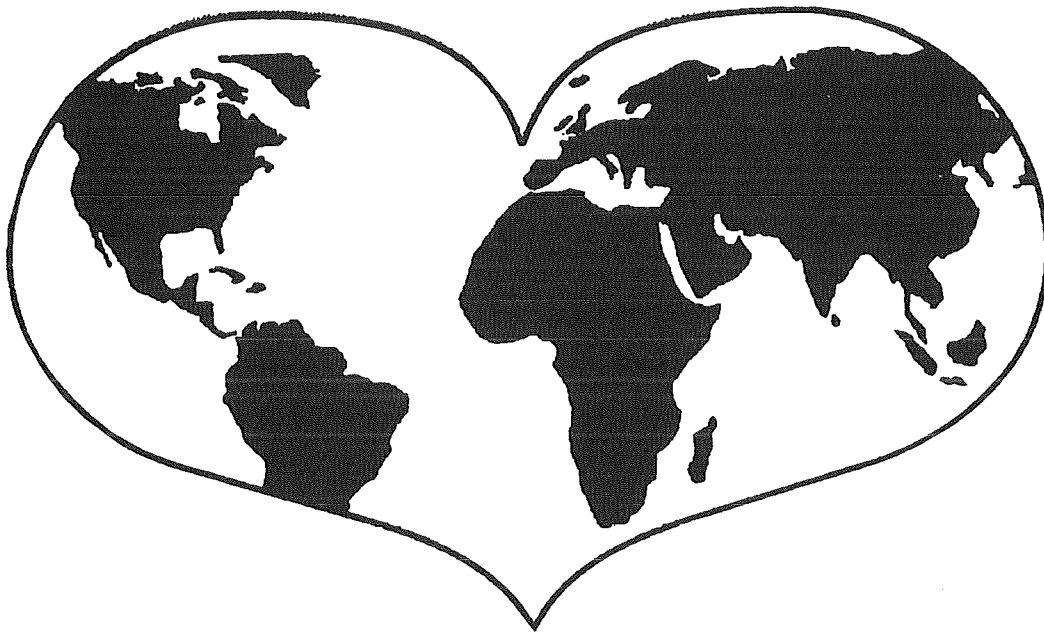


SECTION I:

GAINING A WORLD

PERSPECTIVE

FINDING YOUR FAMILY MISSION/VISION
INTERCESSORY PRAYER
MOTIVATIONAL MISSION STORIES
HIGHLIGHTS OF MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS





Chapter 1

FINDING YOUR FAMILY

MISSION/VISION

Have you ever wondered about God's purpose for your family? What is HIS reason for your existence and HIS overall mission for your lives? Do you know God's perfect will and your unique destiny and calling as a family? These are tough questions, yet the Bible teaches us that God wants to direct and guide His people (Exodus 33:11, Psalms 69:13, Proverbs 16:19, and John 10:27). We are told in Proverbs 29:19 that "*Where there is no vision, the people perish.*" Along with our individual goals, it is important for each of us to have a corporate vision for our family—uniting us to fulfill God's plan.

Throughout the world today, the family unit is under incredible attack. Despite renewed (and often conflicting) emphasis on "family values," divorce rates are skyrocketing, children are going their own way, and families are falling apart. Along with neglecting our spiritual foundations, most modern families have no common purpose for their lives. So often, husbands, wives, and children head in completely opposite directions, each pursuing their own selfish dreams. Yet God has created the family as a distinct unit—each with a special purpose and calling. Before God established human government or the Church, He ordained

the family unit. However, few of us realize the impact that our families can have on this earth.

Even in Christian homes where "togetherness" is normal, how many of us know (and can articulate) God's mission for our lives? Sadly, statistics of marriage and family success in the Church are no better than that of the world. We may be "family oriented," but without God's vision, we, too, are in danger of "perishing" or "dwelling carelessly" (Proverbs 29:18). Without a distinct mission, our lives may be dictated by the urgency of the moment, and our decisions can become careless and shortsighted. It is all too easy—especially as homeschoolers—to become so busy that we lose sight of God's over-all purpose for our family.

I have heard that many people spend more time planning their vacations than they do preparing for their entire future. Last year as our family got ready for a trip to Walt Disney World, I saw how this could happen. For us, this vacation was a once-in-a-lifetime splurge. We had accumulated six free airline tickets for anywhere in the United States, and decided to use them to visit the



amazing world of Mickey Mouse and his Magic Kingdom. For months we planned our “strategy” together. Pouring over travel brochures, we evaluated every option possible. We wanted the best use of our time and money. We bought a guide book and even planned our “order of attack” inside each park. All summer long, we had each of our children earn their own admission by pulling weeds and reading books. Penny-by-penny and dime-by-dime, their individual money jars began to fill up as we continued to dream together.

At last, our vacation came. The planning paid off, and we did have a wonderful time. Yet within a few days, our admission tickets were used up, the rental car had to be returned, our motel stay was over, and we were boarding the plane for home. Although we still have memories, it really was a short-lived vision. But think about it! How many invest this same effort and cooperation to find God’s plan and purpose for their families?

To achieve something great, you must have a plan. Throughout the Bible, we see men of God who were moved by His mission for their lives. Moses was called to deliver the people of Israel, and as a result, an entire nation was led out of Egyptian slavery. Joshua was called to lead Israel into the promised land, and despite giants and opposing armies, he was determined to fulfill his purpose. John the Baptist was called to prepare the way for the Lord, and even Jesus Himself was motivated by His mission to fulfill the will of His Father.

History also proves the importance of having a vision. Military kingdoms and political empires are not established by accident. To achieve victory takes effective leadership, and a definite plan and purpose. Think about government leaders today. Does a person become a Senator or President of the United States just by chance? No! It takes hard work, diligence, and an effective political strategy. It takes a powerful theme to unite diverse groups of workers and volunteers. Even in the business world, companies often invest thousands of dollars hiring professional business consultants to help bring their employees together with a common sense of direction. A company “mission” can inspire renewed cooperation and bring increased productivity and effectiveness. Think about the following corporate “mission”: Apple Computer strives “to make a contribution to the world by making tools

for the mind that advance humankind.” Disney’s goal is simply “to make people happy.”

Also in successful ministries, there is usually a specific and unifying purpose. In the growing AD2000 movement, “A church for every people by the year 2000” is the motivating goal. In Youth With A Mission, thousands of short and long-term missionaries are brought together by the common desire “To know Him and make Him known.”

As a family, you too need a unifying purpose and plan. Are you willing to invest the time and energy needed to find God’s mission and vision for you? It is not enough to just come up with a good idea and then ask God to bless it. Instead, you need to earnestly pray and seek the Lord for HIS goal—and that plan will ALREADY be blessed. But take note! God will not usually show His perfect will if you are merely going to consider doing it. To find the Lord’s direction, you need to get to the place where you are willing and ready to obey His plan—whatever it may be.

Your Family Mission/Vision: Like a Compass, a Rudder, and a Telescope

Like a compass, our family mission will guide us when we lose sight of every other landmark. When our way seems unclear, this mission will allow us to persevere—guided by our core principles and beliefs.

Like a rudder, this unifying vision can steady us to run a straight course, even when the winds are not favorable. A mission statement allows us to participate in something greater than ourselves, and to be directed by a steadfast goal, instead of being tossed about by every coming wave.

Like a telescope, this mission can also enable us to view our destination from far off. A mission statement gives us hope for the future, and can help us to live purposefully, with a sense of calling and destiny. Instead of trying to fulfill everyone else’s expectations, we will be motivated by our desire to please God.

Practical Steps to Find and Develop Your Family Mission/Vision



To establish a written mission statement and vision for your family, it is important to set aside a special time together. If at all possible, take a few days away from your regular responsibilities and everyday surroundings. Get away from your telephone and your routine chores, and spend time as a family before the Lord. Reserve part of this time for corporate fasting as together you seek God's direction. (This does not have to be a long period; ask the Lord for His guidance. Depending on the ages and health of your children, this could be skipping one meal together, or abstaining from food for twenty-four or forty-eight hours.) Seek God's will and direction and realize that He delights in instructing His children in His way.

To help you in this search, you may want to bring with you several of the following tools:

1. Bibles for each family member
2. Prayer journals from recent years
3. Several packages of Post-It Notes™
4. Marking pens for each family member (dark felt-tip markers or Sharpie™ pens work best because they are easy to see from a distance)
5. A portable typewriter and typing paper.

How to Begin

With the whole family together, start by taking time to explain why you have come and what you wish to accomplish as a family. Discuss the importance of having a family mission and vision, and set a goal to have this articulated clearly (Lord willing) by the time you go home. Open in prayer, then focus your thoughts and attention on the Lord. You may want to begin by singing or worshipping together.

Preparing Your Family Mission Statement

To begin, hand out marking pens and stacks of sticky notes to each family member. For a specified period of time (perhaps an hour) have each person get alone with the Lord to answer three specific questions. If some of your children

are too young to write, take time to talk with them and write down their answers, or have them draw pictures to illustrate their response. Referring to the Bible and past prayer journals, have each family member write all they can about each question. Encourage your children to take their time, pray earnestly, and seek God's purpose and direction.

Step One Questions:

1. Who are we as a family?
2. What is our reason for existence?
3. What do we wish to accomplish?

Instruct everyone to write down each thought on a sticky note. By the end of the specified time, each family member should have three stacks of ideas—one stack for each question.

Bring Your Ideas Together

Together, take time to talk about each question one by one. Have each family member share his or her ideas as they post their sticky notes on the wall. After you have heard each idea, group the thoughts into categories on the wall. As a family, create "headers" with different color markers that summarize the main ideas in each category. Brainstorm together for themes or common ideas. Eliminate repetitive words and phrases, and then prioritize the categories and examples in order of importance. Have someone type up these lists in an outline form.

Examine Your Family History

Next, reflect on your family history, with an eye for the future. With sticky notes and markers again, have each family member write down their answers to the following questions:

Step Two Questions:

1. How has our family been used by God?
2. What unique resources, strengths, gifts and talents does our family have?

(Note: This question can include abstract gifts such as wisdom or determination; spiritual gifts such as teaching or hospitality; educational skills such as musical talents; computer knowledge; physical abilities such as construction skills or ability in the arts or sports; practical resources



such as a home, vehicles, tools, or money.)

3. In what areas does our family need to improve?

4. What doors of opportunity are open to our family?

After everyone has had time to write down their answers, have each member share their ideas one by one. Again, post the sticky notes on a nearby wall, group the answers into categories, and create headers as before. Remember to have someone type up the results.

Step Three Question:

1. What Do We Believe?

Talk together about your family's core values and beliefs. Using the same sticky note method, discuss and write down what is important to you as a family. What behaviors are required? What things do you want to encourage or discourage? What do you value? What biblical beliefs are foundational to your life? Share these ideas, post each thought on a separate note, group them into categories, and create headers. Again, have someone type up these results in an outline form.

Based on what you have discovered up to this point, craft your statement of purpose, your Family Mission Statement. In a concise statement of several sentences or phrases, together answer the following three questions:

Step Four Questions:

1. Who are we in terms of a family unit?
2. Why do we exist as a family?
3. What should we accomplish as a family?

Your Mission Statement should be clear and consistent with scripture. It should convey emotion about your identity, and should help to guide you in your decisions. It should be concise yet inspiring, and enduring enough to last through the different seasons of your lives. Most importantly, make sure this statement summarizes God's mission and direction for your family. It should be general, broad and simple. Instead of including specific goals, it will be more philosophic in nature—expressing a summary of your family's over-all purpose in life.

After receiving input from the children, both parents should spend some time discussing and praying about these ideas. Just as a business needs a president and a church needs a pastor, so also a family needs a spiritual leader. Whenever possible, your family mission should flow from the direction of the father.

Preparing Your Family Vision Statement

After you have completed your mission statement, you are ready to begin preparing your family vision. This vision statement will be more specific in nature, establishing a clear picture of what you want to accomplish within a specified time frame. Keeping in mind your family's over-all purpose, answer the following questions together:

Step Five Questions:

1. Where do we want to be in three to five years?
2. What will we be doing by that time?
3. As a family, what direction do we feel called to take by God to achieve our mission?

This Vision Statement should be actionable and measurable. It should require a "stretch" that will unify you as a family, and state specifically where you want to be and what you will be doing in three to five years. Again, use the sticky note method as you share your family ideas. Group these ideas into categories, create headers, and then use this information to put together your Vision Statement.

Step Six:

1. Make a list of your short-term objectives.

As a family, brainstorm what you must do short-term (one to three years) to get to the picture you have presented in your vision statement.

Together, develop a list of between three and five vital objectives. These should not be just some of the many trivial objectives that you have, but the vital few. They should answer the question, "How will we accomplish our family vision?"

**Step Seven:**

1. Identify Major Hindrances that will affect your family in reaching the mission and vision you have developed.

2. Together, answer the question, "What major things stand in the way of our family achieving this vision?"

Try to think of at least one barrier for each of your specific objectives. Share these ideas and post them on sticky notes. Develop a list of the most critical barriers you might face, in order of severity.

Step Eight:

1. Determine strategic actions to overcome each of these barriers.

As a family, pray about how to overcome each of these potential challenges, and come up with a list of seven to ten strategic actions which could help you overcome the possible challenges. These actions should be very specific, with a one to two-year focus.

Step Nine:

1. Compile your work into a Family Mission/Vision Notebook.

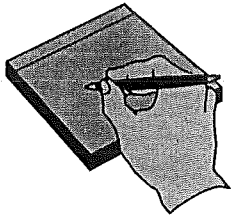
Using the outlines and answers to these questions put together a family mission/vision notebook, and prepare a copy for each family member to keep. Encourage everyone to review this notebook in prayer, and then review your concluding statements later as a family. At least once a year, review your work and update it as needed, or as the Lord leads.

Step Ten:

Believe in your mission/vision statements and **LIVE BY THEM!**

It has been said that "a simple idea acted upon is better than the grandest idea left undone." Now that you have a goal and direction for your family, let this serve as a guide for both your short and long-term decisions. Continue to desire the Lord's direction and guidance as you move ahead to fulfill His will.

Do not be afraid to make a mistake. Seek God to the best of your ability and remember that it is easier for Him to direct you if you are moving somewhere than if you are simply standing still. May the Lord bless and direct you as you seek His guidance and direction for your family.



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