Writing the Family Mission Statement

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# Introduction

If you want to start building a multigenerational family you may be asking yourself whether or not it is really necessary to go through the trouble of writing a family mission statement. Before you understand why the answer is ‘yes’ to that question, you should first know that the unanimous answer to that question from all the authorities who study and write about this subject say the answer is ‘yes’. So we can ask the question – What do they know that we might be missing? And the shortest answer to that question is – the principle of governance. What does that mean as it applies to multigenerational families? Look at this quote from James Hughes Jr.:

“Successful long-term wealth preservation requires the creation and maintenance of a system of governance or joint decision making, to the end of making slightly more positive decisions than negative ones over a period of at least one hundred years.”
– *Family* *Wealth: Keeping It in the Family*

When you think of governance, think first of a system of group decision-making. In the next training article on drafting a family constitution we will address this question of group decision making more directly. For now, what does a mission statement have to do with group decision-making? Well, what exactly is the group going to make decisions about? How to make the best wedding cakes? How to increase shareholder value for a company? In other words, the group first must have a mission before it knows what kinds of decisions it needs to be making. The purpose of the group logically precedes the system of governance. It is actually the first part of governance.

### Not Just for Businesses or Individuals

In our culture we typically associate the making of mission statements with businesses or individuals. I’m sure many of us have at one time or another been encouraged to write a personal mission statement. The irony is, that while it feels weird in our culture to think in terms of a family mission, long before there were modern corporations, and long before American hyper-individualism, the family was the primary group that acted in terms of a mission. What we’re suggesting here really is a restoration of a wise ancient practice rather than an introduction of something new. I would suggest it is our current culture that is off-base in this regard, rather than the historic one.

### The Pieces

We’ll be looking at the different pieces of a mission statement. People define a mission statement differently. Some people include beliefs, values, vision, strategy, etc. in the overall mission statement and others keep them separate. Whether or not you include them in your family mission statement, it is important to understand the distinction of these different pieces and that each piece makes its way into your family governing documents in some form or another.

### Entry points

With the different pieces of a mission statement a question you will run into is which piece to work on first. Do you start with beliefs, or vision, or with the heart of the action-oriented mission itself? Part of the answer is that it doesn’t matter as long as you address each piece at the end of the day. However, you’ll see in a moment that there are some pieces that are more logically foundational to the others. Beliefs do precede mission logically, for example. However, that does not necessarily mean you need to work on beliefs first. There are motivational reasons to consider working on the heart of the mission first and then refining it after you’ve considered your beliefs. Think of it more like spokes on a wheel that you’ll keep on coming back to.

With that, let’s jump into looking at beliefs and values.

# PART I

# Beliefs & Values

* **Beliefs**: Beliefs have to do with what is considered true versus what is considered false.
* **Values**: Values have to do with what is believed to be good or bad, better or worse.
* Values example: "Knowledge and skills are the keys to success.”

“Give a man a fish and feed him for a day, but teach him to fish and feed him for life".

* These example maxims may set the priorities of self-sufficiency over consumeristic dependency
* Beliefs and Values are similar in that most value statements could also be belief statements. For this reason, organizations usually have just one section dedicated to their core beliefs and values and it is usually labelled as their Values Statement.
* While similar, it is good to acknowledge the distinction between beliefs having to do with truth and falsity, vs. values which deal more with degrees of goodness and badness.

Consider for yourself – What are some beliefs or values that might be appropriate to include as part of a family mission statement?

What do you think about incorporating an historic creed or confession into your family mission statement? Is this a good or bad idea? Why or why not?

# Vision & Mission

* **Vision Statement**: Outlines what the organization wants to be, or how it wants the world in which it operates to be (it is an "idealized" view of the world). It is a long-term view and concentrates on the future. It can be emotive and is a source of inspiration. For example, a charity working with the poor might have a vision statement which reads: "A World without Poverty.”

Now, if you think about it, you are going to have to choose a time horizon for your vision statement. This is a picture of the future but the future 10 years from now and the future 1,000 years from now are very different questions. For multigenerational families, the time horizon of your vision can be too short or too long. What do you think is too short of a time horizon, and why? What about a time horizon that’s too long?[[1]](#footnote-1)

* **Mission Statement**: Defines the fundamental purpose of an organization or an enterprise, succinctly describing why it exists and what it does to achieve its vision. For example, the charity above might have a mission statement as "providing jobs for the homeless and unemployed".
* Many people mistake the vision statement for the mission statement, and sometimes one is simply used as a longer term version of the other. However they are distinct; with the vision being a descriptive picture of a desired future state; and the mission being a statement of purpose and action, applicable now as well as in the future. The mission is therefore the means of successfully achieving the vision.

# PART II

# Considerations before Drafting the Mission

Transitioning to *Considerations before Drafting the Mission*, we need to ask ourselves these three questions:

1. What “Level” of the Family is the Mission directed at?
2. Is there a common mission for all families, or does each family have a unique mission?
3. Does a family discover their mission or creatively determine their mission?

A little hint on the last two questions – the short answer is ‘both/and’. We will see how that plays out in a moment.

## What “Level of the Family

* Should the nuclear family (father with mother) draft the mission or the extended family (adult siblings with parents)?
* To which “level” of the family should the mission be applied? Nuclear? Extended? Multigenerational?
* Should a family mission be limited to a season, or be generationally permanent? Should it change over time?

What do we mean by, ‘what “level” of the family is the mission directed at’? There are actually two questions here. The first is – who determines the mission and, secondly – what group is the mission for? To put it another way, who determines it, and who is it for? Those can be two different groups. When you get into the subject of multigenerational families, the question of what you mean by the word ‘*family’* gets a little complex. From our American cultural standpoint, the default assumption when we talk about family is the nuclear family. However, think about inheritance and succession. With inheritance and estate transfer, typically you are talking about an older couple passing on their assets to their various adult children. At that stage we are talking about the extended family rather than the nuclear family with only minor children in mind. But, of course, we’re not done with distinctions here. We are talking about multigenerational families, which are related to, but also distinct from, nuclear and extended families. They are not the same thing! Now we may agree that a multigenerational family mission is *for* the multigenerational family, but does that mean the multigenerational family determines the mission? Unfortunately, that’s impossible. A multigenerational family, by definition, includes ancestors and descendants. It exists throughout multiple generations. It has a certain level of abstraction. Only a living generation can make this mission. And if it is for your descendants, aren’t your descendants also your sons’ descendants? Do you think they have some place to contribute to the creative development of the mission? Some families may decide they should wait until the second generation is old enough to even begin working on a multigenerational family mission. So you can see the conundrum here. Let us look at a couple of quotes that address these questions and then I’ll offer some of my own suggestions:

“The concept of a family vision can be short-term, something you feel called to for a season, long-term, something you feel called to for life, or multi-generational, something your children and grandchildren feel called to. The longer the scope of the vision the more it’s important to allow God to place the calling on your kid’s hearts. A calling may span the generations by going to just one or a small number of your children, while the others receive other callings the family must also affirm and support. It’s generally helpful for parents to begin to craft at least a short-term description of their vision to give their efforts focus and to communicate to their family and their community the direction they feel God is leading them. As you walk more into your seasonal vision God will often begin to show you if the scope is bigger than what you originally conceived.” - Jeremy Pryor, *ReFamily: The Biblical Blueprint*

Notice a couple of things here. Pryor indicates the possibility that only some of your children will receive a vision that is cast by their parents. We’ve already talked about how a covenantal family should only expect to pass on their assets to covenantally faithful children. So there’s a distinction to be made between the *covenantal family*, and what I call the *natural family*. Notice also that Pryor recognizes that on the one hand there’s a place for second-generation children to contribute to a family mission, but still recommends first generation parents to begin crafting something to get started.

The next quote is going to affirm the side of the first-generation parent’s right and responsibility to determine the family mission:

“As sons and daughters of the Kingdom we must discern the humanistic deception in how truth is transferred. Humanism says, ‘You are of age, now you must discover your own truth and establish your own way.’ In contrast, the ancient path of the Kingdom of God says, ‘Truth is passed generationally, so now that you are of age you must continue in the way of the ancient path.’ In the Kingdom of God the truth of the fathers is also the way of the sons, for there is only one way.
Inherent in humanistic reasoning is the suggestion that our father’s truth began with them so we have the right to establish our own love of truth and pursue our own way. But the truth of the Kingdom of God is not found in establishing our own truth. Rather, it is being a steward of our father’s truth and becoming responsible to the generations past in order that we might equip the generations to come.”
- Norm Willis: *The Ancient Path: A Return to the Kingdom Mandate of Generational Transfer*

This is what I call the *fathering principle*. Covenantal succession is a “father-to-son” transfer. When I use the terminology of fathering here, I am using it biblically and symbolically. This is not saying mothers are not involved in this process. They very much are. It is assumed that husbands and wives are working together on crafting the vision and mission of the family with the husband having a higher level of accountability to God. He is the representative head, but that does not mean he is not working with his covenantal helpmeet in the creative process. As a matter of fact, the theology of Genesis 1 indicates that a man can’t do it alone. He needs his wife to fulfill the dominion mandate. The Bible uses gender to teach us the reality of how God’s Kingdom works. Men, part of our identity is being members of the Bride of Christ, with all its feminine attributes. Women, your adoption into the family of God is through Sonship. The point is, ‘*fathering’* is an appropriate covenantal term for covenantal succession and spiritual reproduction and applies equally to mothers as it does to fathers.

As it regards the question of drafting a mission for your family, the fathering principle indicates there is an appropriate place for first-generation parents to begin instilling a vision and mission for the family that you expect your children to adopt.

With that said, consider the following quote from our same author, Norm Willis:

“A family mission statement should be timeless, yet relevant. It should define both the direction and the means. Every member of the family should participate in a council so there is total ownership of the family plan. Like the putting together of a puzzle, each family member will bring a piece of the overall look. When the whole family contributes, it is much easier to detect what God has ordained from the foundation of time (Ephesians 2:10). A family mission statement is something specially uncovered by the entire family. Therefore, it can be owned by the entire family. With family ownership, it will serve as a roadmap to guide a means to refocus in the midst of life’s storms. A family mission statement cannot simply be presented and then expected to be enthusiastically embraced. Fathers must lead the family into a council of participation and mutual discovery.”
- Norm Willis: *The Ancient Path: A Return to the Kingdom Mandate of Generational Transfer*

As you can see, while there is a place for the parents to initiate the family mission, there is also a place for subsequent generations to contribute to the creative process of mission making as well. What’s at work here is what I, and others call, the *creative ownership principle*. Groups tend to identify more with, and be more committed to, a mission that they have given creative contribution to. And a vision and mission that they have a measure of control over. The suggestion is that it is wise to consider granting this freedom to subsequent generations for the sake of eliciting that “buy-in” factor.

So how does this all work out? There are not absolute rules here that apply to all families and every situation but let me offer a few suggestions that account for all these principles.

## My Recommendation

* Emphasis on the *vertical family* over the *horizontal family*
* Adult sons renew father’s mission but in a fresh way for their family and descendants.
* Adult children with parents to create an Extended Family Mission that is related but distinct from the nuclear family missions.

First – I would put the emphasis on the vertical family over the horizontal family. What do I mean by that? The vertical family is the multigenerational family that exists throughout time. The link is primarily from parent-to-child, parent-to-child, rather than from a whole extended family or clan in one generation reproducing itself as an extended family or clan in the next generation. The reason for this is that you should assume the possibility of covenantal apostasy of individual members. Remember, for a Christian multigenerational family, the point is not the preservation of the natural family for its own sake, but the expansion of the Kingdom of God. The maturing of the multigenerational family should only be for the purpose of better serving God’s Kingdom, and that can only be done by covenantally faithful individuals and families.

When I say the emphasis should be on the vertical family that does not imply a neglect of the horizontal family, by which I mean the extended family or clan. It’s just a matter of priority. In the article on the Family Constitution we will address how to deal with the complexity of the multiple levels of family.

My second suggestion is that adult son’s renew their father’s, or their parent’s, mission but in a fresh way for their family and descendants. What this would look like is each adult son determining what elements in their parent’s mission they believe should be passed on to their children. There might be some elements they think don’t warrant as much emphasis. On the other hand, there might be some new elements they think deserve need to be emphasized with their next generation. This is obviously something that will require a high degree of wisdom to do well. Both elements need to be preserved. Both newness and continuity. And the continuity needs to be substantive and meaningful rather than nominal or else there is really no multigenerational succession going on.

The last suggestion is for the Extended Family in its second-generation stage to create a fresh mission for the Extended Family as an extended family rather than something that is going to be passed from parent to child. In effect this means that you would have multiple covenantal missions in operation during the transition from the second and third generations. And again, we will address this complexity briefly in the article on *Drafting the Family Constitution*.

For now, what the above suggestions do is preserve both the father-to-son transfer principles as well as the creative ownership, or buy-in, principle of the second and subsequent generation.

## Common vs. Unique

* The Dominion Mandate
* The Dominion Mandate or The Great Commission?

Our second question was this: is there a common mission for all families, or does each family have a unique mission? And as I alluded to earlier, the short answer is, of course, both/and.

At the end of the day, each family, each father particularly, is going to have to make an interpretative determination on what they understand is the Scriptural mission given to families. Part of that search is going to include evaluating what different teachers in the church have to say on this subject. As you look at different common articulations of this you are going to find themes centered around discipleship, the glory of God, worship, and other themes. There is definitely multiple inter-related themes in Scripture that can and should be integrated into a family’s mission statement. And, of course, there are very different ways of articulating things and emphasizing things.

Today, however, I am going to focus on what several teachers have concluded, which is looking to the Dominion Mandate as a foundational mission given to families. Dominion is obviously central to what it means to be a covenantal family. So, at this point, we will need to take a step out of the practical steps of family mission-making for a moment and spend some time making sure we have a foundational understanding of the theology of dominion.

The Dominion Mandate, which is also called the Cultural Mandate for reasons we’ll unpack in a moment, is found in Genesis 1: 26-28. This is what is says…

26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

It doesn’t take too much reflection on this Scripture to realize that this is not limited to literally just animal husbandry. Speaking of dominion over fish, birds, and land animals is a way of indicating that the scope and target of dominion is the whole world and everything in the world in all its various aspects. The word *dominion* is about bringing order out of chaos. Remember that the earth was created at first “formless and void.” In the six days of creation, God brings order out of that formlessness… order out of chaos.

So, Genesis 1 speaks of the varied aspects of the created world in terms of fish, birds, and animals. If we were to translate the varied aspects of the world in contemporary terms it would sound something like this list: *agriculture*, *economics*, *law*, *education*, *arts*, *science*, *technology*, *government*, etc. Some authors talk about dominion as taking nature and turning it into culture. This is why we can call the dominion mandate, the cultural mandate. The term, “cultural mandate,” is just the first step in explaining what we mean by dominion. Here are a couple of quotes that further explain this idea:

“Fulfilling this mandate requires us to discover truth through sciences, apply truth through technology, interpret truth through humanities, implement truth through commerce and social action, transmit truth through education and arts, and preserve truth through government and law.” - Stephen McDowell

“The lesson of the Cultural Mandate is that our sense of fulfillment depends on engaging in creative, constructive work. The ideal human existence is not eternal leisure or an endless vacation—or even a monastic retreat into prayer and meditation—but creative effort expended for the glory of God and the benefit of others. Our calling is not just to “go to heaven” but also to cultivate the earth, not just to “save souls” but also to serve God through our work. For God himself is engaged not only in the work of salvation but also in the work of preserving and developing His creation. When we obey the Cultural Mandate, we participate in the work of God himself. “ – Nancy Pearcy

The reason why we are given the mandate to create godly culture is that it produces a greater manifestation of the glory of God in Creation. We see Nancy Pearcy mentions this when she says our creative effort is expanded for the glory of God. We know from Psalm 19 and other Scriptures that one purpose of Creation is to declare the glory of God. Taking this nature and translating it into godly Culture, magnifies God’s glory all the more. In essence then, dominion is God’s prescription for worship. This is how author, Richard Pratt explains it:

“The Great King has summoned each of us into his throne room. Take this portion of my kingdom, he says, I am making you my steward over your office, your workbench, your kitchen stove. Put your heart into mastering this part of my world. Get it in order; unearth its treasures; do all you can with it. Then everyone will see what a glorious King I am. That’s why we get up every morning and go to work. We don’t labor simply to survive, insects do that. Our work is an honor, a privileged commission from our great King. God has given each of us a portion of his kingdom to explore and to develop to its fullness. “

– Richard Pratt

Probably more than anything else, understanding what it means that we are created in the image of God is the strongest argument for the kingly task of dominion being the mission of the people of God.

Regarding the meaning of man being created in the image of God, my guess, is that, you, like me for most my life, have heard things that emphasize we are rational, volitional, emotional beings just like God is. And things like that are what is being referred to when the Bible says we were created “in God’s image.” You may have also experienced the frustration, as I’ve had, that these explanations seem to be like speculations. The passage in Genesis doesn’t come out and explicitly say what the image is…. it just says it. Recently, I read for the first time an actual exegetical explanation for the image of God in man. And lo and behold, it has everything to do with our dominion task. We don’t have time to go through the whole exposition so here are a few summary quotes from Wellum and Gentry from their book, *Kingdom through Covenant*:

“..the term “the image of god” in the culture and language of the ancient Near East in the fifteenth century B.C. would have communicated two main ideas: (1) rulership and (2) sonship. The king is the image of god because he has a relationship to the deity as the son of god and a relationship to the world as ruler for the god. We ought to assume that the meaning in the Bible is identical or at least similar, unless the biblical text clearly distinguishes its meaning from the surrounding culture.”
 - Wellum & Gentry: *Kingdom through Covenant*

 “Given the normal meanings of “image” and “likeness” in the cultural and linguistic setting of the Old Testament and the ancient Near East, “likeness” specifies a relationship between God and humans such that ‘*adam* can be described as the son of God, and “image” describes a relationship between God and humans such that ‘*adam* can be described as a servant king. Although both terms specify the divine-human relationship, the first focuses on the human in relation to God and the second focuses on the human in relation to the world. These would be understood to be relationships characterized by faithfulness and loyal love, obedience and trust – exactly the character of relationships specified by covenants after the Fall. In this sense the divine image entails a covenant relationship between God and humans on the one hand, and between humans and the world on the other.”
 - Wellum & Gentry: *Kingdom through Covenant*

“In the ancient East the setting up of the king’s statue [i.e., image/icon] was the equivalent to the proclamation of his dominion over the sphere in which the statue [image] was erected (cf. Dan. 3.1, 5f).
… Accordingly, man is set in the midst of creation as God’s statue. He is evidence that God is the Lord of creation; but as God’s steward he also exerts his rule, fulfilling his task not in arbitrary despotism but as a responsible agent. His rule and his duty to rule are not autonomous; they are copies”
 - Hans Walter Wolf quoted in Wellum & Gentry: *Kingdom through Covenant*

To sum it all up, to be created in the image of God means God has chosen to rule the earth through man, through us. It’s another way of saying, “take dominion.”

One more point about dominion and then we will return to the practical steps of family mission-making.

When asked what is the mission of the church or, in our context, of the family, most evangelical Christians would probably look to the Great Commission of Matthew 28 where Jesus tells the disciples to go and make disciples of all nations and teaching them to obey all His commandments. Why didn’t we start with this? The answer is that I, and again, many others, actually see the Great Commission as a kind of restatement of the Dominion Mandate. It is an aspect of the Dominion Mandate applied in the New Covenant world. The problem with much of the contemporary understanding of the Great Commission is that too many Christians see it as limited to mere individual salvation rather than the cultural scope implied in discipling nations.

Here is one way of seeing the link between the Dominion Mandate and the Great Commission.[[2]](#footnote-2) As we saw earlier, the Dominion Mandate is about bringing order out of chaos. Fallen man cannot be fully restored to his dominion task of bringing order to the chaos of the world when his own heart is in a state of “disorder.” This is why the gospel of the Kingdom starts with making disciples of Jesus. Men’s hearts need to be reconciled with God first and from that position they can now fully return to the task of bringing dominion to the earth under the new and greater blessings of the New Covenant.

Remember, the way of the Kingdom is that it starts small, like a mustard seed, but it grows. It starts in the hearts of men, but contrary to what many Evangelicals assume, it doesn’t end there. This is how theologian John Frame says it:

“Of course, it is not possible for people to subdue the earth for God until their hearts are changed by the Holy Spirit. So ‘taking dominion,’ following the Resurrection, begins with evangelism and baptism. But baptism is not the end, and evangelism is not simply bringing people to an initial profession of faith. It is making disciples and teaching them to observe comprehensively all that Jesus has commanded, with the assurance of Jesus’ continuing presence. Jesus’ commands deal not only with repentance, faith, and worship. They also concern our treatment of the poor, our sexual ethics, marriage and divorce, anger, love of enemies, fasting, anxiety, hypocrisy, and many other subjects.” – John Frame

We spent some time here on the theology of Dominion but it was necessary as it applies to everything we are talking about in this training series [Dominion Family Training Series] and we’ll in fact return to this again later. One final point we need to emphasize now before we move on to discuss the unique elements of a Family Mission is this: you will need to interpret for yourself what your family means when it references your Scriptural foundation for your family’s mission. You will need to interpret what it looks like in practice and in the details. For example, does making disciples primarily look like knocking on doors and passing out tracks? Or something else? Does Dominion look more like cultural tasks outside the family or the cultural development of your children first? You’ll have to decide these things for yourself and your family.

## Unique Elements

Now what about the question of those unique elements of a family mission statement? Let’s take a look at a couple of quotes.

“Once we have a clear understanding of our mission as families we also need to consider how God may give a unique vision specifically to our family and our family line. In the Old Testament we have many examples of families who have unique callings that get passed down from generation to generation. Aaron’s family was set aside to do the priestly ministry, David’s family was set apart to rule, and the Korahites were gatekeepers (1 Chronicles 9:19), singers (2 Chronicles 20:19) and poets for hundreds of years who penned at least eleven of the Psalms.” - Pryor, *Re-Family: The Biblical Blueprint*

And here is a quote from Norm Willis:

“Not only does every individual have a God-given purpose, but also each family has a unique purpose before God. Even as each individual in that family carries a unique God-given design, when those uniquenesses are put together in a family unit, it results in a unique family purpose. Parents must pray and discern to determine what that purpose is.”

 - Norm Willis: *The Ancient Path: A Return to the Kingdom Mandate of Generational Transfer*

So, the basic point is, that in addition to a mission component that you determine is from Scripture, expect that there will be aspects of your family mission that is unique to your family. With that said, it needs to be emphasized that particularly with the unique elements, this may take some time to determine. You may need several years of observing what God is doing in your heart and lives before this becomes clear. And let it take several years if that is necessary. Don’t worry about it. Remember, from a multigenerational perspective, you have time!

## Discovered or Determined?

* Both/And
* Let Discovery Lead
* Scriptural Mission of Family Discovered and Determined?
* Unique Mission Discovered and Determined

The last background question was whether the family mission is discovered or determined. The answer of course, is “both/and.” Between the two, I have found that the emphasis should be on discovery.

How does this relationship between discovery and determination work with the Scriptural basis of your family’s mission? I’ve already alluded to this earlier, but with Scripture the discovery part comes from your study on the subject of what the Bible teaches. However, you still have to interpret this, articulate it, and apply it. That process is an act of determination.

What about the unique component of your mission? This is going to sound like a contradiction to what I said earlier, but it really is not. I said let your discovery of your family’s unique mission take time if that is necessary. However, at the same time, don’t wait forever either. You have to act in the present. At some point, it is better to make a judgment to the best of your ability to discern what your family mission will be. You can always tweak it later. If we waited until we had some sort of absolute certainty, we would never commit to anything because the discovery process is always unfolding.

We are now finally ready to move on to the actual mechanics and steps of drafting a family mission statement.

# PART III

# Drafting the Mission Statement

## What IS a Mission?

Before we get into the steps of crafting a family mission statement, I wanted us to review what a mission statement is so it’s fresh in our minds as we proceed:

“A family mission statement simply describes (at that particular season) the vision God has given you as a family and how you plan to get there. This family mission statement should address:

* The specific plan for that particular family
* How that plan is to be accomplished.

… Simply put, a family mission statement delineates the goals we have as a family and the way in which we plan to get there. A family mission statement answers three primary questions:

1. Who God has defined your family to be?
2. What He has determined your family to do?
3. How He expects your family to do it”

 - Norm Willis: *The Ancient Path*

## The Questions

The first step in drafting your family mission is discovering what your current family mission already is. You heard me right. I said the first step in the process of determining what your family mission will be, is to discover what it is right now. The fact is, every family already has a mission, but for most of us, it is held at the subconscious level. When we are talking about discovering and determining a family mission, we are talking about doing it at a conscious level. The first step is to bring what is hidden in the subconscious to our conscious awareness. The way we are going to do that is schedule several meetings with our spouse to discuss several introspective questions in order to flush out what our family mission is. I suggest you start with the following questions, but recognize the principle here and realize you will very likely need to ask additional relevant questions of yourselves as needed.

1. What does our family spend the most amount of time on?
2. What does our weekly schedule tell us about our highest values?
What about our annual schedule?
3. What do we spend most of our discretionary money on?
4. What excites us the most as a family?
5. When we plan future events, what subject occupies the largest amount of time we spend on planning?
6. With the above questions, when you have multiple answers, organize them in a hierarchy of importance to your family.

The next step in the process is to do what I call reverse engineering.

## Reverse Engineer

Once you’ve answered the questions, what does your family behavior tell you about what your family mission is? For example, did you find your family spends more time planning vacations than it does planning discipleship? This might suggest that one of your subconscious missions is “enjoyment of family.”

Is enjoyment of family bad? No. But you have to now ask yourself if that is a worthy *multigenerational* family missional objective.

## Scripture

We already made this point earlier, but it needs to be inserted here as part of the steps in drafting the family mission.

* Determine for yourself what you believe Scripture teaches about the mission of the family.

## Options

1. Discard
2. Keep
3. Adopt New

Once you have completed your introspective analysis of what kind of mission your family is already on and your biblical study of what the Bible says about a family mission, you have a few basic options.

**Discard:** The first option is that you may have discovered things that you think are too fleshly or too shallow to be worthy of the level of a missional objective and you’ll have to make the tough decision to discard those things. It should go without saying, but be forewarned that while there should be an exciting element to crafting a family mission statement, this process may lead your family to consider giving up things that you’re very comfortable with right now and this will be a painful process.

**Keep:** The other possibility is that you will have discovered things that are passion areas that God himself put into your hearts. These may very well be the foundations of your unique mission. In this case, these are going to be elements that you keep in your family mission statement.

**Adopt New:** The final option is to adopt new mission objectives. There’s a good chance that your biblical study may lead to new ideas that you haven’t considered before. Or, in your introspection questions, your discussions may lead you to ideas that you haven’t considered before. Either way, be open to the possibility of adopting new mission objectives.

## Writing!

* Let the First Draft be the First Draft
* Concise and Memorable
* Beliefs, Values, Vision

A few points about the writing process itself. Let the first draft be a first draft. In other words, don’t over-worry about making it “perfect” the first time around. I’ve already made this point in different ways before, but you will be tweaking this over time anyway. It will get better over time.

Second, you want to make the actual mission statement concise and memorable. The reason for this is for training purposes for your family. You want something that can be repeated easily and often. Keeping it concise allows for the ability to speak “short-hand” for otherwise big ideas. I’ll refer to this in our next session, but in your family’s various governing documents, you should have longer documents that explain your mission components in more detail.

We touched on this earlier, but the last point here is that you will want to make a decision whether to incorporate your beliefs, values and vision all into your overarching mission statement or to keep them separate. For our family’s mission statement, we more or less have these components as separate headings, however, we also think of all of them together as part of our mission or mission statement.

Following are a few sample mission statements. This should help show both those common elements as well as unique elements that we talked about.

## Sample Family Mission Statements

Example 1*:
“We are a family of sons and daughters of Jesus Christ, demonstrating a Kingdom culture by training the generations to carry the vision of Christ centeredness and covenantal living through a heart of submission, with faith, passion, love and obedience, for the glory of God and the reformation of the Church.”*

Example 2*:*

* *“Make disciples*
* *Grow bodies*
* *Release the fivefold” [Ephesians 4:11]*

Example 3*:
“Our family exists in order bring joy and delight to the heart of God and to take delight in him.”*

This last mission statement is actually a great example of the point we made about a concise statement representing a much larger reality. This is a mission statement of a friend of mine who also shared with me a document that explained what was behind this mission statement. It was about 3 or 4 pages long. So while we only see one small sentence here, for his family, this one brief sentence represents at least 3 or 4 pages of theological reflection. It becomes a symbol.

In addition to explaining the mission statement, my friend’s longer document also broke down the high level mission overview into smaller pieces. What does the accomplishing of the mission look like in our day-to-day, week-to-week life? And that brings us to our final step.

## Break It into Pieces

* Strategy
	+ If Mission is the What, Strategy is the How.
* Goals (aka, Objectives, Initiatives)
	+ If the Mission is the War, Initiatives are the Battles
* Tactics
	+ Mission: what are we doing in this generation? Initiatives: What are we doing this decade/year? Tactics: What are we doing today?

In a lot of ways, breaking the mission down into pieces is about timeframes and making relational connections. A concise multigenerational mission statement doesn’t necessarily tell you specifically what you are supposed to do this week or even this year. Those need to eventually be spelled out. And over time, your mission should creep into everything your family does. For example, you need to make a relational connection between how you eat meals together or how your travel in your car with your family mission.

## Review of the Process

1. Ask Discovery Questions
2. Reverse Engineer: Answers to Mission
3. Come to your own interpretation of the Word of God
4. Options: Discard, Keep, Adopt new
5. Keep Statement(s) Concise & Memorable
6. Break it down in smaller pieces: objectives, strategy, aspirations, etc.
1. Personally, I recommend beginning with a time frame of 100 years. It’s long enough to pull the living generation beyond themselves but short enough for the living generation to see if progress is being made. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. I owe this insight to Jeremy Pryor. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)