

**“HONORING THE PAST, INSPIRING THE FUTURE  
BY PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST”**

**MATTHEW 6:33**

**WHEN I OBSERVE THE YOUTH OF TODAY, I’M INSPIRE BY THE FACT THAT YOU ARE ONE OF THE MOST CREATIVE AND INGENIOUS GENERATIONS THIS WORLD HAS EVER SEEN.**

**IN ORDER TO FIND EVIDENCE OF THIS FACT, I NEED ONLY TO EXAMINE HOW YOU HAVE ADAPTED YOURSELVES TO THE CHANGING TIMES.**

**ALTHOUGH MANY IN MY GENERATION HAVE RESISTED THE CHANGES OF THESE MODERN TIMES, I MUST GIVE CREDIT TO A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO ARE ABLE TO CATCH ON SO QUICKLY.**

**FROM TYPEWRITERS TO COMPUTERS. FROM 8-TRACKS TO I-PODS. FROM PARTY LINES TO CELLULAR PHONES. FROM THE POST OFFICE TO HOTMAIL. FROM PAC-MAN TO PLAYSTATION 3. AND FROM VCR’S TO DVD AND BLU-RAY. I TELL YOU, YOU KIDS HAVE YET TO MISS A BEAT!**

**YOUR ABILITY TO NAVIGATE TODAY’S TECHNOLOGY, IS A TESTAMENT TO YOUR INGENIOUS POSSIBILITIES.**

**FROM THE STANDPOINT OF MUSIC AND THE ARTS, YOU NEED ONLY TURN ON YOUR TELEVISIONS TO SEE YOUR YOUNG PEOPLE’S INFLUENCE.**

**THOSE WHOM YOU NEVER THOUGHT WOULD BE INTERESTED IN HIP-HOP MUSIC, NOW YOU FIND ITS INFLUENCE ALL OVER MAINSTREAM AMERICA.**

**JAY-Z HELPED HP SELL THEIR COMPUTERS.**

**50 CENT HAS DEVELOPED HIS OWN LINE OF VITAMIN WATER.**

**RUSSELL SIMMONS IS SELLING JUST AS MANY CLOTHES AS RALPH LAUREN.**

AND THE NAME BRAND SEAN JOHN IS JUST AS RECOGNIZABLE AS TOMMY HILFIGER.

IN ADDITION TO YOUR ADAPTATION TO TECHNOLOGY, AND APART FROM YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE FASHION INDUSTRY, WE ALSO HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE HOW YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE TRANSFORMED THE WORLD OF SPORTS.

LEBRON JAMES HAS BECOME THE FACE OF THE NBA.

THE WILLIAMS SISTERS HAVE MADE ALL OF US TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT WOMEN'S TENNIS.

TIGER WOODS HAS SINGLE-HANDEDLY CHANGED THE WAY COUNTRY CLUB OWNERS DESIGN THEIR GOLF COURSES.

AND IN SPITE OF THE FOOLISH MISTAKES HE MADE, MICHAEL VICK REDEFINED THE POSITION OF QUARTERBACK.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IT IS AN UNDENIABLE FACT, THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN THIS WORLD.

BUT YET, WITH ALL THE POSITIVE OBSERVATIONS WE HAVE MADE ABOUT THIS DYNAMIC GENERATION, I WOULDN'T BE AN HONEST MAN IF I DIDN'T EXPRESS SOME OF MY CONCERNS.

IT IS TRUE THAT YOU'VE ADAPTED TO TECHNOLOGY.

IT'S A FACT THAT YOU'VE CHANGED THE WORLD THROUGH YOUR MUSIC.

IT'S INDISPUTABLE HOW YOU'VE IMPACTED THE WORLD THROUGH YOUR CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS.

BUT YET AS I STAND HERE TODAY, THE ONE PLACE I FIND YOU LACKING IS IN THE REALM OF EDUCATION.

AS I PREPARED MYSELF TO DELIVER THIS MESSAGE TO YOU TODAY, I WAS REMINDED OF A PHRASE WHICH WAS

COINED BY THE UNITED NEGRO COLLEGE FUND, WHICH SAYS THAT "A MIND IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE."

THIS SLOGAN SUGGESTS TO US THAT EVERYBODY HAS A MIND,

BUT UNFORTUNATELY WE FIND THAT EVERYBODY DOES NOT USE THEIR MIND TO ITS FULLEST POTENTIAL,

AND WHEN I OBSERVE OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE REALM OF EDUCATION, I'VE FOUND THAT THERE ARE SOME WHO ARE SATISFIED WITH JUST GETTING BY.

STUDENTS WHO COULD MAKE A'S ARE CONTENT WITH MAKING C'S. STUDENTS WHO COULD GO TO COLLEGE, THEY'VE OPTED TO MAJOR IN MEDIOCRITY.

AND EVEN WITH ALL THE PROGRESS WE SEEM TO BE MAKING AS A PEOPLE, ITS SAD TO SEE HOW MANY A YOUNG PERSON HAS ALLOWED MEDIOCRITY.

I KNOW THIS GENERATION CAN'T RELATE TO THE ISSUES OF THE LAST 50 YEARS, BUT THERE WAS A TIME WHEN NIKE DIDN'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH US.

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN MACY'S WOULDN'T SELL ANY COLOGNE THAT A BLACK MAN CREATED.

THERE USED TO BE A TIME WHEN THE ONLY WATER YOU COULD DRINK WAS OUT OF A COLORED WATER FOUNTAIN.

AND NO MATTER HOW TALENTED OR ATHLETIC YOU WERE, THERE WERE SPORTS TEAMS, BOTH COLLEGIATE AND PROFESSIONAL, THAT REFUSED TO SIGN A BLACK ATHLETE.

THIS IS WHY EDUCATION WAS SO IMPORTANT.

BECAUSE WHEN EVERY OTHER OPPORTUNITY WAS DENIED TO US AS A PEOPLE, THE ONE THING THEY COULDN'T TAKE FROM US, WAS THE KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM WE GAINED THROUGH OUR EDUCATION.

I UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE NOT ALL AFRICAN AMERICAN AS IT WERE. BUT NO MATTER WHAT ETHNIC

**CLASSIFICATION YOU FALL UNDER TODAY, YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT EDUCATION IS JUST AS IMPORTANT NOW AS IT WAS 50 YEARS AGO.**

**TAKE IT FROM A MAN WITH 60 YEARS OF LIFE UNDER MY BELT; THERE ARE JUST SOME DOORS YOU CAN'T WALK INTO, WITHOUT A GOOD EDUCATION.**

**I'M NOT SAYING THAT EVERYBODY HAS TO GO TO COLLEGE OR GET A MASTERS DEGREE, BUT DROPPING OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL IS JUST NOT AN OPTION.**

**I KNOW YOU LIKE THE IDEA OF HAVING ALL THE TOYS AND TRINKETS YOU CAN PLAY WITH,**

**BUT I NEED YOU TO KNOW THAT "STUFF" COST MONEY.**

**I KNOW YOU'VE HEARD THIS BEFORE, BUT NOTHING IN THIS WORLD IS FREE.**

**CARS COST MONEY.**

**MILLION DOLLAR CRIBS COST, JUST THAT, A MILLION DOLLARS. CELL PHONES COST MONEY. FACT ABOUT IT KEEPING A CELL PHONE ON COST MONEY.**

**NAME BRAND CLOTHES COST MONEY. AND WITHOUT THE PROPER EDUCATION, THESE THINGS ARE NOT AN OPTION FOR YOU.**

**YOU HAVE SOME OF THESE THINGS NOW, BECAUSE YOU DON'T PAY NO MORTGAGE.**

**BUT WHEN THE TIME COMES FOR YOU TO CHOOSE BETWEEN A 500-DOLLAR CELL PHONE AND A 350 LIGHT BILL, I GET THE FEELING YOU GOT ENOUGH SENSE TO KEEP YOU ELECTRICITY ON.**

**THIS IS THE LESSON THAT WE'VE FAILED TO TEACH THIS GENERATION.**

**BECAUSE WE'VE GIVEN THEM SO MANY TOYS TO KEEP THEM PACIFIED, BUT WE'VE FORGOTTEN TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION.**

**I'M NOT SAYING THAT IT'S WRONG TO HAVE SOME THINGS YOU WANT.**

**BUT IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE TO PUT A 20-DOLLAR HAT ON AN EMPTY HEAD.**

**IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO FALL BACK ON, OTHER THAN YOUR ATHLETIC ABILITY?**

**IF MICHAEL VICK DIDN'T TEACH YOU ANYTHING ELSE, YOU SHOULD HAVE LEARNED THAT YOU ARE NOT THAT IMPORTANT TO THEM ONCE YOU COMMIT A CRIME.**

**SO NOW, SINCE MICHAEL VICK DIDN'T FINISH VIRGINIA TECH, AND IN LIEU OF THE FACT THAT THE FALCONS WANT THEIR MONEY BACK, WHAT IS THIS YOUNG, HALF EDUCATED, MAN GOING TO DO WHEN HE GETS OUT OF FEDERAL PRISON?**

**WHEN TIM DUNCAN GETS THROUGH WINNING CHAMPIONSHIPS, HE STILL HAS HIS DEGREE FROM WAKE FOREST TO FALL BACK ON. BECAUSE EVEN AS GOOD A BALL PLAYER AS HE IS, IT ONLY TAKES A SPRAIN OF THE ANKLE FOR THEM TO DISMISS HIM FROM THE LEAGUE.**

**HERE'S THE POINT I'M TRYING TO MAKE TO YOU. BECAUSE I DON'T WANT YOU TO THINK THAT I CAME HERE TO BASH HIP-HOPPERS AND BALL PLAYERS.**

**THE POINT I NEED YOU TO TAKE FROM THIS MESSAGE, IS THAT EDUCATION CAN OPEN SO MANY OTHER DOORS IN YOUR LIFE.**

**SO JUST IN CASE YOUR DREAM OF BECOMING FAMOUS DOESN'T COME THROUGH, YOU CAN STILL HAVE SOMETHING IN YOUR BRAIN TO HELP YOU FUNCTION IN SOCIETY.**

**I KNOW YOU CAN SEND A TEXT MESSAGE, BUT CAN YOU READ?**

**I KNOW YOU CAN WORK A DVD PLAYER. BUT CAN YOU FILL OUT A JOB APPLICATION?**

**YOU GOT ME WHEN IT COMES TO MUSIC AND ART. BUT DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN IRA AND A MONEY MARKET ACCOUNT?**

**YOUNG PEOPLE, THESE ARE THE THINGS THAT EDUCATION WILL DO FOR YOU.**

**IF I WERE AT ABYSSINIAN I WOULD SAY, “*SEEK YE FIRST, THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND IS RIGHTEOUSNESS.*”**

**“*AND ALL THESE OTHER THINGS WILL BE ADDED UNTO YOU.*”**

**BUT SENSE I’M IN A SECULAR SETTING, I’LL TELL YOU TO SEEK YE FIRST YOUR EDUCATION, AND AT LEAST A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA.**

**AND ONCE YOU GET SOME KNOWLEDGE IN YOUR BRIAN, ALL THESE OTHER THINGS WILL BE ADDED UNTO YOU.**

**TELL THE PERSON NEXT TO YOU, FIRST THINGS FIRST.**

**YES, THE PERSON WHO CREATED YOUR COMPUTER, MOST LIKELY IT WAS BILL GATES.**

**BILL GATES IS AN EDUCATED MAN, WHO USED HIS EDUCATION TO CREATE SOMETHING THAT ALL OF US USE TODAY.**

**THE PEOPLE WHO ARE CAMPAIGNING TO BECOME THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, THESE ARE EDUCATED PEOPLE WHO WOULD NOT HAVE HAD THIS OPPORTUNITY WITHOUT IT.**

**YOU CAN BE ANYTHING IN THE WORLD YOU WANT TO BE. BUT YOU HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF FIRST THINGS FIRST.**

**IN OTHER WORDS, YOU NEED TO FOCUS ON EDUCATION BEFORE POPULARITY. EDUCATION BEFORE FASHION. EDUCATION BEFORE A BOYFRIEND. EDUCATION BEFORE A GIRLFRIEND. EDUCATION BEFORE IMPRESSING PEOPLE, EDUCATION BEFORE BLING, BLING.**

BECAUSE THE SAME PEOPLE WHO PICK AT YOU FOR BEING A NERD, THOSE WILL BE THE SAME PEOPLE WHO WILL ASK YOU WHAT YOU WANT ON YOUR WHOPPER.

HERE'S MY QUESTION FOR YOU AS I PREPARE TO CLOSE.  
WHAT WILL YOU HAVE TO SAY AT THE END OF YOUR SENIOR YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL?

WHEN I TALK TO YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE DOING WELL IN SCHOOL, THEY TELL ME ABOUT THE CRITICISM THEY RECEIVE FROM THEIR PEERS.

THEY DON'T FEEL LIKE THEY FIT IN WITH THE CROWD, SO THEY OFTEN GET LEFT OUT OF A LOT OF THINGS.

AND FOR A TEENAGER TRYING TO DISCOVER WHO THEY ARE, THAT CAN BE A PAINFUL FOUR YEARS TO ENDURE.

BUT THE THING I ALWAYS TELL THEM WHEN THEY COME TO ME FEELING DOWN, I TELL THEM TO WAIT TILL SENIOR YEAR.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT REVEREND?

WELL, SENIOR YEAR IS WHEN THE SCHOLARSHIP CHECKS ARE GIVEN OUT.

SENIOR YEAR IS WHEN EVERYBODY STARTS TALKING ABOUT WHERE THEY'RE GOING IN THE FALL.

SENIOR YEAR IS WHEN YOUR CRITICS GET QUIET. BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE ANYTHING POSITIVE TO SAY ABOUT THEIR OWN FUTURE.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO SCHOOL? I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF JOB YOU GOT LINED UP? I DON'T KNOW.

BUT THERE YOU ARE, ON THE NIGHT OF GRADUATION, YOU ALREADY KNOW WHAT'S WAITING ON YOU NEXT FALL.

A SCHOLARSHIP FROM RUTGERS. A FREE RIDE TO CLARK ATLANTA, A SUMMER INTERNSHIP AT IBM. AND IT'S ALL BECAUSE YOU PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST.

I KNOW IT SEEMS LIKE SCHOOL IS POINTLESS, AND YOU DON'T REALLY SEE WHERE THESE SUBJECTS APPLY TO YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW.

BUT IF YOU WANT TO SEE THE POWER OF EDUCATION, JUST LOOK AT THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY RIGHT NOW.

AS WE SPEAK, THE WRITER'S GUILD IN HOLLYWOOD HAS DECLARED A STRIKE FOR ALL MOVIES, SOAP OPERAS, SITCOMS, TALK SHOWS, AND COMEDY SKETCH SHOWS.

WHAT THIS MEANS IS THAT THE WRITERS FEEL THEY ARE NOT BEING PAID WHAT THEY'RE WORTH. SO THEY WENT ON STRIKE TO PROTEST THIS UNFAIR TREATMENT.

AND, WATCH THIS, BECAUSE THE WRITERS HAVE STOPPED WRITING, PRODUCTION FOR *YOUR* FAVORITE TELEVISION SHOWS AND MOVIES HAVE STOPPED TOO.

DAVID LETTERMAN COULDN'T TAPE ANY NEW SHOWS BECAUSE HIS WRITERS WERE ON STRIKE.

DENZEL WASHINGTON HAD TO STOP PRODUCTION ON HIS NEXT FILM BECAUSE HIS WRITERS WERE ON STRIKE.

THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS, MY FAVORITE SOAP, ALMOST WENT OF THE AIR, BECAUSE THE WRITERS WERE ON STRIKE.

THE GOLDEN GLOBES AWARDS SHOW WAS CANCELLED FOR THIS WEEKEND BECAUSE THE WRITERS ARE STILL ON STRIKE.

AND MORE THEN LIKELY, THE OSCAR AWARDS WILL BE CANCELLED BECAUSE THAT TOO IS A SCRIPTED PROGRAM.

WHAT IS MY POINT? I WANT YOU TO SEE THAT EDUCATION IS A POWERFUL TOOL IF YOU'LL USE IT.

ALL THESE RICH AND POWERFUL PEOPLE IN HOLLYWOOD, CAN'T WORK BECAUSE THE WRITERS, THE EDUCATED PEOPLE, THE NERDS, THE ONES THAT NOBODY TALKED TO,

**THE ONES THAT NOBODY APPRECIATES, THE ONES THAT WENT TO COLLEGE, THE ONES THAT EVERYBODY PICKED ON IN HIGH SCHOOL, THESE NERDY, DORKY WRITERS ARE HOLDING ALL OF THESE CELEBRITIES FUTURE IN THEIR HANDS.**

**GO AHEAD AND BE COOL IF YOU WANT. BUT THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE WILL COME TO THOSE WHO PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST.**

**I WANT YOU TO LEAVE HERE SAYING TO YOURSELF, "I CAN GET MY BIG HOUSE. BUT I'M GOING TO GET MY EDUCATION FIRST.**

**I'M GOING TO DRIVE MY MERCEDES OR MY BMW. BUT I'M GOING TO GET MY MATH AND BIOLOGY FIRST.**

**I'M GOING TO WEAR ME A ROLEX ONE DAY. BUT I'M GOING TO GET MY READING AND WRITING FIRST.**

**I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHICH STRENGTHENS ME!**

**IF YOU WANNA INSPIRE PEOPLE LIKE DOCTOR KING, YOU GOTTA PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST.**

- **FREE SOME PEOPLE LIKE HARRIET TUBMAN**
- **HELP SOMEBODY LIKE MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE**
- **MAKE A DIFFERENCE LIKE THURGOOD MARSHALL**
- **CHANGE THE WORLD LIKE BILL GATES**
- **RUN FOR PRESIDENT LIKE HILLARY CLINON**
- **OWN THE TEAM LIKE MICHAEL JORDAN**
- **WIN THE SUPER BOWL LIKE TONY DUNGY**
- **INSPIRE A GENERATION LIKE TIGER WOODS**
- **HAVE (3) DOCTORATE DEGREES LIKE ME**

- **HAVE A FAMILY OF YOUR OWN ONE DAY**
- **WANT YOUR CHILDREN TO BE PROUD TO CALL YOU DADDY**
- **WANT YOUR DAUGHTERS TO IMMOLATE YOU**
- **IF YOU WANNA BE MORE LIKE JESUS**

**“FOR I HEARD, JESUS SAY, I MUST BE ABOUT MY FATHER’S BUSINESS” IS IT ALRIGHT TO GO THERE? I WASN’T SURE...**