

What is a Family Mission Statement?

“A family mission statement is a written statement of what you want your life and family to be and values by which you live your life.” (Families with Purpose)

“A mission statement is a short, memorable statement that communicates the core values of any kind of group or organization. It’s the “Why we’re here” statement.” (Simple Family Joys)

“The goal is to create a clear, compelling vision of what you and your family are all about. Good families—even great families—are off track 90 percent of the time. What makes them good is they have a clear destination in mind, and they have a flight plan to get there. As a result, when they face the inevitable turbulence and human error, they keep coming back to their plan.” (Steven Covey)

“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?” (New Life Community Church)

Reactive vs. Mission-Driven Decision Making

When we don’t have a clear mission in mind as a family, we naturally react to situations, decisions, and problems based on what is *easiest* or most *comfortable*, or what is *popular* and most commonly valued in the culture around us – this could be secular culture or church culture. Consider the following big decisions that are common to most families across the parenting years. What would be your *reactive* responses to these decisions if you were responding according to *easy/comfortable*, *secular culture*, or *church culture*?

- o Work/career choices for mom and dad, schooling, discipline, housing/moving, free time/vacation choices, extracurricular activities, transitioning adolescent to independence, college choices and costs, etc.

When our families start looking indistinguishable from every other Christian family around us, or from the secular world around us, perhaps we are reacting to decisions based on culture, and are unable to discover God’s unique plan for our family. When we feel like we are just spinning in circles, never moving forward, the same problems arising again and again, perhaps we are reacting based on what is easiest or most comfortable in the moment. We haven’t taken time to identify and act on our values and how God has uniquely shaped our family for furthering his kingdom on earth.

Brainstorming Family Values

Before you actually sit down to express some of your values and your family mission, it is helpful to just think through the wide array of influences that are part of our decision making. Some of the values that influence the decisions of our lives reflect the culture we live in. Some reflect the home we were raised in. Some reflect our genetic code. Use the worksheet labeled VALUES to explore the values that resonate with your family members. (If you were in class, you already started this exercise).

Crafting a Family Mission Statement

There are as many ways to approach writing a family mission statement, as there are families. The important point is to choose an approach-ANY approach, and start to explore, reveal, and find, that mission. Here are a few ways. CHOOSE ONE that seems to fit your family best. Whatever you do, remember that while you as parents are the final “deciders,” involving your children in the process will not only help them embrace the mission, but it will give you much needed insight into how they view their family and what they value. Give yourself time to explore ideas together and then think about them and then come back and address the concepts later. Involving another family that knows you well can give you insight into the unique characteristics of your family. Approach this with the curiosity and pleasure of a scientist uncovering the beauty in God’s creation. Adding a treat like popcorn or doing it in an unusual venue-like in a park or a special place your family likes to go, will add to the “adventure” of this discovery.

1. Search online for “Family Statements” (use that search term in a search engine or Pinterest). Pick several that you find compelling. What is inspiring or “truth-telling” in them, or resonates with your own family’s mission? Use the statements to help you write your own, or take bits from several to compile your own. (This makes use of others thoughtful work, while making it fit your family.)
2. Give each family member a sheet of paper with the following sentences to complete individually. Have children do this on their own if they are old enough. If not, ask them and write down their responses. Then read them aloud and talk about which ones are most important to you as a group.

We want to _____
We usually _____
We will _____
We won’t _____
We always _____
We never _____

3. Here are some other questions that may help you define your family values and mission:

- o What are a few strengths of each family member?
- o Collectively, we are at our best when we are....
- o If we had a completely free day together as a family, how would we spend it?
- o What are practical ways we can serve each other?
- o What are practical ways we can serve others outside our family?
- o Name three things you could do better as a family.
- o What would people say today about our family as a whole?
- o What would we like people to say about our family in 30 years?
- o If our home could be filled with one emotion, what would it be?
- o What makes you want to come home?
- o What embarrasses you about our family?
- o Name three adjectives we would like people to use to describe our family.
- o What is one way we are unique as a family?
- o Describe the status of our family in 10 years.
- o Who are your friends? What values or passions do you share that forge your friendship?
- o What books, sermons, videos, blogs, podcasts, or news articles can you always make time for? Why are you drawn to them?
- o Who are your heroes or favorite celebrities? Whose life, when you learn about it, inspires you? Why?
- o What are your favorite Bible stories? Why do they move your heart?
- o Which aspects of Jesus' character and his work on earth strongly resonate with you?

4. If you find or think of a one-sentence statement, you can make short sub-statements that help "flesh out" your overriding statement. If you choose this method, you might choose an overarching statement such as "Love God with all of who we are and love others as we have been loved by God." Then make sub-statements that are short and memorable in various categories of life, such as, education, family, friendships, money, time, talents, skills, church, etc. These statements express how loving God and loving others look in each particular area.

5. From Warren Berger's article "Forget the Mission Statement. What's Your Mission Question?"

- o Why are we here in the first place?
- o What does the world need most that we are uniquely able to provide?
- o What are we willing to sacrifice?
- o What matters more than money/achievement?
- o Are we all on this mission together?

6. Here is a simple format:

"Our family strives ...
to _____ (do something—an action) _____
in such a way that _____ (how and in which manner) _____
so that _____ (we gain this result or benefit) _____.

Example:

Our family strives to act justly, love mercifully, and give generously, in such a way that each individual is valued while challenged to value others so that we learn to trust God's love for us and show his love to the world.