where you are part of a team, and you work with other people, your EQ is arguably more important than your IQ. Be a lekker person so that you can make it lekker for others to be around you. Always remember, everything you do sends a message.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires, "Do Justice, Love Mercy, and Walk Humbly with God

Issue 146 | 5 March

How times have changed.

In conversation with parents, it is often mentioned to me that when they were at school, the headmaster's office was an intimidating space, to which you were sent after engaging in miscreant behaviour. A visit to the office involved anything from a scolding, a parental phone call, anything between one and six 'cuts' or a combination of everything mentioned. What the headmaster said was law, and that is just the way it was. It worked for that time.

In conversation with some retired head's, they struggle with understanding the landscape that we operate in daily. By their own admission, the role of a headmaster is much more complex and demanding than ever before. In fact, this is so for the role of teachers as well. The advent of modern era has brought with it technology, societal ills and complexities, the Millennial and Generation Z parents and of course the Generation Alpha children, who are the first generation to be fully immersed in the digital era since birth.

Whilst much can be said for the way one is to approach Generation Z, I have found that the most digitally connected generation, is in many ways the generation most at risk of being disconnected from others. Despite cell phones and various communication channels, that put us in touch at the push of a button, nothing can replace the human connection. I think, that in many ways, this is why this generation is so inherently 'lonely'. Hours spent connected digitally simply add to the individual being increasingly isolated.

A plethora of learners visit my office daily. Many just pop in to say hi, whilst others pop in for a sweetie. I try and create a reason for the boys to visit my office. Some arrive with a tooth dangling, and know that an extraction by the headmaster, means that the office mouse will be bringing them a hefty tip in the morning. Others pop by to come view and feed the fish, or simply to come and draw a picture at my desk.

What I believe this generation needs most, is a sense of belonging and meaningful human connections. Their world by default encourages digital connectedness. Their world demands constant

attention, as any down time leads to a fear of missing out (FOMO). It's not healthy. Our brains are not "hardwired" to be connected digitally; in fact, our brains are naturally wired

for social connection i.e. the human connection. Thus, for this generation we need to constantly reinforce humanness, in-person interactions, and a strong sense of family (belonging).

Thinking back now, the teachers I was most fond of were those whom I felt a connection to. By default, I enjoyed their subjects, mostly, just because of them. They were also those that I was most accepting of being disciplined by. This is no different to what we as educators need to strive at doing daily in our classrooms. The boys must want to run to your classroom. They must be excited by your presence. They must know that above all, they are important to you.

At homes, time must be spent together. Our lives are so rushed, that even at homes we tend to live past one another. The basics of sitting together at supper, spending time in conversation, and making time for that human connection, must be prioritised over the digital trap. Cell phones, gaming stations, Netflix, YouTube etc. have their time and their place, but so does your family. As a parent of a Genz, you should be weary of your child's Samsung replacing you.

As always, it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 147 | 11 March

When the storm comes, you will know what you are made of".

Everyone goes through a patch where you need to batten down the hatches and just ride things out. These storms come in different forms; home, work or personal life etc. They sometimes build up over a long period of time, and at other times appear quite capriciously. It is what we choose to do during these times that matter most.

This past week, several colleagues and friends sent me the following quote "When fishermen cannot go to sea, they repair nets". I'm thankful that my regular posts about my love for the ocean, for the peace that I experience at sea, and for my boat being a passport to freedom, has made an impact. The message of encouragement came at an apt time. For the eyes of a fisherman gloss over when for a long period they are not able to get to sea.

The issue is that one should not allow the storms to distract or overcome you and it goes without saying that the storm is certainly not the time to rush out to sea. In life we call it perspective. Stepping back, taking stock, regrouping and considering the way forward. The storm I was facing got me reflecting on the "Why"...

At the start of the year, I made a conscious decision that I would choose to keep the boys and the staff my priority. Last week when I needed it most - in walks one of the grade 1's who come and share with me, that I look 82 years old. Whilst I laughed at the gesture, responding to the young man, that on that day I felt 82 years old, it also struck a chord. In many ways the actions of some were proving a distractor.

The fortunate part and privilege of being the skipper is that one can change course when deemed necessary. A refocusing of purpose and intent quickly brings things back into perspective. The more I looked, the more support I found. The more I considered the storm, the more I realised I had a crew second to none, and that the ship we were sailing was going in the right direction. What more could I ask for.

I would be lying if I said being a headmaster is smooth sailing. Time and time again I have seen that when the going gets tough, I need look no further than the boys (the primary reason for being here) and the staff (whom I work closest with). The energy at school is incredible. Being in education means that we can tap into this positive energy daily.

If you get lost at sea, caught up in the storms of life, be it your health or your finances, your work or your personal life, you batten down the hatches, you call on your team (family or colleagues) and you

keep perspective, keeping your eye on the prize, knowing where you are going or what you are wanting to achieve.

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 148 | 19 March

A school that sings together is a happy school.

There are many things that make a good school. What boys do when no one is watching, how they speak to one another when they think no one can hear them, whether there is graffiti on the desks or in the bathrooms are all tell-tale signs as to whether a school is a good school. These are the small things that are probably not as pronounced as the very visible appearance of boys, or how they greet or how impressive the state of the campus is.

It is undeniably special for past and present, that when they enter the Chapel at the heart of our school, the way our school sings, sends shivers down the spine. Not only is our singing a direct reflection on our praise and worship for God, but it very clearly tells the tale of a happy school. Whether accompanied by the organ or the grand piano, the boys sing, and the Chapel reverberates with the sound of song and music.

As time has progressed, we have felt the need to sing modern Christian music, whilst remaining true to our heritage and retaining those great Christian hymns. Thereby we offer the boys a variety of song and experience that bridges 160 years of our existence. Similarly, our Chapel Choir, has adopted a similar repertoire. We often remind the boys that the Chapel Choir, is the oldest activity at the school, and central to the heart of the school. Being part of the Chapel choir, is indeed both a privilege and a responsibility.

Whilst Old Boys will remember the Legendary Clive Mott (Tiger), our Choir Master, who left an indelible impact on generations of boys both in terms of the Chapel Choir, and his contribution to the school, there is another. I call her own very own 'Ronaldo' of the piano. Also known as Miss Elize by the Chaplain. Elize Swart is an inspiration, who is central to the morale and spirit of the school. She quietly enters the Chapel, in her unassuming way, and then takes to the piano like in a 'Elton John' kind of way. She rocks.

Miss Elize plays the piano without any notes in front of her. More so, she is almost instantly able to play any song that you throw her way. Elvis Presley to Niel Diamond, Can't Help falling in Love to Sweet Caroline, Battle Song of the Republic to Rock of Ages, she can do it all. She blows the minds of the boys and staff alike. Supremely talented and passionate, she continues to touch the lives of those that enter the Chapel, through sharing her God given talent, in a way that brings glory to God for all to see. Miss Elize embodies 1 Peter 4:10 (NIV), "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others."

On nominating Miss Elize for the National Teaching Awards, she replied, *"I am not one for awards. My teaching is my ministry and so, recognition from Him is enough"*. We are privileged to have our very own "Ayatollah of (Godly) Rock 'n' Rolla" who ministers to us daily, in a way that raises our spirits through music. As an aside, I found myself writing this newsletter Thursday last week. It later became evident to me just why. The message was placed on my heart by God, when I was both reflecting on storms, and what makes our Chapel a special place.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 149 | 25 March

Walking the field at Tuks, watching our First Cricket battle it out in their first match in the SA 20, I was again struck by and reminded of the quality boy we have at St Andrew's. In remarking on this to Gregg, it led to a conversation later the evening, where we not only reflected on the days play, but we reflected just on how special it was to be working with young men of this quality. As an aside I walked

away from the conversation schooled by Mr Hobson on the intricacies and nuances of the game, as well as the complexities of the Duckworth Lewis system...

In conversation with Gregg, I remarked that one of the things I missed most, prior my Headmastership, was touring with my boys / team. It was 'lekker' packing my bag, and getting ready for a tour again. Touring with the boys, coaching for a season and living the highs and lows with the team, is just an experience second to none. It is the closest one comes to a boarding experience, which is essentially the 'all-encompassing experience'. Be it a sports team, or a cultural opportunity, be it chess or service, music or e-gaming, staff should actively look to experience opportunities with boys outside of the classroom. I have often used the quote, "what knows he of cricket, who only cricket knows". The same can be said for staff who only find themselves in the classroom. The fondest memories I have of my teachers were those, who were both teacher and coach, subject expert and life mentor. They were more than the person I saw for an hour a day in Science or Maths class. They were very much vested in so much more of my life. More so, they knew there was more to me than a test result. This was a massive strength, in that they then knew how to get the best out of me and could set expectations so much higher both in terms of performance and conduct.

Be you a teacher or coach, you are more than your activity. In many ways, the really good teachers and coaches are life coaches, imparting valuable knowledge and skills in their area of expertise, whilst simultaneously extending their influence post the classroom or field. Discussing our 'amateur' coaching careers, our conversation took somewhat a different direction. In our philosophising, we spoke of how due to the very nature of coaching at 1st Team level, it was a very 'public' affair. Be it player or coach, there is nowhere to hide when it comes to results and outcomes. Sure it is an awesome feeling to be in the spotlight when things are going well, but it can be a cruel change of circumstance when things are not. Calls to axe the head of the coach is an all too frequent occurrence. As coach one can't help but taking it personal when a player or team folds. As a really good coach will reflect, will regroup, will arrive to training sessions with specific drills in mind, will prep through video analysis, will have one on one meetings with players and management, and will focus on controlling the controllables and prepare for the uncontrollable. The really good teachers do the same. The really good teachers take it personally when a learner fails. Too often we hide behind excuses like the boy is not working hard enough, he is not doing his homework, he dislikes the subject, he is disobedient etc. This is where the really good teachers come to distinguish themselves. They are able to get the best out of the learner. They make the learner a priority, and don't abdicate responsibility.

Whilst sporting results are a very public affair, and we speak of win and loss ratio, and whether a team had a successful season or not, it would be interesting to apply the same criteria to teachers and ask whether they had a successful season in the classroom or not. Some of the principles from a coaching perspective one could apply are:

1. Are boys better at the end of a lesson than they were at the start.
2. Does the teacher arrive to the lesson prepared (having meticulously planned every minute of the lesson in fine detail).
3. Have the learners and the teacher set short and long-term personal goals and then discussed and agreed these goals with each other.
4. What is the win loss ratio in class in terms of pass and fail, and how many learners has the teacher been able to move from fail to pass.
5. Is feedback offered regularly and with as little delay as possible, so as to inform the learning experience.
6. Is teaching and learning a collaborative experience relying on the input of all members of the class.
7. Are lessons exciting and fun. Do boys want to come to class.

8. Is the teacher creating a winning culture in their classroom, as no one likes losing.

9. Are assessments seen as an opportunity to inform and plot the way forward

10. Do you know the boy sitting in front of you.

Arriving hopeful to day 2 of the competition, the fast bowlers of Garsfontein caught us unawares, and wreaked havoc with the top order. Having to dig in, the lower order did what they could to keep the scoreboard ticking over, but in the end we suffered a convincing defeat where we were just outplayed on the day. Faced with less than two hours ahead of a crucial fixture, and the next big test, with the weather building and uncertainty building as to whether the fixture would take place, I would argue the foundation laid during the season, the lessons learnt, the effort asserted and the team culture established would be central to whether the team would be eliminated during the pool stages. Just like with prepping a team for their final, the hard work and effort put in daily in the classroom over several months and then years, finally equip the learner for the biggest test they will face in their final exams.

The best are more than just teachers or coaches. Whether teaching or coaching, it is about the individual in your stewardship. The better you know the individual, the more likely you are to achieve the desired outcome and result.

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micha requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 150 | 10 April **Home is where the heart is.**

At our Sunday service one morning, I got chatting to Father Gordon Bauer, past Chaplain of St Andrew's. Father Bauer still visits the school every so often and attends services whilst doing so. In chatting Father Bauer used the opportunity to request the reservation of the Chapel for his memorial service one day. As rector of the Chapel, these are requests that I have become increasingly accustomed to.

Whilst sitting in Chapel I reflected on the request of Father Bauer, and on the same request I received pertaining stalwart Old Andean Mr Roger Crawford. The significance of two elder gentlemen wanting to have their memorial/funeral service in our Chapel was not something lost on me. Both gentlemen, having been connected to the school in some way, either as pupil, staff, or governor, have for all intents and purpose lived a life beyond the school, whilst at the same time remaining intimately connected to the school and the community.

There are many Old Andean's and members of the community who post school, depending on where in the world they find themselves through natural reasons adopt a new community, and inevitably a new Church community as their spiritual centre. For instance, when I moved to Cape Town, my Church community shifted from the Anglican Cathedral in St Georges Street, to St John's Anglican Church in Wynberg. By default, one then gets so absorbed in that community, that for all intents and purposes it becomes your spiritual home, and I would guess that it would be safe to assume that at the end of your life, it is where your final service will also take place.

There have been several instances now, where our Chapel has been used for weddings and funerals. Whilst the requests have been both local from in and around Bloemfontein, there have been just as many from outside the borders of the Free State. This points to and supports the fact that there just is something special about our Chapel. Members of the community, make their way back to our Chapel throughout their life journey. That is special.

I shared this message with the boys the following Monday. Our senior boys spend approximately 30 minutes per day in our Chapel during the week, and another 45 minutes on a Sunday if they are in attendance like the boarders. This means that the average day boy spends 2 hours 30 minutes a week in our Chapel, and a boarder will spend 3 hours 15 minutes in our Chapel. If you then multiply this by 43 school weeks in a year over a 12-year period, a learner on leaving the school will have

almost spent 70 full days in our Chapel. This is significant, because in comparison one would need to attend a congregation 'religiously' every Sunday of the year for an average of an hour a service, for 33 years.

On reflection, the Chapel at our school leaves an indelible mark on all who enter its hallowed nave. Generations of learners are exposed to what can easily be described as their first religious base and safe space. The learnings and experiences in the Chapel then provide a foundation for their lives journey, which is inevitably why so many choose to return to the Chapel later in life, be it at Reunions, Weddings, Funerals or just an opportunity for some quiet time and reflection. This is what makes this school special. This is why the Chapel is called the heart of the school.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 151 | 15 April **Shenanigans at school.**

My mentor taught me that ***"everything you do sends a message"***. What you do or don't do, tells a person a lot about your character and your values.

"Shenanigans" at school is par for the course, provided it does not escalate and become cause for concern.

Firstly, let's keep perspective that at any given time we are dealing with boys of varying ages from 3 to 19 years of age. The school yard is really their first real proving ground. They get to experiment socially physically and mentally. Whilst the journey is preparation for life, there is a beauty about the innocence of youth, that we should not lose sight of and that we need to endeavour to protect and prolong.

As educationalists we are trained to manage this delicate journey. On top of that, not only are we trained but in instances we carry decades worth of experience. My dad always said, "experience can't be bought". Think about when your first child comes along, you blindly feel your way through raising this eating, sleeping, crying, pooping little human. By the time the second child comes along, it feels like a walk in the park. Hand-me-downs and bumps and bruises are par for the course. Dirty nappy, no worries. Teething issues, whack on some T-Gel and a bit of Stopayne and you are good to go.

In the past week, I penned a letter pertaining shenanigans cropping up between young boys which was exacerbated through parental involvement. What then manifest among the boys was unnatural cause for concern. Adult "politics" and young children don't mix. It is a recipe for disaster.

I am clear that we are a school based on relationships; where relationships matter between the boys, the staff and the parents. Anything contrary to this is contrary to the very foundation of the school, where we speak of brotherhood and boys being on the lookout for one another.

I saw a cartoon image over the holiday, where a young boy had his tongue sticking out his mouth. The tongue was directly connected to the adult standing behind the boy. The example set at home often manifests at school (for good or for bad).

Whilst young men are about as impulsive as a Jack Russel, impulsive behaviour does not account for boys being taught to ignore each other, hold grudges or punch someone else. This behaviour is taught and reinforced, and it certainly does not come from me (or the staff).

I maintain that in a boy's school things will happen. Boys inevitably jostle for positions in the "pecking" order, and align themselves with friends who share similar interests in the sciences, the arts the sports etc. This is a natural part of what it means to grow from boys to men. These interests and

friends will change as they journey over the 15 years of schooling - just like our hobbies and friends as adults change.

I can think of nothing worse than having to avoid another, whom I am forced to occupy the same classes, spaces and environment with. Further to this, I shudder at the thought of leaving school "mortal enemies" with another. The world is just too small, and there is so much bigger and worrying things out there, than to have to worry about a school mate.

The boys are quick to move on. Often, they move on before adults at home even come to hear of what has happened, or teachers have even had the chance to deal with matters. This does not mean it must not be dealt with. What it means is that when adults get involved it is important to keep perspective.

The most destructive aftermath ensues when adults lose perspective. Children get labelled, lawyers are roped in, and children are used to settle scores between "warring" adults.

Conversely, I have found that when the adults are on the same page and able to work together, the children walk away the winners. The end goal is for the boys to model the type of behaviour the world so desperately needs like forgiveness, compassion, reconciliation, growth, restoration and amelioration.

This is why whilst discipline at Saints is consequential; what you choose to do has a consequence, at the same time it is pastoral and restorative; aimed at restoring behaviour, actions and frame of heart and mind. Yes, boys must understand there is consequence for action, but at the same time they must understand that we (adults) don't write them off for what they have done.

School is a safe space where learners must be allowed to make mistakes. School provides a safety net where the adults can catch the boys when they fall. The consequences at school must serve as a learning curve, because the consequences after school are so much more severe.

I liken it to teaching our boys to take their foot off the accelerator, rather than putting their foot down when the traffic light turns yellow. The consequence for skipping a yellow light could be catastrophic. A learner caught cheating at school receives a zero for the assessment and might fail the term - both consequential of his decision to cheat. Conversely a learner who cheats in his final exams is barred from writing matric for five years... Five years of his life down the flusher. A compounded effect over his lifetime. Five years later access to University or the job market.

As adults we need to constantly be shepherding the boys the way a sheepdog looks after its flock. A little to the left, now a little to the right, a nip and a bark here and there, but we do eventually get them to the green pasture, and we can account for each. A sheepdog does not go "wolf" on a "rouge" sheep. The sheepdog realises that the wayward sheep requires that little bit more attention, for the good of the flock. That is why a sheepdog is so busy, it constantly guides the strong willed or perhaps the bewildered, back to the flock, so it keeps moving all the sheep in the same direction.

At Saints we profess to be family. We tell the boys they are brothers. We expect them to behave like brothers. Yes, brothers don't always get along, but you know the saying "blood is thicker than water"... When brothers get "stuck" into one another, mom and dad step in. The situation is assessed, consequences are assigned, and life within the family gets on. Mom and dad don't encourage holding grudges, instead wanting the brothers to reconcile and make amends, because they realise just how important it is for the brothers going forward in life.

This is exactly how we handle issues between boys at the school. Your son standing before me, is no different to another. I see them both the way I would see my own son. I handle every boy, and every situation the way I would want someone else to handle my son whether he faltered or was on the receiving end. I implore parents to do the same and to keep the following in mind:

1. Keep perspective: We are dealing with boys, and most importantly, we are dealing with someone's most precious possession.
2. It takes two to tango. There are always two sides to the story, and you have probably only heard a very selective version.
3. Understand: School is a proving ground for life. This is a safe space where boys can make mistakes.
4. The shoe could very easily be on the other foot. 15 years is a long time to always be on the right side of the argument / altercation / incident.
5. Know: There are consequences for actions. You might not always like or agree with them. Let your son learn from them.
6. Our approach to discipline is a restorative and pastoral approach. We always look to rehabilitate behaviour.
7. Don't: Interfere, incite or complicate matters. If it does not pertain your son directly, don't get involved.
8. Use your son to settle a score with a parent, teacher or the school.

Boys will be boys. Our role at school is to allow them to be boys for as long as possible, and then to educate and raise them to be men when someday they leave these gates.

Parents, keep in mind and consider what Arj Barker said; *"My friend and I were up to all sorts of shenanigans at school. But one time it ended up disrupting the whole class and we got in trouble. His parents told him he wasn't allowed to hang out with me anymore. I had a friendship break-up in third grade. It was brutal."*

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 152 | 23 April

The Saints Samurai.

The other day I found myself in an interesting conversation with Mr Roelof Botha. We spent an hour or more enjoying a freshly brewed cuppa joe, whilst the weird "winter" rain, if you could call it that, set in.

I recall when I was at school, at the end of every day we were required to sweep the floors, pick up the papers, and create some semblance of a neat classroom before leaving for extra mural activities. Depending on the staff member you had for the last period of the day depended on the detail of order and cleanliness expected. Some required a rather superficial level of cleanliness, whilst others expected you to be able to eat your lunch off the shining floors (particularly if this teacher happened to have a military background). Reflecting on this, it dawned on me that those who expected most in terms of their class, also expected most of us in terms of their subject and our performance. Attention to detail and taking care of the small things, inevitably spilled over into other areas.

Roelof and I got to speaking about the Japanese National Soccer Team, and their fans, who gained media publicity, when at Russia 2018, the team cleaned their own change room and the fans stayed behind to clean the stadium, game after game. This uniquely Japanese tradition, manifests what they as a nation hold dear. When I think of the Japanese, I think of the Samurai. The word "samurai" itself means "to serve". This act of the Japanese is an example of self-discipline, respect for self and others, and pride in who they are and their identity. It got me thinking about what this meant for what Japan would look like.

I decided to investigate this in a bit more detail. It quickly became evident when researching Japanese culture that:

- Japanese culture emphasizes cleanliness and respect for the environment.
- From a young age, Japanese children are taught to respect their environment and dispose of their waste properly
- After each school day, children spend 15 minutes to clean up their schools.
- Many visitors are struck by the absence of rubbish bins and how clean the streets are, which is partly due to a cultural emphasis on personal responsibility and taking waste home.

In contrast I think about visiting a stadium in South Africa for a Springbok game or when Bafana Bafana play. The stadium looks like it was hit by a hurricane after a match. The cleaning and maintenance crew spends days cleaning and repairing the stadium. I don't doubt this is any different to what you would find at an English Premier league fixture or many other stadiums across the world. What I do know is that in Japan, it is different. I still cringe when I drive into Bloemfontein from the Cape side of the N1. Someone in their wisdom decided to place a landfill at the entrance of the town. So, driving into Bloemfontein, your first impression is a rubbish strewn highway and smell of burning plastics. Not much better when you enter from the Northridge side either. One can only fathom the impression people get when driving into our city.

At Saints we take pride in the appearance of our campus. We go out of our way to reinforce with the boys that they need to own the campus and take responsibility for the campus. This means we expect a litter free campus, a graffiti free campus, and intact and undamaged premises. We emphasize with the boys, that we leave a place and a person better than we found it/them. Notwithstanding this, this is exactly the point of the conversation Roelof and I were having in that we feel so much more can be done and taught. One walks a fine line between imparting lessons and offering a service. Schools are uniquely placed in that they do both.

Research shows that the measure of a good school is what children say and do in the parking lot when they think no one is listening or watching, whether there is graffiti on desks / walls and there is litter lying around, and how members of the community treat and interact with support staff. I maintain that at Saints we do things differently. The conversation with Roelof certainly has given me something to ponder on. What if the senior school were to clean their own classes after school, sweep and sort out litter and recycling. What if every boy was disciplined enough and took responsibility for their area they occupy during the day, be it the classroom, the sports field, or any other facility. Would we in essence not be producing Saints Samurais?

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and walk Humbly with God".

Issue 153 | 7 May 2025

I recall visiting the Middestad with my Dad back in the day. The trip usually involved a 07:30 departure from the house, after having just thrown my entire biorhythm out the window, the fallout from a ritual sojourn (a holiday without rituals and schedules). No sleeping late on your 'last day'... Crusty eyes, 'deurmekaar' hair, and self-pitying attitude were the disposition adopted by my brother and me. Having just parked the holiday vehicle, my Dad would take us to town in one of the classics. A sequence of events (and frustration), of disconnecting battery chargers, uncovering dust laden car covers, and priming (not flooding) these resting relics, usually unfolded in an effort to get either the VW Beetle, the Chev Bakkie or the MG, started.

The harrowing trip to the Middestad served a dual purpose. Anything wrong with the vehicle was discovered by my Dad in that short trip, and that fault needed to be tended to immediately on return. For me, I knew this automatically meant forgoing the last day of holiday. Perish the thought the problem could not be fixed that day, I knew my first Saturday of the new term was also gone. My brother somehow managed to evade this fate. He had this way of disappearing silently, and added to that, he had a real case of selective hearing and doing... My father would call from the garage. As his cries for help became ever graver, in seeking assistance, I inevitably at the sound of his anguish, and in an act of self-sacrifice, responded.

The other purpose of the trip to the Middestad, being that of going for a “trim”, “chop” or “shape-up”. Reflecting now, our visit to the chop shop (barber) is analogous to an inmate being ‘booked’ in at prison. The commanding and imposing figure of a Afrikaans ‘She-Battle-Tank’, stared you down as you entered. I could never understand why we did not just turn right around and get out of that line of fire... Much like the Terminator, there was no reasoning with this Tannie, and she would fulfil her mission of inflicting a ‘one-size-fits-all’ cut to you. No one spoke a word whilst waiting on their turn, the atmosphere dominated by the sound of scissors slicing through the last vestiges of the holiday.

The sound of some Afrikaans ‘treffer’ of a bygone era being played on her tape deck, was only momentarily interrupted, by the sound of a vacuum. Yes, this Tannie took a vacuum cleaner to your head, long before taking a Hoover to someone’s scalp was fashionable. You dare not flinch or mutter a word at the humiliation being inflicted on oneself. I can however attest that those adverts of the vacuum being able to suck and hold onto a bowling ball mid hair are true by the way... Once done, the Tannie afforded you the ‘courtesy’ of a rearview look at her fine work, by means of a pink handheld mirror, to which she exclaimed “Reg!”. And reg she was. It was not a question or an invitation for commentary. She handed you a Choc Éclair sucker and sent you to your seat.

Strangely, I miss that Tannie. Things were so much simpler then. You arrived, you had your hair cut and you left. All this at a fraction of a price of the various salons, and with the bonus that no headmaster would dare query the stereotypical, short back and sides look, cut to traditional Afrikaner etiquette and precision. I am not saying that there weren’t choices... As an adult male, you had options. You could choose between a schoolboy cut, or the cut of champions, the Helgard Müller Mullet style, as clearly displayed by the multiple Huisgenoot centre page posters on display of Helgard himself. I think the Tannie had a liking of our very own Bloemfontein legend and hero.

I recall taking my son Daniel for his first haircut, at Tommy’s Hairdresser in Plumstead, before his first day of little school. Tommy’s is probably as close as I could find to Tannie Tank’s hairdresser. Daniel had until then been sporting golden ‘surfer’ locks, synonymous with being a little carefree Southern Suburb Capetonian. He sat there anxiously, not really knowing what to expect. Little did he know, that this was the first of many more times in his life when he would metamorphosize. His first cut was really a step in transitioning to a new phase of his journey. He went from being a toddler to a little boy in an instant, ready to take the step from being at home, to going to little school. This was something keenly understood by the wise old “Ma” who tended with care and precision to cutting away and shaping this young man, much like an artist who chips away at a piece of boulder to reveal what was hidden inside. I saw my wife shed a tear when the little man walked back into the house. I am convinced it was out of sheer pride, as opposed the time Daniel walked into the house after having been on the receiving end of a ‘hostel’ cut by Tristan Perez. A semi-balded Daniel with tufts of hair protruding from where the clipper failed, graced us unceremoniously with his presence.

Rites of passage are important to young men. Spending time with Dad is even more important. Fathers play a pivotal role in paving the way for these rites of passage. Whether they are there to take you for your first haircut, or run alongside you as your go-cart whooshes down a tarred hill in Hartswater, or are there when you hook your first shark at sea, or they keep your Saturdays busy with either working on the car or weeding the vegetable garden, the lessons they impart will stand you in good stead for the rest of your life.

It is a privilege to be in a position where I can follow in the footsteps of my father, and be there for Daniel at his first haircut, or next to the field when he plays his sport, or stand alongside him at the harbour catching his first shark, or just in taking up his entire Saturday, getting him to work with me on the boat engines. Hopefully, he too will appreciate and value the lessons learnt in keeping his shoes polished and being neatly groomed, and just perhaps he gets to meet his future wife when he stops along the road and is able to change a flat tyre for her.

Returning from the short break, I hope to see all the Saints boys neatly cut, well-groomed and ready for the exam term that lies ahead. As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; “Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God”.

Issue 154 | 13 May 2025

“Black or White”

Whilst on a road with Daniel, we were listening to a selection of various tunes from back in my day, and beyond. I personally like taking a trip down memory lane, and I also exposing my kids to music that I like, and other golden oldies, played by my parents on the record player, the tape deck and later even the CD. Access to music was way more difficult back then. I remember trying to record a song I liked, whilst it was being played on the radio. Alternatively, one actually had to go to a music store, browse and hope that the artist you were looking for was in fact in stock. The effort of the search, the meandering through the isles, and the vibe of a music store is something lost to this generation.

Visiting Musica or Rebel Music was an adventure. These stores were commonplace in malls and developments around the city. The Buggles (if you are a little older), and Adam Sandler, (if you are a little younger), sang “Video Killed the Radio Star.” The introduction of the television reshaped the radio and music industry. I suppose at that time the real fear was that television would completely replace the audio empire – thankfully, it did not. There is no doubt however that the evolution of music from vinyl to digital and physical to online, has resulted in a shift in culture. At a click of a button and at a fraction of the price, the various Apps available these days can provide you with unlimited music entertainment. Things have been made so simple, but even in that simplicity, something special has been lost – much like replacing a visit to the big screen, with popcorn and slushy, to streaming at home over the flat screen. Yes simpler, easier, but the build-up, the dress up and the excitement of a night out at the cinema lost.

So, whilst on this road trip, I told Daniel of a story, behind a particular song. It was on a trip to Durban with my parents in the early nineties. This after my parents had just spoilt my brother and me by buying us our very own Walkman. They took us to select our very first cassette from a local music store (yes, I explained what a cassette is). Not very clued up, I decided to find the artist of one of the songs I heard playing repeatedly on the airwaves. It was a catchy tune, and I enjoyed singing to it. There was no Shazam to help identify the song back then, so I had to give it my best in singing to the shop assistant. I think I did alright because I was directed to the Michael Jackson’s ‘Dangerous’ Album, the one that debuted at number 1 of the top 200 billboard in 1991. The entire trip back from Durbs to Bloem, I was treated to the sound of the “King of Pop”. As soon as the iconic single ‘Black or White’ played, it got me jamming to Daniel’s initial embarrassment, but he quickly joined in. I am quite sure we portrayed the stereotypical picture of persons in a car jamming to their favourite tune, blissfully unaware of the world around them.

The song, ‘Black or White’ got me thinking about part of a conversation I had in my office some time ago. Much like the evolution of music, there has (hopefully) been an evolution in how discipline is managed at school. Many would claim that discipline in yesteryear was so much easier. If you were like me, you did not go through a day without getting a ‘jack’. I dreaded going to writing class (of all things), because I got ‘caned’ every single lesson. I’m actually a bit traumatised, because my writing teacher seemed to take some glee in dishing out his best effort on my behind... Easy fix for him. He jacked me, he handled the matter, but it changed nothing for me. To this day my handwriting is poor. I inherited it from my father, and he from his father before him. Daniel is also ‘cursed’ with untidy handwriting, and I have had to explain this to teachers as well.

Discipline at home is not black or white, and discipline at school is not either. The consequence should of course be fitting of the offense, but that is not the decisive factor by a long shot. There are multiple considerations like history and track record, context and background, age and maturity, and intended outcomes. A one size fits all approach (between 1 and 6 of the best) does not work. That is how it was applied to us when we were at school. Be it bad behaviour or learning a learning disorder, be it home circumstances or socio-economic grouping, the cane was intended to fix it all – it did not.

It was however much easier taking a jack, than having to sit detention, or worse, have a conversation with your parents after the teacher had called them reporting some miscreant behaviour. When adults are on the same page, discipline is managed easier. For adults to be on the same page, we need to understand that policy in terms of discipline is just a guideline and there is always scope for the application of consequence. Suspending a learner for a “grievous” offence, relegating him to his house for a week, where he can laze about the couch and watch TV whilst his single parent is at work, hardly seems a consequence. However, sitting in the front office for a week, being forced to

attend school, do homework delivered by teachers, and put in graft seems much more appropriate. What works for one does not work for the other. Sometimes I will call parents and inform them of miscreant behaviour, but other parents I won't, because I know it entails a beating for their son. Policy would dictate that I treat both the same.

So, whilst my children will not have the opportunity to physically visit the music store or the video shop because "times they have a changed", they will still get to hear and watch the 'golden oldies' like Blink 182, Green Day, U2, ACDC, Top Gun, Rambo and Rocky. You cannot put a price tag on the good things in life.

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 155 | 20 May **My Mom - The Original ChatGPT.**

I recall having to prepare for orals or written assignments back in the day. The teacher would usually set the task, giving you a week's notice. As with any youngster the week would fly by and then at point 99, on Sunday evening, before the MNET movie, memory of the looming task would come flooding back sending shivers down my spine and panic throughout the household. My mom inevitably jumped into action trying to find the appropriate cardboard for the poster, or past Huisgenoot magazines for clippings, whilst my dad thoroughly irritated by the situation and interruption to the Sunday movie, would start lecturing and bemoaning my lax and indifferent attitude to my academics.

None of us can deny that there was a time when our mothers unashamedly did our tasks for us. Yes, our mothers would spend endless hours preparing orals for us. The content and structure were carefully set out in neat cue cards, and we then proudly delivered speeches using eloquent words, and quoting famous people we had never heard of before. The same could be said for our posters or models that were built. Our moms would spend hours preparing the model volcano, using papier mache, and then preparing everything needed for a successful eruption at school. Our moms were passing grades one, two and three all over again. Those who had very committed mothers did well, and those who did not, barely scraped by...

Looking back now, I laugh when I think about my mother waiting excitedly to receive her mark, and then having the 'audacity' of sending me back to the teacher to query how they arrived at the mark that they did. She insisted there was no way the mark awarded was remotely a reflection of the quality produced – in her opinion of course. At break time standing together, we of course had no qualms about accusing each other of not doing our own work, whilst at the same time defending our mother's work, as our own. Moms were the original workaround to our homework 'problem'. As life progressed, we desperately tried to hold on to the last vestiges of our very own personal assistant managing our homework schedules, tasks and assessments so professionally.

Once we started carrying our own school bags, there was a concurrent drop in our marks. Having to learn the basics of preparing tasks and orals later, rather than sooner, was a proving to be a steep learning curve. It was akin to a mother bird kicking her fledgling out of the nest in a fall or fly moment. Save to say, most of us came crashing down through the branches, our egos battered and bruised, for returning abysmal marks. The next giant step forward for most of us was the introduction of Microsoft Encarta – the digital multimedia encyclopaedia and search engine published by Microsoft from 1993 to 2009 on CD-ROM. Everything available, about anything the school could throw at us, and all in one convenient place, and on top of that available at the click of the mouse. The downfall was that the manual labour mom performed, in doing the organising, in the printing the research, now had to be done by us. The introduction of Encarta into schools meant that teachers quickly 'wised up', and had to adapt how projects were set out, placing different parameters on what resources we could use, and the referencing needed. It marked the beginning of the end of the simply copying and pasting info the teachers had previously not seen.

As we progressed into the senior grades, our beloved Encarta was replaced by this new and awesome tool called the internet, and its community-driven platforms like Wikipedia. I recall I was 'blown away' by the scale of this new resource, the internet, and its ability to provide more dynamic

and updated information than ever before. The sheer scale itself was quite intimidating, and it proved quite cumbersome to limit what exactly I was looking for and wanting to report on, in an essay for instance. The choice of photos, one more impressive than the next, led to my father having to replace multiple ink cartridges, for my lack of deciding as to which picture would be best suited to the project I was producing. Whilst searching for information was easy, I found it difficult to discern what information to use, and it became increasingly difficult to distinguish between what was factual and accurate and what was not. To make things worse, I was operating in a space beyond even the realm of help of my mother... It was at university that I first encountered technology like Turnitin to counter plagiarism, encourage creativity, and mitigate any thought of the overzealous use of AltaVista, Yahoo and Excite, the big three search engines before Google.

And now the rise of ChatGPT. I personally don't see ChatGPT as anything else other than a tool. A tool to supplement my own creativity, ideas and thought processes. In writing my newsletters, I promised myself, I would never present a piece written by anyone, or anything else. It takes me approximately two hours a week to write a reflection. I could use ChatGPT, and a reflection would be produced in approximately 5 minutes. That however takes away from the authenticity of each reflection. Further to this, I am not willing to pass my identity onto a learning artificial intelligence. That does not mean, that I don't use ChatGPT as a tool to assist me in other areas – like creating a value proposition to possible donors of the school. I was not trained to do this, but in using the tool I have empowered myself. Of course, like with everything else, a balanced approach is key. My mother always said the word “te” in front of anything is bad – te veel, te baie, te hard ens. The same is applicable to any of these workarounds from too much mother, to too much Encarta, to too much Google, to too much ChatGPT.

The past has already caught up with the introduction of ZeroGPT and Scribbr, a free AI Detector that can be used to identify AI-generated content of ChatGPT and Copilot. There is no going back. We need to guard against fear for the future and rather embrace the responsible use of the plethora of tools available to supplement our own special, peculiar and quaint qualities of being distinctly unique and unlike anyone or anything else... Now, knowing boys, and knowing they will take the easiest way out, we need to find ways protect them, educate them, and promote their responsible use of technology.

Having copied my reflection into both ZeroGPT and Scribbr, I am pleased to report that both indicated my text is human written with both indicating 0% of text likely being AI-generated. You get my point...

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires, “Do Justice, Love Mercy and walk Humbly with God”.

Issue 156 | 28 May 2025

In the past week I visited another school in Bloemfontein. I was met by an excited headmistress, who could not wait to take me on a walk-around of her school. What struck me most was how proudly she spoke of her school. She pointed out projects and initiatives that had been initiated by the school as well as the community. I was impressed by the support they received from their parent body in looking after their little school. It reminded me of a similar theme unfolding all around the country, particularly in underprivileged communities, where schools are beacons of hope.

Walking through the passages, the headmistress pointed out glass jars filled with soup contents, and other food hampers, used to support the children and families of her school. As you can imagine I am talking about a school less privileged than St Andrew's, its setting somewhat rural, surrounded by small holdings, and other industrial complexes. Mrs Meyer, my PA, pointed out to me several learners walking around in short pants, despite the freezing temperatures. On enquiry, these learners indicated that their families had not yet purchased long pants, and that the small clothing bank of the school, had not yet received a donation of the correct size track suit pants for them.

A group of learners of varying ages were assembled outside the school hall, eagerly waiting on our visit. The headmistress addressed those gathered. She related to the kids, that like them, in many instances, she had worn shoes passed down from siblings and family members to her. Without

exception, those seated, nodded in agreement. I quickly scanned the children, and the level of poverty and need was very evident. I explained that we were there to hand out shoes, that had come from other children in Ireland. Their faces lit up as their names were called, and each came forward to collect a pair of shoes.

In visiting many schools around the country, I have found an overwhelming sense of pride and appreciation for what they as the school community have, despite circumstance. There are educators and communities doing wonderful work out there to give their children the best on offer – and the best on offer is relative. For some it means having a multi-million sports complex, for others it simply means having a library in a mobile container.

We try and teach the boys at Saints to be mindful of what they have. This is not to guilt the boys, but rather to help them appreciate what it is that they have. It would be a pity for any learner to first encounter the realities of our country, on leaving the gates of the school for the last time as a learner. Service is central to our mission at Saints. Turning out mindful men, acutely aware of their responsibility to build our communities is critical to building our nation.

In many instances, it is just natural that we try to protect our children from some of the harsh realities out there, but in so doing, we are doing an injustice to them. Mindfulness and appreciation should form part of all core home values. The next time your son turns his nose up for your cooked meal because he wants takeaways, get him to go hand that very uneaten meal to someone on the street. The next time he mutters something about the boots you buy him, send him to Freedom Park to hand his old pair of boots to the kids playing barefoot in and amongst the stone and glass. A reality check occasionally is a good thing. When last has your son had one?

Every week I am treated to stories that put a smile on my face. I wanted to share this one with you. A boy arrived at my office and asked if he could leave a gift for my PA. Several minutes later he returned enquiring from Mrs Meyer if she had got his gift. Inquisitively she asked, “what gift”, to which he replied, “you’re sitting on it”. On standing up he went on to say, “it’s stuck to your bum”. Mrs Meyer had to pry the glue and glitter covered paper from herself. Safe to say, her dress sparkled for the rest of the day.

As Always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires “Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God”.

Issue 157 | 4 June 2025

What's your favourite?

I get the opportunity to travel all around the country to market St Andrews. Taking a road trip and enjoying a ‘cuppa joe’ is one of my favourite past times. Those who travel with me know that I can’t drive past an interesting sign or not turn off on a forgotten road to the middle of nowhere. Time is my friend when I am on the road.

The result is that I have come to explore hidden gems that I previously ‘flew’ by in my younger days - you know those days when one has less patience, and getting to your destination was your primary focus. Nowadays my holiday or adventure begins when I start my vehicle. My wife equates my driving to Hoke Colburn - the Chaperone in Driving Miss Daisy...

My expeditions mean that I can tell you the best pies in SA are sold at Ou Meul Bakery and Cafe in Riviersonderend. The best grape juice is sold in bottles at Mariner’s Wharf, Hout Bay. The best rooster koek is sold at Oude Post Bistro & BP Buffeljagsrivier. The best fish and chips are sold at Fish on the Rocks in Hout Bay. Great coffee is sold at Snobs Coffee Roastery and Rooms in Trompsburg. Lovely biltong is sold at The Fat Butcher in Ventersburg. The best hot chocolate is sold at the Grille Shack enroute to Gordons Bay. I can also tell you that SA’s busiest goldmine is the Shell Ultra City Kroonstad. I think they print money there - that place is always busy - and it is the perfect distance between Bloem and Johannesburg - so every family and their dog, and every tour bus carrying learners on some sporting excursion stops there. These joints having a winning recipe.

During the week, post one of our local marketing trips to a feeder school, we found ourselves in a coffee shop. The coffee shop, a new franchise to Bloem, was one which I introduced to Mr Hobson and Mr van Wyk, on tour to Cape Schools Week in Cape Town - my first as Head of Saints. Eager to support my new school and to impress coach and pupil, I wanted to share in some of Cape Town highlights/secrets with my new brethren. I spared no expense in taking them around the Cape, sharing hidden gems like Borruso's Pizza joint - home to the best pizza in SA, Hout Bay Harbour where the Free Staters got to pose with one of the local seals, and I even got Mr Van Wyk and Mr Hobson to try and then summarily gag on some Bokkoms - a taste not so much appreciated by them.

It was there in Wynberg where I introduced my travelling partners to Bootlegger Coffee Company. So sitting over a 'cuppa joe' in Bootlegger Preller, Mr Hobson commented on the good coffee, and also the good service. He went on to comment that clearly they were strategic and intentional about how they trained staff, and who they appointed. All too often, with franchises one can replicate the look, but replicating the feel is something that wants to be done. Sitting in Bootlegger in Preller, one might as well be seated in the Bootlegger in Kenilworth - the taste and service both great. Clearly Bootlegger have successfully bottled their winning recipe.

Turning out a winning product requires attention to detail, and being intentional about what it is that you want to achieve. At Saints we are intentional about hammering home and paying attention to the small things. This is why the look and feel of a Saints boy is recognizable around the country. A Saints boy carries himself in a certain way, and you can expect a certain set of behaviours from a Saints boy. There is a gravitas associated with a Saints boy that is palpable. Further to this, the boys (and their parents) buy into what it is that we are trying to achieve - turning out good father's and husbands and men who can proudly take their place in society and contribute to making the world a better place. We focus on the small things, because then the big things take care of themselves.

Humility, integrity, well-mannered, friendly, trustworthy, loyal, respectful, tenacious, courageous and helpful are all words that come to mind when I think about a Saints boy. This is why the brand of Saints is so recognizable and so appealing - it has to do with our brand ambassadors - our boys - who live the brand daily. If you want to know what we are about, speak to one of our boys. At Saints we are intentional about raising men of substance - because character never goes out of style.

Next time on the road, stop by the Whistling Bridge Café between Three Sisters and Graaf-Reinet, or Oppi-Vlak Padstal between Aberdeen and Willowmore. There you will find friendly people, good food, and a homely atmosphere – much like we have at Saints.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 158 | 18 June 2025 **Live or Capture the Moment - You choose.**

We recently visited the sprawling hills of the Zulu Kingdom. The roads were of course busier than usual, because we booked our visit the same weekend as the Comrades. The race attired, club-branded 'gangs' of focused, mission-orientated runners were palpably perplexed whenever this formally dressed and very evidently 'non-runner' commented that he would see them at the starting line at 05:45 with the first wave of runners... No I did not run, I was there for the KZN Old Boys' Reunion in the Midlands, but I did have some fun with the runners whilst having high tea at the Little Church tea garden on Van Rheenen's Pass.

The Comrades is as South African as having a braai. It is a celebration of who we are and what the 'gewone mens' can do when they push themselves. We have people from all walks of life and different ages, pushing their bodies a distance of 90km, to very breaking point. I think most of us can really appreciate how far that is, because for many South Africans we don't even have 90km worth of fuel in our car tanks. I of course prefer only running when something is chasing me. Watching the sheer raw emotion of people pushing themselves to cross the finish line before the cut off is about as real as life can get. For those wanting to do it all again next year, just when they thought, it could not get any more challenging, they will get to do it running uphill from Durbs to Maritzburg in 2026.

At the Reunion function held at the nostalgic Fern Hill Hotel, I got chatting to Kopano Malebo and Andrew Viedge about the goings-on at Saints. Andrew spoke of the time he got to meet his hero - extreme explorer / athlete - Riaan Manser. Riaan's story is amazing. He was the first person to circumnavigate the coast of Africa by bicycle, 37 000 km, through 34 countries over two years and two months. He also became the first person to kayak 5000 km around Madagascar, alone and unaided. In 2013, Riaan with his long-time girlfriend, Vasti Geldenhuys, rowed from Morocco to New York in a rowing boat alone and unaided. Imagine the kind of conversation one could have with someone like Riaan - and that is exactly what Andrew chose to do instead of quickly snapping a shot on his cell with Riaan.

Andrew went on to explain that he has made a point of living the moment instead of capturing the moment - a distinct difference. All too often we miss the moment in trying to capture the moment. I have fallen into the trap on many occasions as well. Reflecting on that now, it is difficult to explain, but it would seem that we are either too afraid of losing the moment, or too caught up in wanting to share the moment, or perhaps even so connected to our devices, that we are unable to live the moment. This led our conversation into two salient points of 'life' at Saints.

We have recently taken the decision to update our electronic device / cell phone policy. In reflection we could not justifiably conclude for learners in Grades 1-7 to have a cell phone at school, whilst there were only a few reasons for the boys in Grades 8-12 to have a cell phone at school. The result was that we implemented a policy whereby grades 1-7 are not allowed to have a cell phone at school and grades 8-12 were required to turn their devices off during the academic day - only having their phones on, when given explicit permission to do so for academic reasons in a class setting. After initial 'subdued' pushback on the part of a limited number of senior boys, and having explained the benefits to them, the boys bought in, and we noticed the following:

1. The boys were again actively engaging each other in conversation at break times.
2. The number of ball games at break times increased threefold.
3. The number of cyber issues - bullying and sharing of memes and inappropriate content at school substantially reduced.
4. The awareness of the boys returned to normal - standing for and greeting adults and visitors - because their eyes were not glued to screens.
5. The fact that learners were not able / were not allowed to constantly check phones, proved to be a welcome relief for many, and it is my view that in many instances their levels of anxiety dropped.

The restriction on the use of cell phones coincided with so many positives that the increase in muddled and torn school clothes, the smell of sweaty boys and the odd injury at break times for a wayward tackle during ballgames was but a small (and welcome), 'price' to pay. Secondly, with our emphasis on really getting to know the boys through active interest and building relationships, the mood of the school and the way we do things have changed. The plethora of positives that come from taking time to get to know each other cannot be underestimated. The way we do discipline and the way boys and staff interact with each other has changed for the positive. There is not a 'distance' between the staff and the boys, and each can hold the other to higher expectations based on mutual respect and trust.

We went on to discuss that for some, the sad reality is that their experience at school was not great. Much of it can be attributed to school being a 'hard' place, and the boarding house being even 'harder'. Asked about my view, it is rather simple - respect is earned, and what is generally acceptable in the common family set up is my guiding principle for what is acceptable at school and the boarding house. For example, families by default are built on relationships, where Dad is the authority figure. Big brother does not get to tell little brother what to do, but rather is held responsible and accountable for him. For those of you who are older siblings, you will know what I mean. Big brother does not get exclusive use to the microwave or the TV or other amenities whilst the little guy does not. Big brother does not run the house, Dad does.

We have been very intentional about changing the way we do things. Much has to do with the role of the adults and what we allow or accept, as well as that of the boys buying into a new or different way of doing things -one based on relationships and mutual respect, where the school and the boarding house, is for all intents and purposes a 'home away from home'.

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy, and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 159 | 23 June **It's not the child...**

Since being back in the Free State, I have found myself on the occasional road trip. I love the conversations that come up when on these trips, because it almost inevitably means some time for philosophising about life or work. Add in a good coffee and a biltong along the way, and road just seems that much shorter.

On a recent road trip, I found myself in the company of Mr AJ Mouton. He is that colleague, that you can call at any time for help, and he will be there no questions asked. He mentioned to me, that when people find out he is a teacher, they inevitably stereotypically enquire as to how teachers make it these days considering the youth we have to deal with. His response was spot on, and I totally agree with his sentiment that "the kids are the best part of the job". To be quite honest, and you may not want to hear it, the department is also not our biggest headache. My father used to say, "you don't get a problem child, you get a problem parent".

I maintain the best part of my job is working with the boys. You may be shocked, but in many instances, they are much more emotionally intelligent than we were when we were at school. In many instances as pupils we had no opinion because what the teachers (or mom and dad) said was law. I often remind parents, and men who were with me at school, that had cell phones existed back when we were young, many of us would have found ourselves in prison. Yes, things may have been significantly simpler when we were young, but all in all, I reckon the youth are doing well navigating the challenges they face today, compared to those we had to face.

I vehemently disagree with the assertion that teaching is so much more difficult these days because of the children. Conversely, I would argue, that if anything, the teaching profession is more complex than ever before because parents have lost the ability to parent. It's not cell phones, social media, or pornography, it's the parent who enables the child. It's not drugs and alcohol, it's the parent who does not notice the change or understand the movement of their child. I agree that times have changed yes, but if you are parenting the way your parents did, you are doing it wrong.

A father shared a story with me in my office, how when he was younger, his father continually 'bailed' him out at school whenever he found himself in trouble. His father then bailed him out after school, until a point where his father could no longer, and at around age 30, he found himself in prison. He did not want the same for his son and wanted to do things differently to what his father had done. He maintained, that if his father had allowed him to feel consequences when he was younger and at school, things would have turned out differently.

In contrast to the father above, the most difficult part of my job and any of teacher / coach for that matter, is dealing with a parent where the world is against them or against their son. They point fingers at everything and everyone. They are constantly aggrieved, and nothing is ever good enough. They challenge and fight the system and conjure up perceived injustice and unfairness when it comes to them. My father taught me that one should be careful of pointing fingers, because "when you point a finger, there are four pointing back at you". The inevitable loser is the child. Luckily at Saints, this type of parent is the anomaly.

What is not an anomaly is that our boys are encouraged to question and challenge the norm (in a respectful way). This is what makes us different. In an era of misinformation and disinformation, artificial intelligence, and algorithms, our boys are taught to question and interrogate opinions, views and 'truths' for themselves. At school we say, "there are always three sides to a story: yours, mine and the truth somewhere in-between". Take for instance the narrative and view of international media on the conflicts globally. What is being reported on and covered by CNN and Aljazeera are two very

different narratives. The enquiring mind will process and interrogate information from both, before formulating an opinion.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I can tell you this, show me the parent, and I will be able to tell you with around a 99% point of certainty how the child will turn out. There is of course always the 1% exception to the rule, for good or bad.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 160 | 18 July

What's so special?

I recently attended the U12 Inter Provincial Hockey Tournament hosted in KZN. Winter is of course synonymous with hockey and rugby weeks being hosted around the country. As per South African tradition, families converge on schools tasked with hosting these IPT events. In many ways these weeks signify the peak of the Winter season, with many of these winter sports winding down after their next three or four third term fixtures, marking the shift to cricket, water polo and other Summer sporting activities. In many of the schools this is also the time that soccer gets some much-needed time in the sun.

At breakfast on the first morning, Brett the owner of the accommodation we were staying at, moved around the tables introducing himself and went on to enquire from guests details as to their stay in the midlands. A mere hospitable gesture quickly turned into conversation, as couple after couple stated their 'provincial representation' by extension through their sons, but more so, the topic of school attended by the player (and father) came to dominate the subject matter of the conversation. Not surprisingly at all, the schools mentioned were all of the 'traditional' boys' schools - Selborne, Maritzburg, Michaelhouse, Grey College and St Andrews to name but a few. The boys of those parents were now second-generation ambassadors for their father's alma-mater.

There was an immediate connection and shared respect for the institutions in question. Being of a similar vintage some of us reminisced over past inter school fixtures and went on to share in appreciation for what our schools meant for us. I could not help but think that the meeting over breakfast is rather symbolic of a greater connection that plays out daily - be it some remote lost destination, a small family-owned business or a corporate (international) giant. There is a brotherhood or essence that exists between fellow old boys and schools of this ilk, that few who have not attended understand. There is a 'unwritten' understanding, respect and appreciation for each other. Even parents of sons who have not attended a traditional boys' school, find themselves pulled into the culture and ethos of the institution and grow to be lifelong supporters.

It's an undeniable fact that boys' schools offer world class education and open doors to opportunities after school - that comparatively few others do. I would argue that schooling at the traditional boys' schools, is now more popular than ever. One simply needs to look at the stats - the applications to, and the waiting lists at each of these schools, are astronomical - and this is because these schools offer something others don't (Unique Selling Point) - boys only education. This fact is very much to the ire of very vocal opponents to monastic boys' school education, hammering on chauvinistic and toxic masculinity as the basis of their argument for the elimination of these institutions - whilst simultaneously disregarding excellence and proven achievement. Without getting into a back and forth with the nay-sayers, it is quite clear that while parents still may exercise choice, they will continue choosing this education for the benefits they see as important to them. Much of this boys' school community - made of men and women will disagree with assertions that an all-boys environment is a 'bad' thing, rather holding that these institutions turn out men of substance and integrity. It is irresponsible to make the assertion that institutions such as those in question reinforce male patriarchy. In a sadly confused world, we need to do more than ever to turn out good husbands and fathers - what else they become is just a by-product.

I am proud to have attended an all-boys' school, I am proud to be working in an all-boys' school, and I am proud to have my son in an all-boys' school. I would have it no other way. I know that opportunities after school will be readily available to my son for the brotherhood that exists amongst the boys and men, and for the sense of family and community that exists beyond the walls of the

school. Having asked some past Head Boys of boys' schools what made these schools special and why members of the community continued to choose them over Co-Ed or Home School options, the responses of Justin Van Winkel of Wynberg Boys', Kenneth Mould of Grey College, Ryan McLaren of Grey College and Gregg Hobson of St Andrew's were as follows:

"Society needs young men who can and are willing to lead a healthy traditional family, take responsibility, and are resilient enough to cope with life and still keep going. It's a unique set of requirements compared to females. An all-boys school is geared to achieve these outcomes in numerous ways".

"When studying law, I remember the relationship between partners (in a partnership) being described as one "of the highest order like between brothers."

"The absence of girls causes boys of different personalities and from different backgrounds to abandon a certain level of pretence during their daily trials and tribulations, inevitably resulting in a sense of brotherhood. They realise that "none of us is as good as all of us."

"In each other, they see themselves - familiar elements of the obstacles they themselves face as they try to navigate through their school lives. They soon realise that they share a common purpose, a common fate. This makes their bond both very strong and very fragile".

"By their nature boys' schools can provide a unique environment for boys to develop character and confidence in themselves through a variety of shared experiences and positive mentoring opportunities".

On arriving to breakfast on the last morning, Brett enthusiastically called me over to introduce me to Richard, a friend of his, an Old Andrean, and past head boy of the Junior school. It was dejavu as we spent the conversation reminiscing on fond memories and shared appreciation.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 161 | 30 July **The Windsock.**

Last Sunday, members of the community gathered for a prayer walk around the campus. The goal was to ask God for His blessing and protection over His school for the term in advance. I have often said to staff and parents, that had God not been present on this campus, there were multiple instances where things could have gone horribly wrong.

Every so often there is a flourish of excitement on campus, more so than usual, when preparations begin on our Chapel field. It's not when Mr Hobson visits the pitch for the first time post Winter in anticipation of the cricket season, or when Mr Brand starts pacing out the respective mini rugby and hockey fields. It is something rather unique to St Andrew's.

The corridors at Saints are generally noisy when boys are moving around. I regard it as a sign of a happy school. Every now and then something happens that ratchets up the excitement by a notch or two. The sound of screeches or laughter reverberate through the passages, when for instance Max, our campus cat, manages to ambush and then play around with a small mouse or bird to the bewilderment of the grade one and two onlookers. Being men of action, the Saints men jump into action to rescue the item of prey - much to the disgust of Max.

Similarly, the unmistakable sound of an approaching helicopter sends the school into a buzz. The boys rush out to the field, where the ambulance and the ground crew have already demarcated the set landing pad. The excitement builds as the helicopter approaches, garnering the attention of the school community. There is just something 'cool' about getting a front row seat in watching the helicopter land on our very own fields. The roar of the rotor blades and the sheer force of the downdraft, send grass and dust into the air. It is something to behold.

The pilot makes it look so easy. I recall buying one of the first RC helicopters on the market some fifteen years ago. They were much different to those you can now buy from every store, in a plethora of different shapes and sizes. They are also much more affordable and easier to fly. The original RC

helicopters had no auto stabilizers like these modern versions do. Take flying a drone for instance, you hardly need to do anything, as the drone basically does all the work for you in keeping it in the air.

Being a PlayStation Ace, who had conquered many an army on TV in my attack helicopter, I was brimming with confidence. Having assembled the helicopter, I could hardly contain my excitement as the battery charged for several hours. Finally, I was able to position my helicopter out on the synthetic cricket pitch on the school field and showcase my pilot skills. As I throttled up, the Helicopter lifted off the ground, and I touched down a split second later. I repeated this nervously several times and then decided to take to the sky. My maiden flight was a total disaster. Having totally disregarded the wind, and any form of understanding of the physics involving the main rotor and tail rotor, my helicopter crashed to the ground, sending pieces of the helicopter in all directions. It was an expensive lesson to learn.

During our prayer walk around the campus, my eye caught sight of a newly installed, large red windsock on the top of Medi-Clinic. So often I had watched the helicopter land on the campus, that I had taken the importance of such a simple beacon for granted. It dawned on me, that without the windsock the pilot would have no indication of wind conditions (speed and direction) on the ground, the direction of approach needed, and importantly whether the wind is within safe operating limits. The purpose of the windsock is to provide situational awareness for pilots, especially at unfamiliar landing sites.

I could not help but draw a comparison of pilot and windsock to us and God. For the pilot to operate the helicopter safely, he needs to keep his eye on the windsock. For us to navigate this life, we need to keep our eye on God. How else can we develop situational awareness and read the signs to navigate the crosswinds we will inevitably face, if we don't operate in the security of keeping our eyes securely fixed on God. Just like the windsock, God will provide us with invaluable insight and direction, to help us navigate our journey safely. The ever-present input of God, like the windsock, in times of quiet or turbulence, stands as a constant reminder of the fact that we cannot operate without him. To do so would be to throw caution to the wind. You may think you have it all in control, but in the end, you could just be a PlayStation Ace.

As an aside; I am sure that God is just as excited when he watches us pilot our helicopters. As always, it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires: "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God

162 | 6 August

What's on the menu?

Table Mountain is synonymous with Cape Town. It is regarded as the 8th natural wonder of the world. Cape Town has also recently been voted the best city in the world. It is the place everyone wants to be right... Starting off as a young married couple in Cape Town, life was hard. The sad reality about Cape Town, is that it comes at a premium. They say you pay for what you get. I can accept that. No potholes, a relatively decent public transport system, metro police, good infrastructure, sprawling wine farms, beaches, and loads to do.

The Victoria & Alfred Waterfront is one of the popular destinations if you are looking to go to have a pint at a famous pub or enjoy some fine wine and dining by candlelight at one of the many five-star restaurants. The atmosphere especially over those unending summer days, is something very special. Tourists galore, live music, people dressed to the nines, and parties being hosted on catamarans, all against the backdrop of Table Mountain, make for a spectacular occasion for any person frequenting the waterfront – especially local and international tourists.

Tourists love the Waterfront, but locals know better. During my time in Cape Town, we visited the Waterfront only occasionally. The tourists are much more inclined to sit in heavy traffic, waiting their opportunity to visit this thrilling destination and discover the exciting locale. Trust me, for the locals, this surreal feeling, quickly feeling wains. The food and drink on offer are good, but it is tailored to tourists. Food and drink elsewhere are just as good, if not better, but at a fraction of the price. Take for instance Fish on the Rocks or Kalkies, their fish and chips are the best in Cape Town. Dirty and dingy, they serve local food that is lekker. The Brass Bell or Forries, are iconic pubs serving a diverse range of liquid refreshments. Wonderful alternatives, perhaps not as flashy, but certainly have their own charm and ambience compared to the overpriced and overcrowded V&A Waterfront.

My father always says, “life is about choices”. Choosing a school, is like choosing a plate of food. Why pay more for the same plate... Certain establishments, cater for a particular type of clientele. Tourist spots may dazzle, but the local establishments serve real flavour, heart, and value - without the price tag. A primary consideration for me when choosing a spot is value for money, as well as taste and quality. Another consideration is whether I feel comfortable coming as myself – civvies or casual wear, or am made to feel welcome and also like I fit in. One quickly gets to know when you don’t quite belong... Although my position affords occasional enjoyment of attending lavish functions at high end establishments, I much prefer just wearing my slops and having a steak at a regular joint with the common folk. On top of that, having a meal with my family, is first prize. If that means spending the evening at the Spur, because my young kids can run around and get their face painted, whilst we eat a burger and chips of the menu, that’s ok by me.

I often say to parents, **not every school is the right school for every boy**. You need to choose a school where your son will be happy, where he is made to feel welcome, where he can be himself, where you as a parents feel comfortable standing next to other parents on the side lines, and where you can relate to the values and the ethos of the school. I tell parents that they must do their homework, to discover where the best value for money is, and where they are made to feel part of the family. Most importantly, I ask parents what it is that their son wants to do. You’ve heard the saying, “Happy wife, happy life”... Trust me it is way more apt to say, “happy child, happy life”. I am sure no parent will disagree.

In reflecting, Bloem is no Cape Town, and that’s ok. What it does offer is everything a city has to offer, but with a small-town feeling. I realise this is something those who know nothing of town living will understand. It takes me 5 minutes to get anywhere in Bloem and 10 hours to get to the sea. In Cape Town, one spends 10 hours in the car a week to get to work, but it takes 5 minutes to get to the beach (if you reside on the peninsula). In Cape Town, 3-bedroom house costs you more than R3 million in a decent suburb, whilst for the same in the Free State you can buy a couple hundred hectares and some sheep. In Cape Town, the artisan food stalls serve a variety of delicacies, whilst in Bloem they braai the best steaks. It’s all about choices... Just because you pay more, does not always mean you are getting more. Bloem holds its own with the best. Saints stands back for no other school.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; “Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God”.

Issue 163 | 13 August 2025

Are you listening to me? Why have you not replied? Can you put it down!

One day whilst fishing with my father at sea, I had made myself comfortable on several life jackets and just opted to take in the sun and the sound of the sea. It was one of those days when the fish had just gone ‘off the bite’. Having drifted off, I felt a heavy tug at my line and immediately sat up like my favourite wrestler the Undertaker. On attending to the matter at hand, my cell phone was flung overboard. I watched in dread, rather helplessly, as my phone sunk, disappearing out of sight into the murky depths. Maybe one day it will wash out as a relic, evidence of a primitive civilization that once fished these waters.

After what can only be described as panic and a spike in anxiety, much like an addict suffering withdrawal symptom after going ‘cold turkey’, for not being able to check my phone, I had to relegate myself to this new normal – a holiday without my cell phone. What initially seemed unbearable, in having to try and notify all my contacts, that if for some reason they were looking for me, they would need to do so through my wife, the panic slowly dissipated into a sense of peace that my conscious being had long since forgotten. The habit of constantly frisking myself for my device, or the unknown need to suddenly stop what I was doing to check my device just for in case, or the worry about what work email awaited five days prior Christmas, was replaced by a sense of freedom difficult to comprehend.

Undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges we face in this modern world is our addiction to our cell phones. We are unable to function normally, unless we have device in hand. Mental health issues have spiked, suicides are through the roof, and there is a greater sense of loneliness and depression than ever before. This new drug has been normalised because we all do it, as opposed to being frowned upon, like a heroine or dagga addict. Whilst there are not chemical effects, studies have shown excessive use leads to behavioural changes and brain alterations like those seen in drug use. Have you ever thought to yourself, my child is different when they don’t have their phone with them?

My point exactly. As adults, we have completely lost the plot when it comes to managing screen time – our own and that of our children.

The sad reality is despite good intentions and effort to mitigate use, every day requirements necessitate (the almost) constant connection. We have been conditioned to prioritise checking and connecting with our devices to the degree of absolute exhaustion. Work follows you home, people follow you home, service providers follow you home, even SARS follows you home. There is nowhere left to hide. The only way to do so is to switch off your device, because the reality is that most of us don't have the self-discipline to manage our urge to connect. If you wake up in the morning and the first thing you do before getting down on your knees, is to check your phone, there is a problem. If responding to a message whilst placing a family member 'on hold' real time, there is a problem.

Now, if we as adults struggle to manage our device use, how much more difficult for our children. I can't even say that our children get totally absorbed, because the reality is that as adults, we are ourselves totally absorbed. In many instances we have 'outsourced' our entertainment and even our relationships to our devices. Worse so, we have in many instances outsourced our parenting to devices. It started with the television, and plonking our children down in front of Barney and KTV, to now relegating our children to surrogate parents in the form of Face Book, TikTok, WhatsApp, and a whole world of potentially dodgy paedophiles and creeps, just waiting to take our place. The situation is fraught with red flags that we chose to ignore at our peril.

We recently took the decision to put a stop to junior school learners bringing devices to school, and to limit the use of devices for senior school learners outside of academic time. It gives the learners (and even forces) the opportunity to 'disconnect' – much like putting your device on flight mode when one climbs onto an aeroplane. There is a no-nonsense approach to what is expected from aviation authorities. I wish I could get parents to adopt the same approach to assisting us with managing and monitoring devices given to their children. An unmonitored device is like leaving a loaded gun lying around – someone is going to get hurt. Parents, your child is exposed, and you are failing in your duty of care if your child has a unchecked device. I can only tell the boys so many times that if they can't do it in front of their parents, they should not do it. When last did you check what conversations your child is having? When last did you check what pictures and videos they are looking at or even sending (of themselves)? When last did you check the content of the games they are playing?

Did you know that children aged 7+ can be sued in the name of their parent or legal guardian under South African law, while those aged 11–18 can be sued in their own name. The acid tests a parent would face is whether they were acting as a responsible, and reasonable person, with the best interest of the child at heart. As an adult, you cannot plead ignorance to the very real dangers your child faces when using an electronic device. Much like a child playing with a gun, the adult is expected to understand that there is a degree of risk, and act to mitigate that risk. The question of course is whether you can answer to the affirmative. The law is complex and far reaching. Accountability in this instance cannot be outsourced to a third party (or even the school). We share in the responsibility of protecting our children when it comes to the use and abuse of electronic devices.

Perhaps it is time to tell our kids to go play outside again. Perhaps it's time to start conversing with our spouse before bed again. As I expect of the boys, not to do something their parents would not approve of, would you be comfortable with your spouse viewing your device? As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 164 | 19 August 2025

All fingers are not equal, but none is more important than the other.

People often tell me that my computer is "sorry". More specifically my PA, Mrs Meyer, will call out from her office, as the clicks of my keyboard start intensifying both in speed and sound. By my own admission, my typing is something to behold. Like a child with ADD, I have taught myself splinter techniques and manage my typing by using three fingers only – my two index fingers and my right thumb. I am certainly not as eloquent as those who type away without looking at the screen whilst their fingers effortlessly dance across the keyboard.

I wish I had learnt to type correctly at school. More so, I wish I could bring myself to find time to upskill myself by using something as simple as an App. I watch my son Daniel learning to speak German on an App called Duolingo – he is now past one hundred days on an unbroken streak. He tells me his next goal is 200 days. Whilst it is a small start, the 20 minutes or so he spends on focused and deliberate practise and learning quickly add up to 10 000 hours, the common benchmark for mastering something. My problem of course is that I have probably expended 10 000 hours already reinforcing my poor typing – I am now an expert at doing it the wrong way.

I recall when I first started at Saints, I watched as grade 8 learners approached the altar of the Chapel, and were required to light a candle as part of the rites of passage and symbolism at the school. These learners were handed matches by Father Ashe, and I watched on in disbelief as the boys struggled with lighting a match. Something as simple as lighting a match, is a skill many of our youngsters lack. I was fortunate enough to be called on to braai often for the family, whether whilst caravanning, or camping or just for Sunday lunch as a youngster. I am similarly passing down the family tradition to Daniel. Does your son know how to light a match and start a family braai?

Two weekends ago, I sat on the patio of the Saxon in conversation with Derek Holmes – Old Boy of the school. We were discussing all things Saints, and the important role of the institution in the lives of the boys whilst at school, and the role of the Old Boys Association post school. Derek likened the St Andrew's community to that of a hand (well from my listening to his business insights). The hand, other than our brain, is one of the most amazing features of what it means to be human. We use our hands to interact with the world, use tools, manipulate objects and to communicate for instance.

On your hand you have five fingers, each unique and each with its own function. When working together, the hand can achieve a variety of goals, it is otherwise unable to do, if each finger pulled in another direction and did its own thing. Additionally, when a finger is injured, we strap it and look after it. The stronger fingers compensate by looking after the injured finger – we don't simply just chop off the injured finger. Being surrounded by different, but like-minded individuals or teams, the hand is strong. Having five thumbs would not be very useful. The same is applicable to school, business, and life – strength, unity and excellence in diversity.

The signature handshake of the school, using five interlocking fingers, affectionately known by some as the 'claw', is such an apt reminder and symbolic representation of the importance of each of the five fingers – boys, staff, parents, Old Boys and God. Each of these are inseparable, and each play an important role in the daily happenings at Saints. It is easy to take for granted the ease of function as these fingers seamlessly work together, in the absence of any form of impairment - the result of a missing or damaged finger.

Historically, the French, are responsible for the disrespect associated with the middle finger. During the Battle of Agincourt, the English soldiers used longbows, which were powerful weapons. The French, fearing these bows, would cut off the middle fingers of captured English soldiers. Without this finger, they couldn't use their bows effectively and so were disrespected. Those English not captured, took to flipping the bird, in an act of defiance and a visible cue that they were still able to fire the formidable weapon.

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 165 | 27 August **"You will be a man my son".**

My body aching and paining, from resting horizontally too long, late in the evening I took a walk down the passage. The muscles and the joints are not so 'lekker' after the battering and bruising of multiple sporting injuries, and the general wear and tear that sets in after 40. Sleep is another thing that seems to be evading me now these days. It got me thinking... My mother always says, "Oud word is nie vir sussies nie".

As I made my way down the corridor, the house was quiet, the family was fast asleep and even Chrissy (my Dog), merely glanced at me, not caring much for my midnight stroll, at the expense of having to exit the covers of Daniel's bed. Having had a particularly rough week, I could very easily

have lulled myself into a sense of feeling sorry for myself. It then struck me, that this very scenario had played out multiple times when I was younger – as it probably does in many households.

Earlier that afternoon I was standing at the astro watching our teams compete for spots in the finals of the Bloemfontein league. There on the embankment, a 'gang' of campus resident children were riding their bicycles and having fun as they sped down the embankment onto the fields. They were having so much fun, so carefree. I felt like pulling out a bicycle and joining them in careening down the berm.

Raising our sons right, through the example we set, is the most important thing we will ever do. As I walked down the corridor, my thoughts about work commitments and expectations, the pressures of providing for the family, the sense of responsibility that comes with wanting only the best for one's family, and the reality that one's choices ripple through and directly impact those you most love, weighed heavily on me. Is this what it means to be a man? Is this what my father felt when he returned home exhausted late at night, to find a sleeping family.

Being a father and husband means that brings with it a tremendous responsibility – and men don't speak about this. In many ways one tries to keep the outside world out, to keep your family safe, and to mitigate the effects of what can be an ugly world – much like Moses holding back the red sea. One wants to be present, whilst at the same time trying to provide. One feels the need to be strong for everyone, so that you can provide a sense of security, whilst silently facing challenges and personal battles.

Taking your place as the head of the table in the household is no easy feat. It is a deeply personal journey. You try and model the behaviour you want your child to reflect, but time is never enough, and before you know it, they are their own person. You watch others grow old, and you say farewell. Soon you find yourself in the position your father and his before, once was. This is the journey of what it means to be a man. This is the journey your son will also walk.

Raising a young man, means you are not only raising your own son, but you are also raising someone else's husband and father. What kind of man is it that you want your son to be one day. What kind of father or husband do you want him to be one day. Would you be proud if you saw him emulate and model your behaviour and the example you set?

I already miss it when my son shies away from a hug (or even a kiss) as he grows into a young man. It is natural in his journey. It does not mean that I will stop trying. As he grows, we grow in a relationship that transcends friendship. We can joke, enjoy each other's company, talk sport and girls, fish together, and secretly admit our own vulnerabilities to one another. He is growing into a man, whom I much prefer spending my time with. What you see is what you get, and there are no hidden motives and agendas. It is the purest form of love between men.

I am sure that what I have said, resonates with most fathers (and mothers). Be it your son or daughter, you are raising your most precious gift, and this is also the most precious gift you will one day give to another – when your child marries or becomes a parent. Raise them right. Raise them in love. Keep it real.

It makes me so happy to see Dads spending time with their sons. Those memories are to be treasured - and as you do for your son, so he will do for his one day. As always, it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God". As always, it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 166 | 3 September

What do you say to your child when he/she gets out of the car...

The 'school run' is probably not something many people look forward to daily. The 'morning drop-off', (unless you are the exception to the norm), is characterised by what can only be described as 'organised early morning chaos'. Getting everyone ready, fed, and packed, on the correct side of clock, is the goal of all families. Inevitably one member of the family team fails this time sensitive test at least once a week raising the ire of the presiding adult. Disrupting family routine and harmony and eliciting a lecture on the road trip or a 'Ramaphosa-type' family meeting come supper time - the result

of the miscreant's actions. Whilst I have been privileged to reside on campus in the Cape and in the Free State, I have not excused myself from the daily school routine. From when Olivia was a little girl, I made a deliberate decision to prioritize the morning school custom. When residing in Wynberg, our morning routine involved me carrying Olivia on my shoulders to her little school - Mary Poppins - singing nursery rhymes. On one occasion I dressed up as Spiderman and walked her to school - to her excitement and that of her classmates. She keeps this memory as a profile picture. Later, on our walk to Wynberg Girls - our favourite time being those wet Winter days, sharing an umbrella - we always found something to chat about - be it the Poppy flowers blooming in November along the pavements, or the Egyptian geese raising their families on the sports fields.

On moving to Bloemfontein I braced myself for what the Eunice school run might look at - different, but nonetheless I was determined to hold onto the established morning tradition. Now instead of walking, we take the car. This time is sacred time for us. Both Olivia and I look forward to our morning 'road trip'. As with other folks, our daily demands require much of us, but in return, we must be intentional and prioritize time. I choose to prioritise 15 minutes of quality time with my daughter - daily - in the car. Sometimes we sit in silence, sometimes we listen to our favourite bands, sometimes we chat - it really does not matter - because it is our 'special protected time'. The promise of this time together also holds us accountable to each other - a slip here or there, means a possible trip that hangs in the balance - forcing us to synchronize our morning preparations.

Without fail, when my daughter leaves the car, I tell her to "be good, be nice and be kind" - something my mom always said to me on my way to school. In addition, I tell my daughter to "be strong and courageous for the Lord your God is with you wherever you will go. I top it off by telling her that I love her, am proud of her, and that she must kick the day's butt". It feels good when she affirms me with her own poetic alliteration in response. It gives me strength for the day and keeps things in perspective - it is her opinion (and by default that of my family) which matters most.

Be it a car trip, your appearance at a school activity, or at night putting your child to bed - prioritise time with your child, prioritise your undivided attention, and tell them you love them - daily. These days, time is perhaps not on our side, but I can assure you that quality outweighs quantity.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God."

Issue 167 | 9 September 2025

When the electric fences fail...

It was way back in 1993, when I was but a wee youngster of 10 years old, that my parents took my brother and I to watch Jurassic Park on the big screen. I consider myself a bit of a movie fundi and believe Jurassic Park to be one of the most iconic movies ever to be released on the big screen. Never had dinos been brought back to life, in what seemed to be a semi-plausible plot, complimented by awesome graphics and props, that resulted in a thrilling experience.

The plot of the movie revolves around a wealthy industrialist, John Hammond's creation of a dinosaur theme park on Isla Nublar, where he invites Alan Grant, Ellie Sattler, and Ian Malcolm to certify its safety. Save to say, not long into the movie, having been shown the awe and mystery of this beautiful setting, where majestic long neck dinos roam, things take a turn for the worse.

A hurricane and sabotage by a disgruntled programmer cause a power failure. The power failure happens to take place, just as the vehicles on safari are outside the T-Rex pen. Whilst the visitors are stranded, helplessly waiting on rescue, boredom, nightfall, the rain, and the weather set in. Who can forget the look on the faces of the children as they observe the distinct ripples in the glass of water, and the audible thud of something large underfoot. With their breathing elevated, and using their night vision, the young girl comments "where is the goat". It is at this point, that the remains of the goat drop on the roof car, and the audible gargle and growl of the T-Rex, draws our attention to the terrifying sight of this ultimate predator.

At this point, the adult in the car, scrambles to take cover, leaving the two children bewildered at the sight of the T-Rex. A few seconds later the fence is shaken and there is a crack of thick cables snapping one by one. The T-Rex steps out of the pen, unleashes an almighty roar and mayhem

ensues as cars are destroyed and a person or two is chomped. It goes without saying, that despite anything that could have happened, it was only when the fence failed, that the T-Rex broke free.

I could not help drawing a parallel of the T-Rex breaking free to what it is like raising a boy. Our job as adults – the teachers and parents – is to ensure that there are firm boundaries in place. Much like in Jurassic Park where the electric cables keep the dinos in check, so too, do boundaries when dealing with boys. Our job is to nudge them in the right direction, to allow them to shock when they push up against the boundaries, and to understand and provide a (safe) space in which they can operate. As our boys grow, so does the space they occupy in terms of size, but also the size and strength of the electric cables needed to keep them within the set parameters.

For a youngster in the lower grades, a gentle shock, will quickly get the little guy back in order. The same pen built for the little Compsognathus (chicken-sized) carnivorous dinosaur, is hardly effective when dealing with a T-Rex. As our boys grow older, the consequences for actions are so much more serious, which is why they need to clearly understand there are non-negotiables. Failure to adhere to these non-negotiables like for instance, drinking and driving, can lead to life-changing consequences. Ignoring the warning

signs like skipping a yellow traffic light, can lead to life-changing consequences. Delving into drugs can lead to life-changing consequences. This is why it is important for the boys to come to understand that there are boundaries within which to operate and hopefully as they have grown, they have learnt from past mistakes.

It is in the nature of boys to push boundaries. As adults we need to create a safe space in which they can do so. As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; “Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God

Issue 168 | 16 September 2025 **A tale of Two Opposites.**

There was a stage at school where I got more hidings, than I got pocket money – and I did at least get a R5 a week to visit the Tuck Shop. We had a tradition of ‘striping’ our tie, which entailed marking in pen the number of ‘jacks’ one got – much like Tom Hanks, etching off the days he was isolated on an island in the movie Cast Away. Different times, different ways of dealing with discipline.

As a school we have embarked on a bit of a mission to limit the boys use of devices at school. We have noticed the positive outcomes, as have parents, and jokingly in conversation with one of the parents this past week, we have noticed an uptick in break related injuries. Yes, in the absence of cell phones, the boys are again playing games at break time. We joked, that when we were at school, at any given time, there was always one of us in a class in a cast of sort – broken arm, leg, finger or toe.

I am a firm believer in trying to catch boys out – **DOING SOMETHING GOOD**. I am also a firm believer in making boys aware that there are **CONSEQUENCES FOR ACTIONS**. Last week I spoke about when the electric fences fail. In my wonderings around campus this week, I popped by the classes, to have a squiz at the happenings in the classrooms. By in large most learners were meaningfully engaged save for a few individuals browsing their devices out of the sight of the teacher. An enquiring glance in their direction, quickly corrected the matter. As a follow up, I thanked boys for their support in terms of putting away devices, and warned that on my next visit, any device to be found, would be taken by me. Praised, prepped and knowing the expectations, I set off on my next walk about...

Walking the hallways, most doors were open, possibly, a way of communicating via morse code, the boys warning each other of an impending visit. Have passed several classes I stepped my way into class to find a boy, back turned to the door, discretely operating his device under the cover of his blazer. An audible gasp echoed across the class, as I stuck my hand out in the direction of the deer caught in the headlights. Having waved the offending young man to join me out of sight in the corridors, we engaged in a traffic officer-type conversation. Ie. Do you know what you were doing, and you are leaving me no choice, the caveat of course being that the boy attends to collecting his phone at the end of the day with his House Head or Parent.

As I was meandering my way out of the office, semi-oblivious to the earlier offence, I saw the offending soul ‘sheepishly’ being accompanied by his father to my office. Mid-crossing the road, the father was already muttering at the boy, pertaining his expectations. Having entered the office, I passed the phone to the father, knowing nothing more was necessary. In some instances, less is

more. With the support of the parent, to his credit, the situation was amicably resolved in no time at all. Point made, lesson learned, and message sent. This, however, is not always the case.

It was about in the 2020's that vapes started gaining popularity amongst young people and started making their way into school. The smoking of cigarettes in public spaces was banned, and the macho image portrayed by the Camel adverts of what real men smoked, was replaced by warning labels on packages. For some reason or other, Vapes, were touted as a 'healthy' alternative. Those in the know will tell you, the basic difference is only that one burns tobacco to cause smoke, whilst the other heats a liquid, to produce an aerosol – both containing toxins that can lead to nicotine addiction, lung damage, cancer and heart problems. It is on that premise, that we took a hardline stance on vaping – if caught, the boy would be faced with an immediate five-day precautionary suspension, and a meeting with his parents.

On one of my other walk-about two years ago, I came across a young man, nonchalantly puffing away at his vape, having semi-attempted concealing himself behind a building. On confiscating the contraband, this being a repeat offence, I was sure that, he was in for a jolly good talking-to by his parents. The boys know, that when it comes to vapes, the device is confiscated, and kept in my drawer in the office. When the police do their rounds, all contraband is handed to them for disposal. That very same afternoon, the mother of the learner walks into my office and brazenly requests the return of her son's device. I don't often get caught off guard, but I was at a lack for words. Having composed my thoughts, whilst hauling out devices of different shapes and colours, I place them in order like suspects in a lineup. The mother casually picked out the device well known to her, as she knew about his smoking. The conversation that followed, was not pleasant save to say, my father's words of forty years' experience came to mind; "You don't have problem children, you have problem parents".

You always get an exception to the norm. The reality is that educating / schooling / raising a child, is a working partnership. Just like at home, Mom and Dad / the Adults work together – the same applies to the school environment – teachers and parents together. One hand washes the other, and we can strengthen our influence and the outcomes, by working together, as opposed to working in opposition.

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 169 | 23 September **It does not matter how great you are.**

Growing up, there was for me, no more a greater rivalry than Arsenal and Man United. These were in my opinion, the two 'great powers' who had come to dominate the English Premier League – well at least whilst I was a child. This predates the rise of Chelsea and Man City, as clubs very much under the radar, to forces to be reckoned with, because of huge foreign financial investment.

Two of the greatest Football Managers, Arsene Wenger and Alex Ferguson, were both at the helm of these clubs, in what could easily be regarded as a 'golden' era for both. On reflection the two clubs had a very different 'feel' about them. The Arsenal team, was transitioning from its traditional English foundation (English based players), under the guidance of Arsene Wenger, to a team comprised of a variety of nationalities, bringing with it French flair in the likes of players such as Petit, Henry, Anelka, Viera and Dutch skill in the likes Bergkamp and Overmars, under the leadership of the rock hard, Tony Adams, and four fellow 'old school' English defenders. In contrast, Man United, comprised a team of mostly English / UK players having come through their academy structures - Beckham, Giggs, and the Neville brothers, whilst internationals like Peter Schmeical and Eric Cantona - both seriously crazy but talented individuals – comprised the minority of the team. The team was led by Roy Keane - another rock hard Irish legend in his own right. It is my opinion that that Man United team, can probably be regarded as the last great English club – comprising mostly UK players. These days all EPL teams are riddled with international talent.

Whilst both teams experienced many successes, the tenure of these great coaches came to an end around the same time - rather aptly so, but in very different ways. Wenger was at Arsenal for approximately 22 years, and Ferguson was at Man United for 27 years. These are absolute anomalies – in terms of 'life span' – by all accounts even back in those days. Sir Alex Ferguson was 'forced' into retirement due to health issues and wanting to support his grieving wife who had lost her

sister, whilst Arsene Wenger was forced into retirement by supporters, after the performance of the team weined. In many ways, it could be argued that Arsene Wenger stayed on longer than he should, and therein lies the key, knowing when the time comes to go. In contrast, I would argue that Alex Ferguson was 'saved' by his health issues, and family matters beyond his control. The job of a Manager in the EPL is likely one of the most volatile - here today and gone tomorrow.

Whilst reasons for retirement was 'forced', it was symptomatic of a change in times and it became abundantly evident, that these two greats would not survive the changes happening around them. The 'game' evolved faster than they were able to adapt. The role of manager as talent developer, father figure, decision maker, authority figure, and face of the club, had shifted to a new age of players earning hundreds of millions and taking on the role of global icons. The dynamic within these clubs shifted from coach / manager in its traditional sense to managing egos and the superstardom of players. This is where the likes of Jurgen Klopp and Pep Guardiola, are able to step in and bridge the gap - a new type of manager for a new age of football. Balancing this new dynamic has arguably become the biggest challenge the new age manager faces. What worked very well in the past for Wenger and Ferguson, is simply no longer applicable. This is why the likes of Wenger and Ferguson, would not survive in the current environment. Ferguson, infamously, threw a boot, at 'boy-wonder', Beckham, perhaps the original, modern English football superstar. Whilst Ferguson had the backing of the changeroom then, with the likes of leadership in Keane and co, that was probably the turning point and the first sign, of a no-nonsense manager, facing pushback, evidence by Beckham leaving shortly after, despite Alex Ferguson having been like a father figure prior.

I find myself engaged in multiple conversations with members of the community, around matters pertaining 'back in the day'. Just like Arsene Wenger and Alex Ferguson, there was a time and place, and in that time and place, their way of doing things was the right way for then. Just like pro coaches, we are dealing with a new generation (of learners and parents), who require a different way of doing. At school, one very much has to invest more so than ever before in the person - building the character, engaging in conversation, building a relationship of trust, recognizing the input of the other and collaborating together to achieve outcomes. These days the most valuable skill any individual can have is EQ - Emotional Intelligence - the ability to understand, use and manage oneself and others. This makes for the most successful leaders and the best team players.

Whilst Arsene Wenger and Sir Alex Ferguson will always be regarded as legends within their respective clubs, their inability to move with the times meant they were no longer best suited for the position of English Premier League manager. A golden era, in a time relegated to the history books. Now these clubs forge ahead in a very different landscape, building on the legacy of these giants.

As always, it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "DO Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 170 | 1 October 'Resilient but changed'.

I recall it as if it was yesterday, my wife and I 'broke' the news to the kids that we would be leaving Cape Town, and moving to Bloemfontein. Daniel and Olivia were devastated for the fact that they had to leave everything they knew behind – the home they had grown up in, their nanny, their friends, and their schools.

Four years on, and I often reflect on that conversation, and how things turned out. The four of us processed this move differently, and I would be lying if I said, it did not affect each of us uniquely. As adults reasoned, that other than a great opportunity, at a great school, career wise it made sense. In addition, we as adults, would be returning to something familiar, in that we both lived in Bloem, and we also still had family residing there. The setting for us, was thus not unfamiliar, or widely beyond expectation, like when we moved to Cape Town originally... Thinking on it now, there were times we cried to go back to Bloem.

Having prayed about and discussed the move at length, a primary consideration for us, was whether our children would make it, and what the advantages and disadvantages would be for them long term. With most of those I sought counsel from, the feedback was that children are resilient and that they will adapt. They were right, in that both Olivia and Daniel, managed the transition in their own way,

and four years on, they both call Bloemfontein home, whilst reflecting fondly on their time in Cape Town.

Yes, children are resilient, and they bounce back, but what they did not tell me is that they would be changed. Perhaps, I should have taken it as a given, but I recall, just wanting to get them through the move. How they were changed, was something I overlooked. It got me thinking on the fact that every day I encounter boys, who are changed for better or worse for the decisions made by the adults in their lives. Despite this, these boys from the little guys to the big brutes in the Rugby team put on a brave face, or shed a tear in my office, whilst trying to keep it together and then attempting to get on with their day.

I have full understanding that life happens, and I wish that at school, I could shield the kids from all the happenings beyond my and their control – usually happening at home. I have no doubt, that parents attempt to act out of love, and act in the best interest of their son. It does however go without saying, that sometimes, as adults we get things wrong (unintentionally mostly), and the result is that our child is changed for ever.

At school, I often remind the staff that we are working with someone else's most precious possession. I also emphasize that at school we are surrogate parents, and we need to always be mindful of how consequent our decisions and actions can be. At school we act to provide a safety net for those kids who fall. The bottom line is that children are changed for their interactions with us (adults) – for better or worse. I take my role as guardian and father of 800 odd boys of mine very seriously.

As always, it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 171 | 15 October

Part of the process is remembering the difficult days, so you don't forget to enjoy the good ones.

I was privileged to be part of the Nedbank Challenge hosted at Grey College for the last four days. The Tournament itself is arguably one of the toughest competitions both in terms of opposition and physical demands on players.

I have attended the competition for the better part of 15 years, having toured to Bloemfontein with the Wynberg soccer team. In our very first year of competition, we ended stone last, not having won a single game, and results probably averaging out at about 5 goals against per game.

It was at this tournament, that on the first evening, I met fellow Capetonians from Robinvale in Atlantis. They were also the team we played in our first ever appearance at Nedbank Challenge - save to say they massacred us. After the initial clash, the coaches and players struck up a friendship that would continue for many years - so much so, that teams who had never had any reason to interact, trained together and then travelled together to Bloem in future years.

There were many difficult days, in building the Wynberg soccer program. The challenges were heavy, and on many occasions, I felt quite isolated. Slowly as contacts grew, coaches were brought in, and support at the school increased, WE (notice the change from I) were slowly able to chip away at the boulders that needed to be moved. With that the program started taking shape, and we were able to cement ourselves a more prominent force amongst the soccer playing schools.

In my time at Wynberg, we slowly started clawing our way up the rankings, from last, to mid-way, to into the top 10. Last year the team managed 3rd place, and yesterday I was privileged to witness a dream come true - reaching the finals of the Nedbank Challenge. I could not help but exude an immense sense of pride, when Henry Knight, my Goalkeeper for 5 years and now coach and Andries Bezuidenhout, my fellow first team coach whilst at Wynberg, were able to steer the team of boys from my last year at Wynberg, into the Finals.

Conversely, I experienced a surreal sense of DeJa'Vu. I watched a rather despondent Elliot Motseki, reflect on the progress of St Andrew's at the Nedbank Challenge. I watched a man sitting on a log, in a similar space, I found myself in on several previous occasions. There sat a man who had invested his whole self into building a soccer program having managed to get the full school playing soccer from U7 to U19, getting the sport recognized as a school sport in which players could receive colours,

starting a premier Soccer Night League for U15 and U19, setting up a Sunday Business League, ensuring that teams were able to go on tour, securing quality gear for the boys and arranging committed and passionate coaches. Whilst he cannot see it now, I see a foundation that has been laid that is second to none in the country and a man building a legacy.

It is important to keep perspective, and to see beyond the present. It is difficult in the moment, and it only comes with experience. Part of the process is remembering the difficult days, so that you can appreciate the good days. It is only through the process, that one comes to realize that you can take nothing for granted and to never become complacent. The difficult days are inevitable, they are of course the ones that keep us grounded, focused, and driven. Soccer (and sport), like life, is like surfing. When you are on top of the wave, you enjoy the ride, and hopefully you can ride it out to the beach. On other occasions, you come crashing down from top of the world and you get pummelled. On other occasions, when at the bottom, you just need to keep paddling to catch the next wave.

Every coach needs a photo on a log that they should frame and put up as a reminder. As always, it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 172 | 22 October

EXAM ADVICE: "It ain't about how hard you hit. It's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward."

The Sunday night MNET movies back in the 80's featured actors like Sylvester Stallone in Rambo, Jean-Claude van Damme in Universal Soldier and Arnold Schwarzenegger in Terminator. One of my favourite movies growing up was Rocky. The story of a nobody named Rocky Balboa, who goes on to defy the odds and win the World Heavy Weight Title.

Few know that, like Rocky Balboa, the actor Sylvester Stallone was also a nobody in the early 70's having only experienced limited success, nothing compared to what his future held. Sylvester Stallone decided to make the move to California to pursue his dream of making it big. Things were tough, and Sylvester Stallone had to eventually sell his beloved dog, Butkus for \$40 due to extreme poverty.

One night Sylvester Stallone went to watch Muhammad Ali fight Chuck Wepner. It was the clash of the greatest fighter who ever lived taking on the man they called the 'The Bayonne Bleeder'. That night Chuck Wepner did the impossible, he went the distance and knocked the champ down. So, the idea of Rocky was born. He wrote and finished the script in a mere three days.

At one of his auditions, he handed the script to one of the producers who eventually read it, and loved it, save for one thing; they did not want Sylvester Stallone to play the main character Rocky. The producer felt that one of the more established stars would be better suited – someone like Burt Reynolds for instance. Sylvester Stallone was initially offered \$360 000 for the script, on condition that he did not play Rocky. Despite facing extreme poverty, Sylvester Stallone 'backed' himself, did not give in, having thought to himself that really had this poverty thing down, and was in no way used to the good life. The producers eventually relented and gave Sylvester Stallone one million dollars to play himself.

Movies like Rocky, and the stories behind them serve as inspiration, and it is this reason, I chose Rocky, as the theme for the matric exams. The original Rocky movie featuring the young and athletic Sylvester Stallone was released in 1976, and 30 years later Rocky Balboa was released in 2006, telling the story of the now retired Rocky, who against all odds decides to step into the ring again.

This time Rocky doesn't fight to win, but to prove that it's never too late to push yourself further than you thought possible. In one of the movie's most famous scenes, Rocky tells his son: "It ain't about how hard you hit. It's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward." Just like the Matrics, your sons will also be writing their final assessments in a couple of days. Your son has trained for this moment, and it is now time for him to step into the ring with focus and determination.

Some tips for the fighter from Coach Rudd:

1. Look the part. Just as Rocky laced up his gloves with pride, you too should take pride in your appearance. Let your appearance reflect your discipline and self-respect.

2. Make every round count. Every remaining academic period is precious — use each one fully. Don't wait for the final bell to seek help. Even Rocky needed his coach, Mickey, in his corner. Lean on your teachers — they're in your corner too.

3. Make every second count. In the ring, every second matters — and the same is true in the exam hall. Read instructions carefully, manage your time wisely, and move steadily through your paper. Don't rush the start, and don't give up before the bell rings. Work right until the final moment.

4. Create your training ground. A clean, organised study space helps your mind focus. Keep your notes neat, your room tidy, and your atmosphere calm. Build the environment for victory.

5. Train smart, rest well. Balance study with movement and rest. A short walk, some stretching, or light exercise can refresh your mind. Don't neglect your sleep — aim for at least six hours of quality rest.

6. Avoid distractions. Just as Rocky blocks out the crowd's noise, you must block out social media and television. Stay disciplined, keep your eyes on the goal, and your mind on your mission.

7. Stick to your fight plan. Use your exam timetable wisely. Schedule study time, practice with past papers, and ask for help when you need it. Make sure you know exactly what you're writing, where, and when. Check your exam timetable every day and set alarms so you're never late. Arrive early, calm, and ready. Champions don't leave timing to chance.

8. Stay focused on the finish line. Every round counts — every paper is another step toward your future. Even if you've stumbled before, you can still finish strong. Remember, Rocky didn't win every fight, but he always gave it everything he had.

Some tips for the parents supporting:

1. Be their corner coach. Your voice of calm guidance makes all the difference.

2. Help him prepare his "training ground." Support him in creating an organised, quiet study space — clean desk, sorted notes, and minimal distractions. A focused environment leads to a focused mind.

3. Keep the routine disciplined. Ensure he gets proper rest (no less than six hours), eats well, and takes short breaks for fresh air or exercise.

4. Keep distractions at bay. Social media, late-night gaming, and endless scrolling are the equivalent of noise from the crowd — they drain focus. Help him manage screen time and maintain boundaries that prioritise his studies.

5. Help him stick to his fight plan. Ensure he knows his exam timetable — what he is writing, where, and when.

6. Encourage smart practice. Past question papers are the sparring sessions of academic preparation.

7. Stay calm in his corner. Exams bring natural tension — but your calm, measured tone will anchor him. Offer reassurance, small words of confidence, and the quiet belief that he can do this. Sometimes, the best coaching comes in silence and steady support.

8. Celebrate the effort, not just the outcome. Win or lose, what counts most is that your son steps into the ring, gives his best, and finishes strong. Just as Rocky didn't win every

fight, your son's journey isn't defined by one result, but by the character he's built along the way.

Whilst the Matrics are into their last round, looking for the knockout, the rest of the grades may only be into the first, second or third round etc. working their way to being able to say that they went the distance. No one round is less important than the other, and the blows taken, and points scored, in these, set the fighter up for the final round.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 173 | 29 October
The 'armchair coach'.

Over the past couple weekends the campus has been abuzz with cricket fixtures. We have hosted numerous midweek and weekend fixtures receiving guests from both within Bloemfontein and further afield. At one of these occasions, I happened to find myself in earshot of a spectator questioning every action of coach and boy alike. Sprawled out on his camping chair, cool box at hand, he strategically positioned himself under the shade of one of the trees to ensure maximum comfort. He consulted his cricket app regularly to 'meaningfully' fill in stats to substantiate his comments; from team selection, to who should bowl and bat, and in what order this should happen. He offered his input on how the team should warm up, and went on to highlight the shortcomings of the franchise and provincially qualified coach. I could but just sigh...

The 'armchair syndrome' is one of the diseases in South African sport. These diehard fans / 'expert' coaches seem entitled to offer their opinion, in most cases, in the worst kind of way. Neither under 7 player, or Springbok is spared in the vitriolic commentary of these armchair 'professionals'. The reality is that in most instances these are well-intentioned people - they have just lost perspective. Their experience of perhaps playing semi-amateur sport at best, or having learnt everything they know from watching TV, seems to colour in the illusion of grandeur of days gone by and the wealth of experience they bring to the table. Television has also reinforced the 'bravado' of the armchair coach, who gets to shout the odds at professional players and coaches weekly, as they provide Pep Guardiola and Rassie Erasmus advice on team selection and tactics.

I immediately knew I wanted to write a reflection on this coaches' handbook that I had the 'privilege' of listening to, for the full two- hour duration of a riveting junior midweek cricket match. I wondered how I would get across what it is that I wanted to say. I want to be clear, I have no problem with supporters, but it is how they support that matters - especially when dealing with school boys - someone else's most precious possession, where words can make or break them. When it comes to Springboks, my view is that these armchair coaches are free to offer input and criticism showcasing their knowledge, provided they are prepared to put their CV on the line to back up the authority with which they speak.

Having wracked my brain, the answer came to me by way of my son. On Sunday Daniel asked me to watch a movie called *Kicking and Screaming*, a movie starring Will Ferrel. Daniel offered a synopsis of the movie as an introduction indicating that it is both funny and sad. The movie is about a father and son duo, who coach amateur club soccer teams for children. The theme is how perspective is lost when winning and competition replace what really matters at that level - having fun. Whilst the movie is typically funny like most Will Ferrel movies, it shares an important underlying message of how adults can distort and ruin the excitement, love and drive of children, when children are required to win – at all costs. It points to the problems that come with attaching personal self-worth and identity to winning.

There are several poignant moments in the movie. One of them is when the Grandfather, played by Robert Duvall, coach of the league leading Gladiators soccer team, trades his bench-warming Grandson to bottom of the league Tigers. Left with no coach, Will Ferrel steps in to coach the Tigers for one time only. As he starts bonding with the team, he comes to enjoy the players for who they are and continues to coach. He comes to realisation that he needs help, so he calls on the help of his father's neighbour and Nemesis - Superbowl winning football coach - Mike Ditka. As the desire to win becomes increasingly important, after a bet is taken by Will Ferrell against his father, that his team the Tigers will make the final, things start going 'pear-shaped'. Drawing on the experience of the Superbowl coach, another significant event, is when the coaches decide to take a shortcut and draw in the talents of two Italian soccer maestros, so that they (the team) can start winning. Taking a long-term view, and developing talent, is replaced by the short-term desire to win. From there the team quickly fall into the trap of the entire game revolving around getting the ball to the Italians, who make quick work of opposition. With the Tigers now starting to win games, perspective is lost, and everything becomes about winning and getting to the final.

The story of the two Italian boys also points to distorted family dynamics, where these boys are forced to work in their father's butchery, as their future has already been by their 'Papi' - they will be taking over the family business. The father of the Italians constantly reinforces the idea of, "Prima la carne", which translates to meat first, before soccer - pointing to the fact that the family business comes

before being a child. This ties in with the theme that in many instances, children just want to be children, but that adults' complicate matters. In the same way, when the Tigers were left without a coach, and Will Ferrell and Mike Ditka, a Superbowl winning coach step in to assist, parents who made excuses for not stepping forward, are found to be criticizing the coaches from the sidelines.

By the time the Tigers have reached the finals, Will Ferrell has totally lost perspective and is only focused on winning. He says to the team that they can win and go on to greatness or lose and have a series of cataclysmic events unfold for the rest of their lives. Mike Dikta points out to Will Ferrell that he is instilling bad attitudes in the players and highlights the loss of perspective. By that time relationships within the team and relationships between coach and parents has broken down. Will Ferrell in the all-important game leading to the final benches his own son for want of winning the match. The teammates go on to ask his son "what has happened to your Dad". This is further exacerbated in the final when Will Ferrell is oblivious to his son not even being present. At half time, Will Ferrell is sat down by his wife who tells him he has gone totally overboard. With the truth dawning on him, Will Ferrell admit this to his son and asks forgiveness. His son forgives him and tells his father that he was a good coach; *"You taught us about everything not to do in soccer"*. Will Ferrell calls the team together, apologizes and tells them to do everything the opposite of what he taught them - for instance, the Italians must share the ball, instead of the team playing the Italians only. They go on to win the game coming from behind, as the entire play book of his father goes out the window, with each player in the Tigers contributing in their own way - something his father had not planned for.

At the end of the movie, I asked Daniel (my son) what the important messages in the movie are. He replied as follows:

1. "Adults must learn to find where they fit in".
2. "Things become creepy when the coach encourages boys to win at all costs".
3. "You can be enthusiastic in a respectable way" referring to the behaviour of spectators.
4. "Don't lose yourself in the excitement of wanting to win".
5. "It's ok not to be the best".
6. "Don't become what you fear the most", referring to Will Ferrell becoming like his winning father coach.

As always, it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 174 | 5 November **"Ons was toe net kinders".**

This past weekend was a walk down memory lane and got me reflecting. It was in 2004, that I watched Prime Circle live - with a young lady who was destined to become my wife. It was a lifetime ago. Prime Circle, besides being an awesome SA band, has always had a special place for my wife and me. We jumped at the opportunity of attending a performance after being invited by friends. As the band arrived on stage, it was that my wife remarked that we were but just kids, likewise the members of the band also, when we first watched them.

I think back to how simple life was back then. Being a student and having this 'newfound sense of freedom', my biggest concern was where my next tank of fuel would come from. My father had an arrangement with me that he would fill the tank of my gas-guzzling 1600 VW Beetle once a month, thereafter it was my responsibility. This meant carefully considering where and when to travel with the Beetle, having to balance filling up of my ride with the R50 a shift pittance I earned, working first at the video shop, and then later for my uncle at his Verimark store over weekends, to having some spare change to visit my then later girlfriend (after Prime Circle) and offer her some spoils. Going to a movie, possibly meant walking, if 'life' was not properly managed over the month. Luckily, my mother always had a sense of what was happening and would sneak the odd R100 my way, so that I could go to the movies or take Karen for the famous Cheetah Burger at Kalahari.Fish. I think my mother was investing in her future... She gave others a bit of the 'skeef' oog, and probably felt the need to try and keep her around...

Thinking back now, we came right with so little. Entertainment was spending time together, either at a museum or at home, in each other's company. There was not really money for entertainment, so we did what students do best - we 'sponged' off our parental environment. No matter the freedom we

had, the safety net of having our families meant contextually worries were negligible. The worst that could happen was, when boundaries were pushed at home, and the folks were inconvenienced one too many times, a change of scenery was required for the sake of everyone's sanity. Balancing this nomadic type visitor status between the two families in terms of visiting hours, was crucial to maintaining the vital lifeblood of any student - food, petrol and a bit of cash.

Sitting at the Prime Circle concert, it was as if a lifetime flashed by. I would say that my life is categorized into three distinct chapters. Bloemfontein - encapsulating school, childhood and varsity. Cape Town - encapsulating, marriage, children and work. Bloemfontein -encapsulating head mastering, exponential professional growth, family challenges, and four years on, the story continues. Without a shadow of a doubt, it would seem that as we grow into this thing called 'life', it hardly becomes easier. In many ways, the older we get, the more we complicate things, until the day we no longer do. The quicker we get to recognizing what really matters being the simple things - the things one yearns for when most overwhelmed and tired - family, love, peace and being 'right' with God - the quicker one comes to realise that everything else is just 'noise' / distraction.

We live in a different world now, far changed from when we were children. Life is busier now, the values of society has shifted, and there is an inherent entitlement of people believing they can say what they want, to who they want, do what they want, and it is as if they speak, type and act with no filter, or concept of **being accountable for their words and or actions** - something all of us were taught and reminded of by our folks. There now seems to be an 'immaturity' about society at large, where the **concept of own opinion and view, supersede the responsibility that comes with having such**. Those good old values of a certain level of decorum in dealing with each other, the level of decorum that comes with a title (Mr or Mrs, Dr, Prof or Revd etc.) or the decorum that comes with the office you serve, is now more important than ever before. I consider myself privileged to be in a position where I can point out to our boys that there is another way of doing things.

At the junior prize giving's last week, I shared with parents that in a blink of an eye they will be sitting at the Valedictory service of their son. At that point, a stage of life - having a child of school going age - is over. No more Saturdays next to the fields watching sport, no more morning school runs, no more prize giving's. You will be lucky to get an invite to his graduation (if he chooses to go to University), and the next family get together may very well be his Wedding. One thing for sure, your school going child will move from being a uniform wearing, rule abiding citizen, to nomadic, parasitic vagrant, as they too 'sponge' off you in their 'formative adult years' - be kind to them. Whilst with us, we realise we are working with your most precious possession, and that we are raising your Grandchild's Father and your Daughter in Law's Husband.

Yes, we were children once, young and free. 21 years on, and life looks very different. The person in the mirror, greyer and grizzled, like the band on stage, changed, and in their case less their original lead singer - Ross, but still the same. Life happens, but as Prime Circle said, " We still have much music to make, and if you keep coming, we will keep performing".

As always, it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 175 | 12 November **"Rites of Passage"**

At St Andrew's, rites of passage, are fundamental to what we do. We are privileged to have boys joining us for some 15 years give or take, a mere three years old, if they join us in Grade 000. By choosing St Andrew's, you as the parent take the first step in setting your son on a trajectory in life.

I can recall my wife and I taking our daughter to school on her first day. I am sure you would agree that this is a nerve wrecking experience, because what is being asked of us is to hand over our most precious possession to the care of someone else. We do this, because we know, however much we want to, we cannot keep our son under our wing, shielded from the world that is out there. Our child needs to interact with other children, where they learn to socialise, and grow in independence, away from us. You will know that this occasion is usually marked by tears from both parent and child, because this is the first time you need to turn around and walk away, whilst your child calls for you. As parent, you must fight all instincts to turn back, and pull the plug on this necessary step in your

development.

Little school is characterised by the play, and really operating in a what is a care-free space for our sons. Their days are made up of spending time with their first friends, sitting together eating snacks, and learning the basics of reading and writing, under the care of what is usually a very nice teacher, who in many ways becomes your son's parent, in your absence during the day. There they create the space for your son to grow and explore, in a safe space. In a blink of an eye, his journey at little school is over, and he moves on to the next phase of his (and your) journey. This is perhaps the first time in his life, where he needs to say goodbye to friends, who end up on another path and head off in another direction. Post your son's characteristic farewell concert and graduation, he finds that your language changes to one of him going to 'big school' for the first time, as a little seven year old Grade one.

Can you remember spending the December 'prepping' your son for the momentous occasion of going to 'big school'. Probably the most evident feature of this phase of your son's life, is when he 'dons' his new school uniform for the first time – and you invite the entire family to a family photo shoot.

Fast forward several years, and your son has moved from a little seven-year-old grade one, to a thirteen-year-old, 'big fish' in a little pond. His grade seven year marks a culmination of a build-up of schooling, where he takes on the role of a senior figure within the school. He quickly shoulders leadership and responsibility, that he has never had to do in the past. Little boys look up to him and teachers trust him to assist them in the daily operations of the school. Your son also comes to represent the excellence of the school in all aspects, as the definition of a successful year – be it in academic, sport or cultural results and other achievements.

In a blink of an eye, his primary school journey concludes, as his grade seven year comes to an end. In many ways, his grade seven year, becomes the culmination of opportunities taken, and the first real measurement of success. The reality dawns on him, when he has to present himself for consideration, to a prospective high school. Suddenly his portfolio is scrutinised in terms of academic achievement, involvement in extracurricular activities and of course his conduct and disciplinary record. His success directly determines the trajectory he finds himself on, and once again, some friends, find themselves on a different trajectory.

Entering high school is marked with several changes, most evidently that, he is once again a 'small fish' in a much bigger pond, and that you as parents, gradually withdraw, being encouraged by the school, to allow your son to find his feet. He quickly comes to realise that you, will no longer sit beyond the 20:00 movie on DSTV, and attempt to assist with the completion of a project he had remembered about at the last minute.

Forgotten lunch boxes, sports equipment, and academic requirements don't necessarily dictate your movement as parents, and in most cases, your son is lucky if you pop by school to 'bail' them out. As he flexes his wings, the mistakes he makes, increasingly exposes him to greater consequences, something you as parents and we as teachers, try mitigating by balancing 'controlling their every action's, to allowing them to bump their head. As parental 'control' wanes, your son is given more and more opportunity and is afforded more and more trust to act independently, in the hope that he has internalised the lessons his parents and staff have taught him. For the first time he is scrutinised to a greater degree, and he gets the first taste of what it's like in the real world.

In many ways, your son's Matric Certificate and his Testimonial speak to the foundation he has laid for the future, and the legacy by which he will be remembered. What is written about him in his Testimonial, speaks to the opportunities taken, his character, and various other soft skills as important as the outcome of his matric results – both a culmination of approximately fifteen years of schooling.

Your son's Valedictory service is both a reflection of his journey of school, and a celebration of another rite of passage, as he both bids farewell to a phase of life, and simultaneously looks forward to the excitement of endless possibilities of the world that awaits. The final stretch of his school journey comes to an end, when at Valedictory, he passes on the torch to the grade eleven group, as he then directs his focus to what is arguably the most important exams he will ever sit.

Valedictory is followed by Leavers Dinner, where he will formally and finally mark his transition from

School Boy to Old Boy, when he exchanges his Blue Blazer for a Black one. He now joins generations that have gone before him, forever part of the very fabric of the history of the school, for once having donned the Blue Blazer bearing the motto, Fiat Lux – Let There Be Light. As much as the change in the Blue Blazer to Black Blazer, marks the end of school 'influence', it also marks a new role in your journey with your son, where he inevitably spreads his wings and takes flight. As always, it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 176| 19 November **Stories from my Grandpa's House.**

Sitting at the fireplace in Still Bay always brings a flood of memories. The family house has been home to four generations of Rudd's. Every male member of the family has had an opportunity to serve as raconteur - the person who spins amusing tales of everyday life. Most often, Grandpa will entertain his grandchildren, by recounting tales to the little ones - be it fishing stories, ghost stories, or all matter of sorts of vivid tales of the weird and wonderful.

There was a particular phase in my Grandpa's life, once the Alzheimer's had set in, that his narration of stories was limited to a mix of his childhood memories and looking for his parents, to recounting the horror of the Great War where he fought in North Africa as part of the Allied forces defending against the invading Axis. I clearly recall my Grandpa staring me in the eye and saying, "My boy, war is a terrible thing".

My Grandpa spoke of how having been stationed out in the field for several weeks living off basic rations, basically slowly starving, how when they returned to a small desolate town, they were treated to one fried egg each. The result was an entire unit incapacitated, emptying their stomach contents, due to the rich meal (a single fried egg). One could quickly come to understand the irritation of watching a spoilt grandchild turning their nose up to a warm plate of food for dislike of the veggies on the plate. My Grandpa made my father (when he was a child), and then me sit, until our plate was clean, or it was placed in the fridge for the next sitting - but finish your plate you would.

On another occasion, the unit came under enemy fire. The South African units were notoriously underequipped during WW2, and were often massacred by the mechanised Axis units. On this occasion, they took cover in a foxhole, a hole dug by each soldier, to be used to escape enemy fire. A mortar shell exploded in the foxhole next to my Grandpa killing his friend instantly. Post the shelling of the Axis, he recalled that all that was left of his friend was his dog tag and a piece of his pinkie finger. They came under fire night after night - each time praying the darkness away, with each day being a new gift.

Whilst flying in their Dakota over North Africa, they experience compass failure - no GPS back then. According to their heading and speed they were due to see lights on their right-hand side - the small village - their destination for the mission. The only problem was that the lights were on the left-hand side of the plane. Having sprung into action, it was quickly determined that their plane had actually veered off into enemy territory, and the lights were actually Axis Italy. Flying on fumes and defenceless to any Arial or Ground attack, they were forced to make an emergency landing and avoid being captured by the Axis forces.

On the 7th November, the school held its Remembrance Day Service. We are one of only a few schools who continue in this tradition. Who do we do so?

1. We pay respect to our fallen brothers - several boys of school going age who went off to war and never returned - by reading the Roll of Honour and placing wreaths by the Memorial Gates.
2. It is an opportunity to unite across faiths, cultures, and backgrounds as we pause to remember those great country defenders of all races who paid the ultimate sacrifice:
3. During WW1 more than 250 000 South Africans of all races volunteered for the armed forces (146 000 White, 83 000 African, 2500 Coloured and Indian) with 7000 deaths.
4. During WW2 more than 334 000 South Africans of all races volunteered for the armed forces (211 000 White, 77 000 African, and 46 000 Coloured and Asian) with 37 962 killed and 14 693 taken as prisoners.

5. Many of our community had a family member involved in the Great War or other conflicts, whilst similarly we still have many others who have family members serving in the military. There is a historical connection between the School and the Military base.
6. We remind the boys that they enjoy the privilege of a life others fought for, and in so doing, they were spared the horrors of war. Our Remembrance Day recognizes not only the Great War, but the Frontier Wars, the Border War, the South African War, and any who lost their life in the establishment of a democratic South Africa.
7. We refuse to ignore history, and use the opportunity to educate future generations, about the history of conflict, the cost of war and the need to work for peace.

At Saints we choose to Remember the 11th hour of the 11th month. Tradition, honour, and respect are core values that we strive to instil in our learners.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 177 | 26 November The Seed.

I think every child who has ever gone through school has done the bean experiment. You know the one where you are given a bean, some cotton wool and are told to water it and keep it in a warm spot. In 3-5 days, the bean seed starts sprouting and you get to watch the different stages of germination.

Just the other day I came across some conversing about their very own beanstalk they were intent on planting once the teacher had evaluated their botanical prowess in terms of the specimen on show, as well as their academic progress by means on what looked a rather complicated worksheet. I could not help but agree with the boys that strategically planting their beanstalk right there and then seemed a much better idea. I stopped myself short from starting to dig with the boys and remained rather professional in encouraging to first comply with teacher expectations. There would be time for play afterwards - I mean what better to do than planting these beanstalks and getting them to grow into the clouds.

We did plant these beanstalks along my garden fence. We met up the next day to view progress, and the boys were admittedly a little disappointed by the meagre growth. In conversation we had hyped the expected result, to be something that would surely have at least surpassed the height of the school roof. Alas, as the days progressed and the little beanstalks did their thing, the interest quickly waned, and soon there was a solitary row of 5 bean plants creeping their way up the fence - in the absence of any onlookers.

The bean experiment is a lovely activity for the youngsters. The effort is relatively negligible, and the results are fairly instantaneous. Prefect for the little guys yes, and appropriate now more than ever for a generation demanding instantaneous gratification and results. The bottom line is that you really cannot mess this up. The bean seed is like the original Nokia 5110 of cell phones - uncomplicated and it works - every time - whether you abuse it or treat it right. It got me thinking...

There is another seed, not too dissimilar in needs - soil, warmth and water. You could plant this seed next to the bean and 3-5 days later, the only germination you will see is the bean. If you remain dedicated enough, to see the bean, extending upwards, there will still be nothing happening with this other seed. By the time the bean has sprouted flowers, the bees have done their thing, and several days later you are able to harvest bean pods, still nothing would have happened to this seed. You will be forgiven for thinking this seed is dead. It is not.

It is the seed of the Chinese bamboo. The growth process of this bamboo requires significant patience. You are required to water and add fertilizer daily - for FIVE YEARS. During this period the seed appears dormant, but it is actually establishing its strong root system. After five years of nurturing the seed through this unseen foundational stage, it explodes into life and can grow up to 90 feet tall in a matter of 6 to 8 weeks - made possible by the root system established in the first 5 years.

Unlike planting a bean:

1. You are required to be PATIENT because there will be NO VISIBLE RESULTS in the first 5 years.
2. You are required to be CONSISTENT in watering and nurturing the seed DAILY.
3. You are required to focus on FOUNDATION, the root system, that will be most critical for the massive and explosive FUTURE GROWTH.

Perhaps we should quit getting kids to grow beans - (yes it had its place with the little guys), or getting them to write exams, and rather give each Grade 8 a bamboo seed on his first day in Grade 8. The measure of his success will be whether after 5 years, at the end of his Matric year, he had a bamboo sprout, ready for exponential growth. In that way we will turn out patient, committed and resilient young men, who understand the process - investing time into the foundation to support the future growth - as they aspire to reach for the stars.

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy, and Walk Humbly with God".

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Compiled by Ailsa Uys | Marketing Manager | From the weekly newsletters sent to parents.