

BCL ep370 Training Life Skills for the Next Generation with Mitchell Slater

Students today are living in a world where they most certainly need to be deeply formed to love what is true, good, and beautiful. But they also need practical skills and confidence that comes from real life experiences that they can carry into college, career, and life beyond. Our guest today began his first business at 17 because his parents gave him the space to take some risks early on and to have experiences that complemented his more formal education.

He continues today to inspire young people to be real world ready. You'll want to hear his story and our great conversation on this episode of Basecamp Live. Mountains.

We all face them as we seek to influence the next generation. Get equipped to conquer the challenges, summit the peak, and shape exceptionally thoughtful, compassionate, and flourishing human beings. We call it ancient future education for raising the next generation.

Welcome to Basecamp Live. Now your host, Davies Owens. Welcome to another episode of Basecamp Live.

Davies Owens, your host here with you on the journey of raising the next generation. I often hear from people when I speak at schools or just from emails that are sent in how encouraging it is to know that they're not the only ones out there doing this classical Christian thing. It is sometimes concerning that you've somehow joined this sort of eclectic group of people that are very different from your neighbors and very different from the school down the street.

I just want to encourage you as I travel and as I talk to people, there are so many people that are leading this movement. In fact, classical Christian education is the most rapidly growing segment within private school, Christian school education. It's because so many people are realizing that what was actually done before really is what our world needs going forward.

This is not just a trip back into nostalgia land. It's an encouragement for how to raise a generation to take on the real world. Our guest today, Mitchell Slater, is very much one of those stories of someone who now in life, founder and CEO of Slater Strategies, but he grew up in Alaska where he learned early on the value of hard work and starting a business while he was still in high school.

Today's marketing company works with schools and organizations around the country, but he attributes who he is now to those early critical days and the role that his parents and school played in his life. We're going to share more of his story and conversation that I had with him here in just a moment. Before we do, a special shout out to a couple of different schools that are part of this growing movement all around the world.

I love to just point to a couple schools each week, in particular to Brandon Johnston, head of school at Coram Deo Academy in Bremerton, Washington. Brandon, thank you for being a part

of the Zipcast and Basecamp Live families, as well as to Christy Cooper, head of school at the Seattle Classical Christian School there in Seattle, Washington. We are so grateful that you were part of this big movement that we're all a part of, and I'm excited for you to hear more from Mitchell Slater and his story and the work he's doing to inspire the next generation.

Before we get started with the interview, a special shout out to our sponsors for this episode, our friends at Wilson Hill Academy and the important work that they're doing providing online classical Christian education, our partners with the Herzog Foundation and the training work that they do all around the country at no cost to Christian educators, including the training that I'm a part of, Coaching for Parent Engagement. You can hear more and learn more at the Herzog Foundation's website. And of course, our friends at Wyze Phone, a great product that is an alternative to a fully functioning smartphone, both for us as adults and for our students, and our own partnership with Zipcast and the great resource we provide to schools all around the country to communicate and connect better with parents and teachers.

All of those great partnerships and details are on our partners page. Without further ado, here's my conversation with Mitchell Slater. Mitchell, welcome to Basecamp Live.

It is awesome to be here. It's been a lot of years in talking about this and now we're finally making it happen. It's finally happening.

You beat me. I got to be on your podcast and I was like, you've got to get on Basecamp Live. So here we finally made it happen.

Well, I would love for folks to hear a little bit of your story. You had a wonderfully unique upbringing in the wilderness of Alaska and you're doing some incredible things right now that are really helping to form the next generation. But yeah, tell us a little bit of your story.

Sure, man. Well, again, thanks for having me. And the story started technically in Florida.

I was born in Florida originally. And then my dad got a job up in Alaska when I was 11. It's an old family.

We moved up to Alaska in 2004 and I'm one of four boys. Homeschooled my entire life. Never went to school.

And I love being homeschooled. My mom's a rock star. None of us got into drugs or went to jail or anything.

So I feel like she did a pretty good job. And I love Alaska. If anybody hasn't ever gone, you got to go.

It really is a bucket list type of state, whether it's winter or summer, you got to go. But as I got up there, I always, my whole life, I've always had a heart for just entrepreneurship as well as ministry. So I've raised in the church my entire life.

And so at 17, I mean, for many years, I talked to my mom, like, I really want to start a business. I want to start a business. And she's like, okay.

And so she said, you can start one, but you're on your own. And so I said, okay. So at 16, since I could drive, I started taking classes at the local Alaska Small Business Development Center for free because it's obviously paid for by our taxes and learn how to start a business, how to do bookkeeping, all that stuff.

And I ended up officially starting a business when I was 17. I was a junior in high school and kind of just was a part of my schooling a little bit of like learning business. I had no idea what I was doing.

I remember making \$30 profit my first month and being like, well, this is going to be a little bit harder than I thought it was going to be. But I've been doing it ever since. So I've just celebrated 15 years in business, still doing it.

And now it's- That's it. Go ahead. No, it's an amazing story.

I mean, I'm still back on four boys in Alaska. Like that had to be like the ultimate childhood, as you're describing. I mean, you probably spent a good bit of time outside, at least in the spring and summer months.

Oh yeah. I'm big in the snow. We did snow machining, which I know everybody calls it snowmobiling.

Alaskans call it snow machining. And then I do ice fishing and snowboarding and all the things in the winter, for sure. So what I'm just trying to, because I want to unpack some of this, because I think a lot of what you're describing is something that, especially for young men, boys today, is harder and harder to do.

I mean, too many folks just are indoors all the time. I think parents are maybe overly cautious about them getting hurt on a snow machine or being outside. So you really had kind of this wild at heart upbringing where there was a lot of spirit of adventure, I guess a lot of freedom in a good way from your parents to just try things.

I mean, it seems like even just the outdoor experiences before you even got to business really helped form that sense of curiosity and adventure. I would definitely agree with that. I mean, homeschooling was a big piece of that because we were always together as brothers and hanging out and mom would kick us out to go do stuff outside.

So I grew up around all the, even in Florida, but specifically Alaska, you kind of, we grew up with acreage up there is where I grew up around outdoors, guns. So it was very common to be like shooting guns your whole life and hunting and fishing and all that. So I'm very comfortable in, around all those things.

So yeah. So with the work you're doing, I mean, we're jumping around, but I mean, I want to stay kind of biographical in this, but I mean the, the concern from what you're seeing with your work now, I mean, with your work now you're doing, you know, directly with schools and giving certainly from a marketing standpoint, but I think just so many traditional education paths today miss it when it comes to preparing students for, for real life, you know, for actually not just the business degree, but sort of navigating life. Again, it sounds like a lot of the things that you just experienced were very much formative because it was giving you just life skills.

Talk again, what are some of the things that you feel like you took from those early years that just formed you to be the entrepreneur and the person you are today? I mean, my mom gave me, mom and dad obviously gave me a lot of freedom in the beginning to, to kind of do what I wanted within, you know, obviously a box, you know, within, you know, in place, but I had the lemonade stand growing up. I, I did anything to sell at the end of the street. I mean, I did, I was that kid that did lemonade.

I had my own carrot garden growing up. I literally sold carrots at the end of the street, anything to make money. I was trying to do it.

And my mom, she didn't, you know, monitor that. She was like, Hey, go for it if you want to. Yeah.

So a lot of it was learning by me, just figuring it out. And so very hands-on experience, not reading it per se in a book, same with the business. I mean, she'd tell me you're on your own.

Like I'll help you with like ideas or if you're struggling with something. But I was taking classes on my own at 16. And then I was like learning how to actually start a business license in the state of Alaska and learning how to do that with the government.

And yeah. And you think, and that's right. That, that drive, where did it come from? I've honestly, since I, since I was a little kid, I've always had it to where I didn't want to, and there's no knock on anybody who obviously, obviously works in eight to five.

I just, that sounded awful to me to be like, I'm going to grow up and work for somebody for the rest of my life and kind of be in this eight to five at an office. That just never sounded good. And I kind of saw my dad doing that.

And I was like, and I knew he didn't enjoy it. I knew he didn't like it. I was like, well, I don't, I don't really want to do that.

I want to have control of like what I want to do and do something I really enjoy. So I think it's because I saw it growing up going, I don't want to, I don't want to do that. Right.

And I think what I'm hearing is, you know, many parents while intentions are, you know, end up, they protect their kids cause they don't want them to fail or get hurt. But it sounds like your mom really did a good job of just both cautioning you, but also giving you enormous freedoms.

And, and through that, you were able to really, you had to go find your own way, which meant you had to own it and step out into ownership business.

I mean, that's really amazing at that age, 16, 17, starting a business. And one thing she did, they did not do, they did not force me or my, any of my brothers to go to college. They like said, if you want to go for it, that was not a thing growing up that I was like, Oh man, they're going to make me go to college or want me to go to college or pay for me.

I knew they weren't going to pay for me to go to college. I was going to be, if you want to go, it's going to, you're going to be on your own. And so I'm a grown up knowing that.

And I, I was one of the guys that didn't, I don't have a college degree. I did take some classes right out of high school at a local university at night while I was, my stories got crazy. Cause I got, I got a youth pastor job at this little church right out of high school.

I was 18. I actually became a youth pastor and was doing that while running my business. And I was trying to take some college classes.

And cause I was like, Oh, I always wanted to be in ministry. And I only took like 16 credits. And I was like, I can't do all these together.

So I've never finished, got a degree or anything. I've been doing this ever since. And you must have had, I mean, inevitably you hit some walls, had some failures.

How did your parents react early on as you were sort of charging out to take on the world? And then you realized, gosh, this may not be so easy. And there was discouragement. What was their reaction to that? I mean, always supportive.

They were, they, it was also, I'm very obviously blessed to know when I ventured out, I knew I had a home to come back to if things really hit the fan, you know, I was like, they're not going to be like, you're on your own. Like, yeah, you can't come back. So I knew that's a really nice mindset to be in knowing, like, I'm not going to live on the streets if this really does blow up in my face here.

So that was nice, but they were always supportive. And they, I don't come from an entrepreneur family either. That's not something that I was like seeing growing up.

So it wasn't like, they couldn't really help me with the business side of things if I had questions on it. Cause they didn't, they didn't. That was another thing.

Right. Yeah. Yeah.

But there was definitely a spirit of, we want you to be, you have, you know, individual agency. We want you to try things. We want you to explore.

I mean, I guess there's sort of practical skill building that you had to self-manage. I mean, so

there's a lot of just sort of, I guess, basic independence, tools of independence that they gave you. For sure.

I mean, finances was one of the ones they did growing up. I remember math was definitely my subject. That was my favorite, but I went, when I started getting pre-calculus and calculus, I was like, I hate math.

This is awful. And I remember my mom did consumer math with me in junior year or something. And I was like, where has this been my whole life? This makes sense to me.

I was like, I'm going to use this later on in life. I didn't, I was the kid that was like, why, why am I learning this? Cause I'm not going to use this later on in life. I knew I wanted to be in ministry.

I knew I wanted to be in business. And I was like, I know I'm not going to use this. And so consumer math was what really excited me because I was like, this will stick.

And I'm going to be excited about using this going forward. Wow. A lot of people are like, what is consumer math? That sounds really helpful.

Yeah. Well, and that, and so to that, to that point, you know, there's a, there's such a need, I think, for just this guiding our children, not only just to the lofty things. We have a lot of wonderful classical Christian schools out there that are helping students to, in all the right ways, form the deep thoughts and ask the big questions.

But not, not too long ago we had on Josh Mulvihill who wrote the book, 50 Things Your Kids Need to Know Before Graduating. It was wonderful because it's everything from, they need to also know how to balance a checkbook, probably to change the tire on their car. I mean, just life skills.

It's really what I hear you saying. There is a need to not only have the academic, intellectual horsepower, but just life navigating skills, which is what you were given in abundance. A hundred percent.

And I'm a big proponent, nothing against obviously the way schools are set up and Christian schools are doing, but I do believe the system is built to raise more workers, not entrepreneurs. I think it kind of will crush the entrepreneur dream. And I kind of feel like if I had gone to a public school or even a private school, I kind of feel like that would have been crushed in me because I had this, just this freedom to do kind of what I wanted to do, what I felt like I needed to do.

And I feel like, I mean, I don't know, because I obviously didn't do it. I just know that the system doesn't, it's not built to cater to the entrepreneur mindset of like start things, build things and create. Yeah.

No, you're right. And yeah. Well, why don't we take a break? I want to come back and unpack

that a little bit more.

I think we're, I'm seeing nationally a shift, I think from, especially in a lot of our private Christian and classical Christian schools. I mean, the idea of being only college prep is if that's the flag at the end of the whole thing is just get to college and you're done. And I think more and more it's like, no, we're really doing life prep and life is a lot more than just academic prowess.

It's the ability to really deal with all the stuff that comes at you. And I think I talk to workers, people in businesses all the time that are just challenged by the number of graduates that are entering the workforce now that really don't have those basic skills, even if they nailed the SAT and are, you know, it's just, there's a disparaging need for life skills as you're talking about. So let's, let's take a break and come back and we'll continue to explore some of these great, not only your own journey, but just some things that have led you now to help schools, help students in this, in this journey of really living well.

We'll be right back after the break. Today's episode of Basecamp Live is brought to you by my friend, Chris Casper, who you heard on a recent episode. His invention, the Wyze phone is a much needed third way, providing a solution from the dangers of a smartphone on the one hand and the limited capacities of an old school flip phone on the other.

His simple distraction free phone design for families who want technology to serve their real lives and give us and our older children a way to do basic essentials like calling or texting or maps without the web browser and the social media and the endless apps that can pull them and us into the addictive time wasting aspects of a smartphone. I personally have a Wyze phone and I can vouch that it is an excellent solution and an appropriate way to use technology that supports virtue and focus and healthy habits. Check out the link in our show notes and on our Basecamp Live website partners page where Chris is offering Basecamp Live listeners a discount.

Every school year tells a story. Some chapters are easy to see like the first day of class or graduation at the end, but the real heart of a story is often written in the quieter pages, a science experiment that sparks wonder, the decision to slow down and memorize a song, the way a teacher walks alongside a student who's struggling. Those are the moments parents long to understand.

They spark questions like how do I nurture that same sense of wonder at home? What simple rhythms can make God's Word a part of our family's everyday routine? How do I encourage perseverance in my child when the work gets hard? Zipcast helps schools bring those quieter pages to light. Each week families receive a short 10 to 12 minute episode that pairs local updates from their own school leaders with syndicated insights from trusted national experts in both Christian parenting and education. Parents can easily listen anywhere on the go, on the drive to practice while cooking dinner or during a quiet walk.

It's not another notice in an inbox, it's a voice, a voice that brings encouragement, clarity and

perspective. And in every episode parents not only hear what's happening at their school and why it matters, but also gain practical wisdom that connects the school story to the home. Nearly 100 schools are already using Zipcast this year and beginning in the fall or winter isn't too late.

It can actually be the best time to start. If you're a school leader, your school's story deserves to be clearly heard. Visit zipcast.media to learn more.

So Mitchell, you grew up in this amazing enviable boyhood in Alaska and then moved out into life and jumped into some seasons of doing ministry work. Bring us up to speed with where you are now and the work you're doing with schools. Sure.

Well after living in Alaska for, I think it was like 14, 15 years, I was youth pastor there for seven or so. My wife and I kind of felt God calling us out of Alaska. And so we moved to Florida eight years ago and been here since then and obviously visit our family every summer up there because summers are awesome.

But I've been doing marketing ever since, but it was about five years ago or so. I felt God tell me, man, you need to focus. Cause I was doing just general marketing, helping roofers, helping dog groomers, helping anybody needed marketing.

And I was honestly losing the love for what I was doing. Cause I was like, it's just, I wasn't feeling fulfilled in what I was doing anymore. I was like, man, maybe I need a pivot.

Maybe I need to do something else. And uh, I felt the Lord tell me you need to just focus, like pick something to just focus on. And so I looked at the list of clients I had and there was two schools I had at the time.

And I was like, you know, those are my favorite clients as I really kind of thought about it. They're my favorite. They're just good people.

It felt really satisfying and, and uh, fulfilling to say, Oh, I'm going to help them get another student in their school or help them help these kids find a school that teaches about the Lord and all that stuff. It just, that was fun to me. I was like, you know what? It'd be cool to help more schools like that.

And so that's when we took the company and I made a school division called school success. And that's when we, I launched my own podcast, which I know you've been a guest on called the school success podcast and started interviewing school leaders from all over the country, learning from them and seeing what's making them tick and what are they struggling with and sharing their journeys for other school leaders to, to go from. And that's kind of when that school marketing division was launched about four or five years ago.

Wow. That is a, and so you have a really, you know, I think helpful advantage vantage point because you're seeing what's happening broadly and um, in schools and you serve a broad

base, not just classical, not just Christian. I mean, you have, you have quite a broad spectrum of K-12 schools that are out there, um, to the comments or to the conversation we're having right before the break.

I mean, you do, so this sort of challenge of a lot of graduates are coming out of these schools, um, perhaps not as equipped as they could be for life skills or for a broader application of education. I mean, you're, so that's a lot of what you're seeing is because of that vantage point you have. A hundred percent.

And I, and again, the support I got from my family to be able to just try and know that, Hey, I might actually fail at that and that's okay. That was really helpful. And that just to park on that for a moment, I think that's one of those, that's so hard, especially for those of us that are maybe more perfectionist oriented or rightly wanting to do things well.

I had a, in my crazy life journey, I had a season for about seven years where I had started a nonprofit with a good friend of mine, Michael Tremaine, who was a former Walt Disney Imagineer. So we built basically an innovation lab using, um, you know, creative technologies and, and, and solutions to help nonprofits and churches. But one of the things that he really kept pounding in my head as a former Walt Disney Imagineer is that you have to be willing to try and to try something even if it fails.

And that's a very hard thing for a lot of folks who feel like it's, they're not being faithful or they've not stewarded something well because they tried it and it didn't work well. So help me understand as you were kind of going both through your own journey and as you look at what is needed with young people today, where is that opportunity to fail, uh, being, being offered? Where's it being offered or how can people learn to do it? What do you, what do you mean? Well, I think it's a great, yeah, let me finish my thought. I think it's like, where are, do you see that we're often not giving students permission to try something and fail? I mean, I think I'm wondering if that's the first problem is like failures never allowed.

So therefore don't try something as every place it's safe. It seems like that's maybe you have to have the permission to even have a more entrepreneurial spirit. Yeah.

I think our American culture kind of pushes that from its core of like, we, you know, we don't want people to see us fail. I mean, if anybody's on social media, you don't post your failures, you don't post the bad pictures of yourself. You know, it's like, it's all perfection.

So to think that we're going to have something bad happen. I'm not that we feel like a failure, but I've learned way more from my failures than I have my successes of like, well, I'm not going to do it that way again. I need to do it this way.

Then what I would have read in a book about it. And so I know, but typically we don't, I know there's a lot of people out there that want to start a business, but they don't because they are afraid of failure. So they'll keep the safe, the safe option of like, let's go eight to five, make sure I

guaranteed paycheck.

And I get, I get that, especially if there's benefits involved. So, but yeah, we've, we foster, that's like kind of like our culture has pushed that, that we don't want to, we don't want to fail. I don't want to be a failure.

Right. Yeah. And it's, and it's a real mess.

So, so jump it back into then your observation, you're in schools, talk about the work you're doing. You you've been helping schools in marketing, but you saw an opportunity to bring students along in that process. Yeah.

So I've been doing, when I was doing this for so long, we started helping schools with like, or your website, getting new students in with ad campaigns, all this stuff. And then I was like, well, schools need social media. Of course they need to be, you know, have social media accounts because that's where their prospective families are.

So I was like, well, let's help them with writing Instagram posts, posting on Instagram, Facebook, all that stuff. And man, like it, it started out okay. And then it just started going downhill.

And it was awful because what I realized is schools are super busy, which I knew that, but we would ask like, Hey, what's happening at the school this next month? And then do you have any new photos from the school? So we can post content for you. That's actually your content. It's real.

And we just, we wouldn't get anything. They would be so busy. They wouldn't send us what's going on.

So then what did we have to do? We had to post templated photo or templated content, stock photos, and they're awful. Nobody likes those. They don't engage with them.

And I, I finally pulled my team. I said, we're not, we're going to get rid of the service. We're not going to offer it anymore because it's just not, it's not a value to the school at all and bad on us.

And so we were going to get rid of it. And then I go, man, there's gotta be a way to think outside the box here. And how can we help the schools do this successfully? And I was like, Oh man, the youth pastor brain in me kicked on.

I go, how can we involve students in this? And I was like, Oh my goodness, these schools have hundreds of little marketers at their school already. What if I could get a small team of students that I could teach and coach how to do marketing that they can help their school do it. And then they can learn something that actually they can use later on in life into high school, into college, into a future career path.

If they want to start their own marketing company or get a marketing job. And that's when the

program we just launched called SMT was born, which stands for school marketing team, or some schools call it student marketing team, but it is school marketing team where I teach students all over the country at different schools, how to do marketing for their schools. And that has been super, super fun.

So what is that? I mean, unpack that a little bit more because I know, uh, you know, the challenge I think in schools, especially in the Christian world, we're always, uh, very cautious about the degree to which students are on technology. And so much of marketing is obviously outwardly facing social media websites. So I know there are schools I've been actually doing ISM training.

And I think I was the only one in the room that raised my hand and said, so are there's, there are schools, you know, that don't have the students running through the hallways with their smartphones, posting to social media. So you're not talking about that narrowly. There's a broader vision of training marketing, but how do you sort of navigate the technology cautions within that, uh, marketing opportunity? Well, I mean, I think every kid should have social media and a cell phone at five years old, every one of them.

No, it's eight. It's not eight. It's eight.

Wait till eight. You know, I'm definitely with what I do for a living and obviously what I'm helping students do, man, I'm a component. I don't, I don't think kids should have smartphones.

Uh, I don't think they should be on social media. I'm definitely on that side, but I'm the quick one to tell the schools marketing is so incredibly broad. It is hugely broad that I know we naturally think social media, which I'll be honest, a lot of the schools in the program, classical schools included are having their students help with social media content and that looks different from every school.

So I kind of will help coach in a different mean, different area, a few different areas for the students. Uh, let's say for social media, for one of those, uh, most of the schools that I'm coaching, they're not saying, Hey student, here's your cell phone. I want you to take photos.

You have to log into the Instagram page. We want you to post when you're at home tonight. Like they're not doing that.

They're saying, Hey students, there's a basketball game on Friday. Who can go take photos of the basketball game that we can post tomorrow on the social media page and they'll go take photos the next day they're getting together and they're like, what should we write to put on the social media page? And the teacher's doing it with them to put content out there. But that's one piece.

Another school does a newsletter fully 100% run by students. They write it, they take the photos for it, they assemble it and send it out to all their families and marketing. Like I tell the students

all the time, you being out in the community at your church in your neighborhood talking about your school is marketing as well.

So we've talked about how do you talk about your school in a positive way when you're around your family, around your friends to send people back to the school. Even like how the school, my favorite ones is letting this, having the students picture that first time they went to the school and what did the campus look like? Was there light bulbs out where the, was the greenery overgrown? Was it dirty? Like all of that is marketing as well. What does your school campus actually look like online but also in person? It's all marketing.

So SMT handles a lot of different things based on what schools and students want to focus on. It's a great model and I love the way that you're just, you painted such a broad picture of students really owning their school and learning how to tell that story, learning how to incorporate that into writing. I think that's a great, you know, certainly to the communication director at the school, this is welcome to hear.

We're actually getting not only help but we're getting it from the actual customers themselves who are saying this is what I love about our school or to your point, hey everybody, it's probably not a great idea to have the pile of, you know, lost and found right there in the door when you come in on the new parent visitation. So they might see it in a way that maybe others don't. We've had a lot of success with zip cast of schools that have done something similar where they have sent students out to do, you know, a question of the week or to do a testimonial.

And so the more that it becomes the voice of your fellow peers and the population of the school, that's what tells the best marketing story. So I love how you're doing that. So explain, so how does that from a programmatic standpoint work? Is that a training that's done to the communication director? Is it done directly to the students? What is the, how does it actually, how do you engage this school specifically? Sure.

It's evolved every year. We're in year five of the program and this year was our best one yet with what we structured. We've been trying to add more tech.

And so this year I had pre-recorded content that I would record based on different modules that the students could learn and grow from. And they can watch it at their leisure when they want to focus on something specific as a group. Typically I try and tell them five to eight students is that sweet spot.

You don't want a whole class of 40 students that if you're actually wanting them to do things, cause that's just too many cooks in the kitchen typically. And then each school in our program, they get one, one-on-one call a month with me. And so that's like, okay, what are you focusing on? Is there as a newsletter? Well, let's talk about what that looks like.

You know, we had a school this past week that had their call with me and we're talking about target market. It was like, okay, we're going to write this content, but who are you, who are you

writing it for? And so it was really good for them to think, I'm not giving them all the answers. So I'm letting them think.

And I was like, all right, who do you guys think is the target market? Like, oh, well, it's probably parents of kindergartners. Okay. How old is a parent of a kindergartner? Probably.

And then I, and we got the work backwards to go, well, then we need to get content that's going to be used to be in front of that perspective person. And then where are those people? Are they on Instagram? Are they on Twitter? Like then they start to go, oh, I get it now. And then this past week we talked about AB testing of like, all right, when you put something out there, let's do two of them and see which one actually gets more clicks and more impressions.

So they're learning. Again, it's not just social media, get on their phone and post it. That's, that's probably the least.

That's not the point. Well, I love that again, that the overarching theme here, of course, the conversation is just, is training students in skills that they can use for the rest of their lives. And I think whether they professionally go into marketing or not, a lot of the things that you were talking about, kind of reverse engineering that process is, is really a way to problem solve.

It's a way to put initiatives together. It is, you're describing it too. I'm thinking about the, how many schools have like a yearbook group.

This was sort of, you know, for, for decades, you always had the students worked on the yearbook and they were kind of in the same way taking pictures and capturing stories that became a single bound edition at the end of the year. This is far more dynamic, but in some ways it has some of that same idea of let's bring put together a little green beret team of students who just sort of really own this communication. Is that, does it ever tie in with your book? It does.

Actually, there's some schools that it's a part of their yearbook team committee. Some of them this year, it's a separate extracurricular after school they get together. And then this is, this year is the first year we actually had a school that it is a part of their curriculum.

Like they're actually getting graded on the class, not by me, but they are getting graded for the class, getting credit and all that. And I was like, oh, that's interesting. Cause they got, they were able to get funding from their state for the class because it's giving it the state.

It was Arkansas. They had like money available for people who are teaching business and marketing or something. And so that's amazing.

So again, this is what you have is, is it typically done as a one year kind of commitment or one year class as such? Yep. One school year. So I'm September, one school year.

Okay. And then like year two, are they kind of up on their own? Is that the assumption they're

kind of, you've given them the skills and they just keep rolling with it? Or is there a follow up? Most every, every group is a little different. So it's typically, they just continue to go on the next year and they can build off of it if they want, or most of them lose those students to graduating or they go to do something else.

And then I have a new team to work with. It's kind of up to them. It is very, it's molded to work with.

Yeah. Yeah. No, I think that's, that's, that's great to have that flexibility.

Hey, let's take another quick break. I want to come back and get your thoughts on a few more just practical words of encouragement on training life skills and equipping the next generation. We'll be right back.

If you're seeking an education that helps your child thrive academically and spiritually, Wilson Hill Academy has spent years developing a model that I want you to know about. In their free guide, you'll see how their thoughtfully sequenced curriculum prepares students for college and how a biblical worldview helps them understand the world around them with and how their discussion-based classes teach them to think critically, not just what to think. You'll also discover how their teachers equip students to live purposefully for Christ.

With accredited live online classes, your child can learn from master teachers anywhere with an internet connection, all within a community that has transformed families like yours. Download their free guide today at wilsonhillacademy.com/slash/guide, or in the link in our show notes. During this short break, I have a special invitation to all school leaders, administrators, and teachers.

I want you to imagine for a moment stepping away from your everyday routine at school and diving deep into the rich foundations of Christian education, surrounded by world-class scholars, seasoned classroom teachers, and administrative experts with years of experience running schools with a lot of wisdom to share. That's exactly what the for the last few years, leading their two-and-a-half-day training on spiritual formation and another one on parent engagement. They offer close to 50 unique training events, ranging from board governance to marketing to classroom best practices.

They even offer a training on how to teach the great books. And the best part of all, well, thanks to the generosity of the Herzog Foundation, these training events, including lodging, are completely free for Christian educators. Institutes are located around the country in beautiful locations, including at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., and the Reagan Library in Santa Barbara.

Don't miss this incredible opportunity. Check out the details at theherzogfoundation.com. Mitchell, your story is so inspirational, and I know that those listening are probably thinking, I've got a child either in my home or maybe in my class that just, I think, would really take off if

we gave him some room to be creative and be an entrepreneur. What are some words of encouragement you have to parents and educators when it comes to just giving them that freedom that was so important to you and that you're providing specifically through marketing? The core of it is business.

I just love the business. I love the game of business. I do consider it as a game where you have to get to practice and you have to get better at it to win the game.

And obviously, you look at the stats, there's businesses that shut down every single year and the thousands upon thousands. And I would wish kids were given a shot earlier on to even just start a business in general. And so maybe you guys have a child that you think potentially has that want or that need, like, I want to start a business.

And just letting them try it. They literally have the best opportunity right now to start something and fail and fail miserably and be okay because they're still at mom and dad's house and they have a bed, they have food. And a lot of people don't have that benefit.

They start in their 30s or 40s and they go bankrupt and they lose their house and they lose all these things. So it's what a great opportunity for kids to get hands on experience to just start a business if their parents are okay with the idea of them doing that. I'm a 6 year old and I'm like, it's so hard to see him fail.

It is really difficult. I want to step in as this father and be like, I'm going to fix it. I'm going to make it better.

But I know he's going to learn from that failure of knowing something hurts or knowing something doesn't feel good. So I let it happen unless he's going to get obviously severely injured or something like that. I'll step in.

But that's kind of what I see this as. And I've kind of, he can do what he wants. I've told him that.

I'm not pushing him into it, but I am highly encouraging him to be a business owner and to do something in this term, in terms of what he wants to do. The way I phrase it though, Davies, instead of saying, what do you want to be when you grow up? I've been trying to start asking him, what problem do you want to solve? Because I want him to see the world of like, there's lots of problems out there, but you could solve that problem and then profit from it and help people with it instead of just going, what do I want to do for work? So I want him to see that there's problems out there to solve. And that's why I love, obviously, capitalism because it encourages people to find problems and fix it and make it better.

As you're telling that story, I have to brag on my middle son, Liam, to this point. When he was at Ambrose, probably in ninth grade, my wife got a strange call from him at school saying, mom, I need you to run by Buffalo Chicken Wings or whatever it is and pick up like eight boxes of chicken wings. And she's like, for what? And he's like, I just got something going on.

So she trusted him and picked up the eight boxes of chicken wings and brought it to him. And then he had figured out, he set up a little business where he figured out it's like 18 cents a chicken wing. It's on for 50 cents during lunch.

So he was like tripling his dollars every Friday. So he became the chicken wing guy selling this little business. So it would have been very easy for my wife to go, well, that's ridiculous.

And I don't know. It was perfectly within his ability to do that. It didn't cause any problem at the school, but it was just kind of a fun example of one of those.

I love that. Sometimes our kids have these crazy ideas and it'd be really easy to just shut it down because it's inconvenient or I don't know, whatever crazy reason, or a reason that might be legitimate, but if it's not going to hurt anything to your point, why not let them try it? So at any rate, so he is, I don't know. We'll see when he writes his bio someday where that were in critical role, the chicken wings played, but certainly gave him some entrepreneurial confidence.

I love, golly, I love that. And I'll give you the example. I mentioned carrots on carrots at the beginning of this.

Yeah. I want to hear about that. Carrots in Alaska, that would have been real.

My pet rabbits. And so my, my mom was like, well, if you want to, I wanted to grow carrots for them. And so, but he also said I wanted to sell them.

And so I remember this, I was probably, I mean, I was under 10 and I remember her saying, if you want to do this, you need to go, you're on your own. You need to buy the seeds. So I remember saving up my allowance, buying the seeds, working the gardens, weeding the garden, selling them.

And like she made me do every process. It wasn't like I'll plant them, I'll plant them and you can sell them and profit from it. She's like, you have to, she, I love that about my mom.

Like she made me have to figure out each stage of this. And I think a lot of times with lemonade, when my son, I'm kind of getting off topic, but I kind of finished, I guess the carrot thing. My son wants to do lemonade.

It's like, okay, you got to buy the product to, you know, there's, there's costs involved. I'm not just going to buy stuff for you and you're going to make all the money. And so he learned there's a cost of doing business.

And when you sell it, you there, you have to pay your expenses and then you have profit. And so, and he was learning that three, four years old, you know, the driveway, you know, and he, it's so fun. Cause the neighbors automatically just buy it.

Cause they're, he's, you know, just a cute little kid. Of course. So it's good, good margins, you know? I love that story.

You could even teach him the, the, the, the, the risk of debt. Like I'll loan you 20 bucks to start it. And then he comes in with his \$18 profit and then you take it all away and he learns that it's probably not going to debt when you're starting.

So there's all kinds of, see all the, we can have fun. We should do a whole book on like a crazy little startup ideas between chicken wings, lemonade, and carrots. There's a lot going on.

Anyhow, Mitchell, well, thanks so much for inspiring us. If folks want to learn more about what you're doing with SMT, how can they connect with you? If they're interested in that one specifically the web link for that one is join.smt.com. If the school wants to sign up on that level, you can check out all the school work that we're doing at schoolsuccesmakers.com. Sounds great. Well, Mitchell, let's continue these conversations.

Thanks for the great work you're doing and advancing the next generation with Christian education and the great work you're doing with marketing. We really appreciate it. Thanks for being a part of the Basecamp Live conversation today.

Thanks, Davey. Appreciate you. Thank you for listening to this episode of Basecamp Live.

Be sure to check out our website, basecamlive.com for more than eight years of timeless episodes that you'll find helpful and encouraging as well as the helpful resources offered on our partners page. The views and opinions expressed in this program are those of the speakers and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of our partners like the Herzog Foundation. See you back next week.