

Developing a Family Mission Statement

It is critical for individuals and families to develop a vision for their future, for their reason to be. *Where there is no vision, the people perish.* (Proverbs 29:18, KJV). Without a vision, families tend to drift and frequently disintegrate.

For over two hundred years, Americans have enjoyed the heritage and benefits of a group of men who toiled, anguished, and prayed over a document that begins with the words: "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." The preamble to the United States Constitution is essentially a statement of mission followed by laws which help to fulfill that mission. Families can benefit by developing a mission statement too.

THE NEED FOR A MISSION STATEMENT:

1. Developing a mission statement is essentially leadership work. We always knew the Enterprise's mission because someone back at StarFleet headquarters has made it very clear: "These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise. Her continuing mission, to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no one has gone before."

A mission statement gives us a vision of what is to be created. In a family it guides the creation of the family climate. As Stephen Covey says, "The whole family can begin with the end in mind, a common purpose, a common vision."

2. Just as our national constitution provides us with a deep sense of order and security (even though we may rarely stop to think about it), a simple mission statement can unite a home around certain fundamental principles. Having a written, objective set of standards greatly contributes to a family's peace, harmony, and security.

WHAT IS A FAMILY MISSION STATEMENT?

A mission statement answers these questions: What is it, Lord, that You would like us to accomplish as a family? Lord, what kind of a family do you want? We know that our time together on this earth is limited. We know that You have a plan for us. What do You want us to do *specifically*? How would we define our unique family mission in life?

EXAMPLES OF FAMILY MISSION STATEMENTS:

- Lamech: Genesis 4:19-24. (This mission statement led to the judgment of the world by flood.)
- Abraham: Genesis 18:19 (Abraham's family mission statement was given to him by God).
- Jacob: Genesis 35:1-5 (This is a weak statement).
- Caleb: Numbers 14:24; Deuteronomy 1:36; Joshua 14:6-12; Judges 1:11-13 (given to him by God).
- Joshua: Joshua 24:15 (Good strong family mission statement).
- David: 1 Kings 2:1-4 (David's Covenant).
- Stephanus: 1 Corinthians 16:15.
- Gary Smalley's family: "We dedicate our family to the task of enriching other families."
- "Our family goal is to enrich other people's lives through physical healing."
- "Our family goal is to raise money for Christian organizations to further God's building of His kingdom."
- "The mission of our family is to help foreign missionaries spread the gospel to all of the world."
- "We devote our family to neighborhood evangelism."
- "God has called our family to demonstrate unconditional love to each other and to other people around us."
- Stephen Covey's family: "The mission of our family is to create a nurturing place of faith, order, truth, love, happiness, and relaxation and to provide opportunity for each individual to become responsibly independent and effectively interdependent in order to serve worthy purposes in society through understanding and living the gospel of Jesus Christ."

[Note the four parts: The characteristics of the home, the effect upon the individual persons, our real purpose, the ultimate source of the power.]

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING A FAMILY MISSION STATEMENT:

1. Mission statements should be timeless.
2. The best mission statements deal with both ends and means.
3. Every member of the family should participate. Even if your children are younger, you can still start using this "family constitution" method. Just keep the mission simple and full of pictures.
4. You don't invent your family mission. You detect it. You uncover it. Each family possesses special gifts, unique qualities, and characteristics. These are clues that God gives you to your family mission statement. Ask God to reveal your unique family mission.

PROBLEMS THAT OCCUR WITH MISSION STATEMENTS:

1. They are rushed. ? Developing a mission statement is a process, not an event.
2. They are announced. ? "This is what our mission will be."
3. They are forgotten. ? If this happens, they lose their power to affect change.

BENEFITS OF A FAMILY MISSION STATEMENT:

1. A family mission statement will free you from the tyranny of other people and life's circumstances. If you don't have a clearly-defined direction as a family, other people or the crush of life's circumstances will tend to set direction for you. You will find yourself the slave of other people and circumstances. ? Example: The kids get involved in too many sports and clubs ? mom and dad begin to feel like the taxi service family ? the family learns to say, "No! That does not contribute to our mission."
2. A good mission statement will define and motivate. It will be God's means to create a unique household. ? Statements (words) have the

power to motivate, to bring growth, change, and realization of a vision.

3. The reason most families split up is because they do not share a common vision. Since each of the family members participate in the creation of the mission statement, the process of making a mission statement will draw your family together. "This is our vision. We share it. This is why we exist as a family." ? Society is tearing the family apart. We must confront division with "NO! We have a unique purpose for being together!"

4. A family mission statement will affect your personal inner life, your heart. As you go through the process of developing a mission statement, you will absorb your mission statement. It will cause you to personally reexamine your motives, attitudes, and behaviors.

5. A family mission statement will become the policeman in your home. ? Even the simplest statement will become a patrolman, but you can also develop your mission statement into a family constitution. Here is the Gary Smalley Family Constitution which is an expansion of a mission statement to include limits.

Smalley Family Constitution We the people of the Smalley family, do dedicate our family to the task of enriching other families. We the people of the Smalley family, in order to form a more perfect union, do establish these two basic principles: 1. Love and honor God. 2. Love and respect others. We hereby base these principles on the Word of God (Luke 10:27). We also hereby establish six family limits from these two principles: 1. We honor Mom and Dad. 2. We honor our commitment to the family by performing all chores responsibly. 3. We honor our commitment to the family by performing all chores responsibly. 4. We honor friends and family. 5. We honor our commitment to the family by performing all chores responsibly. 6. God is worthy to receive our highest honor and praise, and His Word is to be honored as well. Dated: _____ Signed: _____

GUIDELINES FOR FORMING A MISSION STATEMENT

1. Gather Information ? Brainstorm, do some green light thinking. Other personalities in the family like this.

2. Organize ? Categorize your ideas. Beaver personalities delight in this.

_____ Michael Kari Greg

Analyze ? "How practical is that? Does that fit?" Golden Retriever personalities enjoy this, since it takes each member into consideration and promotes harmony.

Limit ? "Can't live with that one." "We don't have the gifts or resources to do that." Lion personalities like the bottom-line mentality.

Start ? Start using your family mission statement.

HOW TO GET THE MOST BENEFIT FROM A FAMILY MISSIONS STATEMENT:

1. Post it in a prominent place. ? Our family mission statement is posted right by the front door of our home.
2. Examine yourselves against it in your weekly family meetings. A church planting pastor once told me: "You must mention your purpose and vision at least every three weeks." Many of us can quote Star Trek's mission statement because it was repeated at the beginning of every episode. Repeat your family mission and examine yourself against it often.
3. Memorize it. ? Constant repetition will make this easy.

[Some of this information is taken from a seminar by [Gary Smalley](#).]