

BECOMING A FAMILY ON MISSION

How to write your family story
by following God's direction.

by Jess Wolstenholm
gatherandgrow.co &

a 4 week Bible study and
family mission statement guide.

Becoming a Family on Mission

How to Write Your Family Story by
Following God's Direction

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Becoming a Family on Mission

How to Write Your Family Story by Following God's Direction

SHARE & PREPARE Parents, read this introduction and highlight what to share with your kids to prepare them for the study.

Everywhere we turn we hear about story. We share in the story of others through amazing films, moving books and well-crafted songs. As technology and media progress we're all about sharing our own stories, too. We flock to social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram to tell our story through daily (sometimes hourly) photos and to watch the tale of others' lives unfold in our feed.

The more we have access to the story of others, the more we wonder about our own. As if comparison weren't enough of a trap 20 years ago when we were "keeping up with the Joneses" now we must overcome the pull to keep up with the Joneses, the Smiths, the Millers, the Kennedys. . .because we are watching (and often wanting) their lives daily. But there is so much purpose to be found in our own story. And our story doesn't have to include comparison, guilt, confusion or regret.

Each person's life is a story that is telling itself in the living.

William Throsby Bridges

Our actions and decisions; the way we live our life and the things we do or don't do, tell a story. Each day of our existence - the magnificent and the mundane - collect like words on a page or chapters in a book to tell the story of our lives.

When we intentionally pursue the VALUES, VISION and MISSION of our own unique family, we don't have time to compare ourselves to others. So focused on our family mission, we abandon our need to compare and compete. Discovering our family mission, owning it and bravely living it out allows our story to be strengthened and brings God glory as each chapter unfolds.

The more we walk, led by God within the words of our own story, the more beautifully and effectively it is written and lived out.

This is what it means to be a FAMILY ON MISSION.

The new year is a great time to ask. . .*What story is our family life telling? Where is our family story going? What does it look like to live on mission in our family?* Our answers to these questions may surprise or disappoint us. But wherever we are right now, it's never too late to live with intention. We can start today, asking for God's guidance (beginning with this Bible study and Family Mission Statement guide) and follow his direction.

This may seem like a mature process to walk through with children. But Paul encourages in his letter to the Philippians, ". . .[agree] wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose." (Philippians 2:2 NLT) In a culture that is tearing families apart by taking each member's story in its own direction, unity and like-mindedness will help us live life together and on mission. Being on the same page early on will strengthen our relationships and the long-term impact of our family.

This process will be fun and exciting. It will bring peace where there is chaos and unity where there is division if we work together and seek God's guidance. Are you ready to live on mission and begin writing our family story with God's help?

Our Holy Spirit Compass: Jesus promised before he left this earth that God would send a Helper to guide us (John 14:16-17). Our Helper, the Holy Spirit, is like a compass, guiding our way when we ask him to. We'll talk more about Holy Spirit wisdom and direction throughout this study. For now, remember this: we have a Compass to guide us along this journey. Let's follow him carefully as we discover our family mission.

WEEK 1: EVERY FAMILY TELLS A STORY.

PREPARE - Let's talk about writing and living our FAMILY STORY. Put away distractions and pray, "God show us something new today!"

LEARN - Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples. John 13:35 (NLT)

John was one of Jesus' closest friends and after Jesus died and left the earth, John was all about encouraging Christians to live a life that *showed* Christ's love to the world. John understood how difficult it was to stand up for truth and choose to live according to God's ways. It was hard for those who walked with Jesus and it's still hard in the world we live in today. With super-packed lives that leave no time to slow down and connect with God or each other, how could we possibly live with intention? We're often just trying to make it through the day.

But God wants for us to resist the crazy and invite him to guide the story we are writing with our family life. He's waiting patiently for us to ask for his input and direction. He knows just how amazing our story will turn out if we let him guide it.

If John were teaching us the ways of Jesus today, he might have said it this way. . . *Your love-filled lifestyle will tell a story to the world that you've chosen to follow Jesus.*

This year, as we face decisions and consider the story our family life is telling, we want to be led by God and our Holy Spirit Compass. Over the next month we're going to walk through a process together in order to determine our family values, vision and mission - all of which make up different parts of our family story. When we're done, we'll have God's guidemap to help our family get where we want to go this year.

ASK -

1. What kind of story do we hope to tell through our family life?
2. What is keeping us from living the story we know God wants to write for us?
3. What can we do to discover God's direction this year?

NAME the Truth - God will write an epic, love-filled story for our family if we follow his direction.

TAKE Action - Let's spend some time in prayer as a family this week and ask God to begin showing us the kind of story he wants our family to write with our lives. Let's ask him for wisdom and direction for every decision we face in the next 12 months. Big and small, each choice we make writes a part of our family story.

FAMILY PRAYER - Dear God, we want our family to tell a story that brings honor to you and shares your amazing love with the world around us. Please help us discover the life you are calling us to live. Guide us by your Holy Spirit as we make decisions about our family values, vision and mission. We trust you to write a beautifully unique story for our family as we follow your direction. In Jesus' name, amen.

DIG DEEPER

age 10+

If you spend any time watching TV shows or movies, you are familiar with the idea of story. Your favorite characters embark on a journey and you wonder how it will turn out. Will they defeat the bad guys? Will she fix her broken friendship? At every turn there are decisions that affect the outcome. Likewise, every choice you make with things like how you spend your time, who you hang out with or how hard you work in school will write parts of your story. This isn't meant to put pressure on you. Actually, this realization can motivate you to choose wisely, asking for God's direction every day. He will write an epic story with your life - if you let him guide you.

SEEDS OF CHARACTER

age 3-6

LEARN: Just like our favorite Bible stories and storybooks, our life tells a story. When we make a decision to follow God, he becomes the author of our story. And when we ask him to, God will show us how to share his love through our story. **Ask:** What are some ways we can share God's love with others this year?

PLAY: Role Play **You will need:** a storybook/Bible, dress up clothes, your imagination. Grab your favorite storybook (or pick a Bible story from your favorite children's Bible) and gather some props/dress up clothes. Reenact the tale by playing different parts and allowing your child to make decisions about where the story will go. You don't have to stick to the "script". Feel free to change it up! **Lesson:** When we follow God's direction every day, we let him write our family story.

LOVE: Take a moment to tell God that you want to share his love through your family story.

GROW: Memorize John 13:35 together.



ACTION STEPS TO BECOMING A FAMILY ON MISSION:

Let's grab some paper and crayons (or other writing utensils) or a family journal. This is where we begin to put God's direction into action. We'll use our Holy Spirit Compass to guide us through each step.

STEP 1: Complete this week's lesson.

STEP 2: Talk about where we've been, what we've been through, what we want to be about and where we want to go (including the happy and the hard parts of our lives - it's all a part of the story God is writing for our family).

STEP 3: Pray together and ask God about the story he wants our family life to tell.

STEP 4: Take notes or draw pictures of the life we envision (if we get stuck, let's begin with the end in mind).

WEEK 2: FAMILY VALUES.

PREPARE - Let's talk about setting the stage with our FAMILY VALUES. Put away distractions and pray, "God show us something new today!"

LEARN - Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. Matthew 6:33 (NLT)

The first step in becoming a family on mission is to set the stage for our family story to be intentionally written. We need to take a look at where we've been, where we are and where we want to go. We need to consider how we spend our time and resources; our family values. Our values are the **why** behind everything we do as a family. If we go to church regularly, it's because we value God and community. If we spend lots of time at sports practice and games it's because we value fitness and teamwork. If we travel often as a family it's because we value culture and adventure.

It's not hard to make decisions once you know what your values are.

Roy Disney

When our values are intentional, they are like lights that set the stage of our story and point everyone's focus and attention in the right direction. What we've experienced up until this point may determine what we value and where we want to be in 5 years will also be a factor in what we make a priority going forward.

Our values come from our experiences, our culture, and our faith. Besides the traditional values that may be on our list like love and generosity, we'll find the specific things our unique family values by taking an honest look at where we spend our time and resources.

We're going to walk through this process together but before we get started, remember that above all else, as believers, our relationship with God and his Kingdom should determine everything we value. Because when we love what he loves and live our lives accordingly, he'll write an amazing story for our family.

ASK -

1. What does the Bible tell us about what we should value?
2. What brings joy to our family as a whole?
3. What do we want to be about as a family?

NAME the Truth - Our family values will light our way as we follow God's direction through our story.

TAKE Action - Let's look at our calendar, finances, surroundings and past experiences and make a list of things that seem to be valued in our family. What values need to stay? What needs to go? Next, we can add new values that we'd like to focus on in order to allow God to write his best story for our lives. Now, let's write out our family values list using the values print at the end of this study guide.

FAMILY PRAYER - Dear God, thank you for the story you've already been writing for our family. We know our past experiences and the talents and interests you've given each one of us will determine what we value. Help us to keep YOU at the center of our lives, no matter what. We hope that what we value and how we live our lives points others to you and builds your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

DIG DEEPER

age 10+

God has gifted each one of us with unique talents and interests. What you value will often be determined by how he's made you. If you are good at sports, you probably value sports. If you are passionate about music, you likely value music or creativity in general. There's absolutely nothing wrong with putting high value on the things you love. Just make sure to keep them in the right order of priority (God first, then family, friends, school and finally our interests) so God can use your gifts to write an amazing story with your life.

SEEDS OF CHARACTER

age 3-6

LEARN: God has blessed us with so many wonderful things. Our loved ones, our toys, our friends. Because we have so many choices for who to spend time with or what to play with, we need to ask God what he says is most important and has the most value for us. **Ask:** How can we find out what God says is important?

PLAY: Top 10 List **You will need:** paper and crayons or other writing utensil. Ask your child to write or draw their top 10 favorite things ever! Don't worry if the list includes only toys or material things. This is a great opportunity to talk about what we value and direct your child to open their heart to the things God loves. **Lesson:** When we love what God loves we experience his best blessings.

LOVE: Talk about the things you love and how God can use them as part of your story.

GROW: Memorize Matthew 6:33 together.



ACTION STEPS TO BECOMING A FAMILY ON MISSION:

Let's grab some paper and crayons (or other writing utensils) or a family journal. This is where we begin to put God's direction into action. We'll use our Holy Spirit Compass to guide us through each step.

STEP 1: Complete this week's lesson.

STEP 2: Take a look at our past experiences, how we spend our time, how we spend our money, our surroundings and where we want to go as a family. Begin writing a list of what we value.

STEP 3: Pray together and ask God what *he wants* our family to value.

STEP 4: Create our family values list.

WEEK 3: FAMILY VISION.

PREPARE - Let's talk about developing our story with our FAMILY VISION. Put away distractions and pray, "God show us something new today!"

LEARN - If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves. But when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed. Proverbs 29:18 (MSG)

If our values are the **why** then our family vision is the **where**. . . *Where do we sense God is taking us as a family? What is his vision or assignment for our lives - in the short term and the long term?* The King James version of the Bible (a very old translation from the early 1600's) says Proverbs 29:18 this way, "Without vision, the people perish. . ." That sounds pretty serious, doesn't it? But what wise Solomon (the writer of Proverbs) was saying is. . . when we don't have a plan for where we're going, we won't get very far and our lives won't be very effective.

You've got to think about big things while you're doing small things so that all the small things go in the right direction.

Alvin Toffler

It's never too early to cast vision* for the life we want to live and when we think ahead this way, we empower ourselves to live intentionally instead of always reacting to what comes our way. As a family on mission, it's important to think about our long term vision or goals (3-5 years ahead) and to also consider God's assignment for us in the short term (the next 12-24 months).

We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps.

Proverbs 16:9 NLT

Our story begins to develop as we seek God's vision for our family life. Once we have an idea of where he wants us to go we can use our Holy Spirit compass to guide our way. Because even though we are being intentional about the direction we're headed, we should always allow God to change our course if necessary as he writes our family story.

**When we talk about vision and where God wants to "take us", remember that we're not necessarily asking him to move us to a new home or community. To cast vision is to dream of what life might look like if we faithfully follow God's direction.*

ASK - 1. What does it mean to cast vision for our lives?
2. Where do we think God wants to take us this year?
3. Where do we want to be 3-5 years from now?

NAME the Truth - God's vision for our family will direct our story this year and for years to come.

TAKE Action - A vision statement will provide our family a beautiful glimpse of the destination we aim to reach together. Though it's important to remain open to God's constant guidance, holding vision in our hearts will set us on course for an effective and intentional journey through our family story. Let's write out our short term and long term family vision using the vision print at the end of this guide.

FAMILY PRAYER - Dear God, thank for providing clear vision for our future when we ask you for it. Please show us where you want our family to go together and the steps we need to take to get there. We want to intentionally pursue the purposes and plans you have for our family in order to live a story that changes lives and honors you. In Jesus' name, amen.

DIG DEEPER

age 10+

An assignment (in terms of God's way) is a purpose, position or instruction given to us in order to fulfill God's plan. He may give you an assignment to be kind to a new student at school or to serve in a certain way at church. When you are an adult, your job may be a specific assignment by God. When we ask God to show us his vision for our lives, he'll often lead us to an assignment he's chosen just for us. As you pray for God to reveal his plan for your future, be open to his assignments. You'll be amazed at how well he works them all together for your good (Romans 8:28)!

SEEDS OF CHARACTER

age 3-6

LEARN: As we grow up, God reveals our special talents and the important people in our lives that will play a part in our story. When we follow God, we can see more clearly the purpose and plan he has for us including the family, friends and job we'll have someday. **Ask:** What do you want to be when you grow up?

PLAY: Puzzle Vision **You will need:** a puzzle, paper, crayons, scissors. Grab your favorite puzzle and put it together with your child. Talk about how it's hard to see the picture until the pieces start to fill it in. Now, encourage your child to draw a picture of what they think their future will look like. Cut it into puzzle pieces and as you put it back together, share more about God's vision for our lives creating a beautiful picture. **Lesson:** God's vision for our future will come together as we follow him.

LOVE: Talk about the loved ones that play a big part in your family vision and story.

GROW: Memorize Proverbs 29:18 together.



ACTION STEPS TO BECOMING A FAMILY ON MISSION:

Let's grab some paper and crayons (or other writing utensils) or a family journal. This is where we begin to put God's direction into action. We'll use our Holy Spirit Compass to guide us through each step.

STEP 1: Complete this week's lesson.

STEP 2: Take a look at our passions, hopes and dreams and discuss where we feel God is leading us in the short and long term.

STEP 3: Pray together and ask God to reveal *his* vision for our family.

STEP 4: Write out our short term and long term family vision.

WEEK 4: FAMILY MISSION.

PREPARE - Let's talk about writing and living our FAMILY MISSION. Put away distractions and pray, "God show us something new today!"

LEARN - . . .[agree] wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Philippians 2:1-4 (NLT)

If our values are the **why** and our vision is the **where**, then our mission determines the **how**. A mission statement is a guideline by which we will live our life and our story. To create an intentional family mission statement we must consider where our values and our assignments intersect.

Values (*our why*) + **Vision** (*our assignments and desired outcome*) = **Our Family Mission**

Our family story will come naturally as we let our life speak loudly what we value and where we believe God is taking us. Putting aside the world's expectations and the overwhelm that often comes with the constant demands of life will allow God to reveal our family purpose.

Write this. Write what you see. Write it out in big block letters so that it can be read on the run. This vision-message is a witness pointing to what's coming. It aches for the coming - it can hardly wait. And it doesn't lie. If it seems slow in coming, wait. It's on its way. It will come right on time.

Habakkuk 2:2-3 MSG

Everything we've been talking about this month comes together right here with our family mission statement. Our family mission will determine the story we tell with our lives. An agreed upon and written mission statement will help us make decisions and follow God's direction because when given a choice, if it doesn't line up with our mission, it's easier to say no.

Remember, Paul's call to God's people is to be of one mind and one purpose, effectively living life on mission to share God's love - just like Jesus. But don't forget what we learned a few weeks ago - how we do that will be unique, according to the story he's writing for **our** family.

ASK - 1. What is a family mission statement?
2. Why is it helpful in living the story God wants to write for us?
3. What mission do we feel God is calling us to?

NAME the Truth - Our mission statement will help us live the story God is writing for our family.

TAKE Action - A mission statement is a guidemap that will help us navigate our family life and story. We'll use it along with our Holy Spirit compass to find our way. Let's think and pray about the mission God has for us, considering the values and vision we've already determined. Now, let's write our family mission statement using the mission print at the end of this guide.

FAMILY PRAYER - Dear God, we are ready to live our lives on mission, according to the story you are writing for our family. Help us to be of one heart and mind as we consider the purpose you have for us - individually and as a family. We want our values, our assignments and our goals to be about YOU and your Kingdom, first and foremost. Show us your way Lord, so that our lives tell a beautiful story of your love and faithfulness. In Jesus' name, amen.

DIG DEEPER

age 10+

Being a family on mission means working together, in all things, with one mind and purpose. It means getting on the same page, even if at first, each family member has a different idea. Love and family is all about give and take, so sometimes that means one person sacrifices what they want for the sake of another. It's normal to feel like the things you are most passionate about are all that matter. But remember, when you think of your family as a team, God can use you to a greater degree because you're better together.

SEEDS OF CHARACTER

age 3-6

LEARN: Families are super special because each member can help the others when they need it. Have you ever needed help and at just the right time mom or dad or a sibling came to your rescue? When we agree it's important to love and serve well, God can use our family to do amazing things for each other and the world around us! **Ask:** What are some ways our family can help others?

PLAY: Better Together **You will need:** pencils (5-10), rubber bands. Hand your child a pencil and ask him/her to break it in half. Explain that it was easy to break the pencil because it's not very strong on its own. Now put 5 or more pencils together and secure them with a rubber band on each end. Ask your child to break the pencils. The pencils won't break because they are stronger when bunched together. **Lesson:** When we share one heart and purpose we have the strength to follow God's mission because we are better together.

LOVE: Take a moment to share reasons why your family is better together.

GROW: Memorize Philippians 2:1-4 together.



ACTION STEPS TO BECOMING A FAMILY ON MISSION:

Let's grab some paper and crayons (or other writing utensils) or a family journal. This is where we begin to put God's direction into action. We'll use our Holy Spirit Compass to guide us through each step.

STEP 1: Complete this week's lesson.

STEP 2: Consider the purposes God has for our family and how to live them out daily.

STEP 3: Pray together and ask God to reveal *his* mission for our family.

STEP 4: Write out our family mission statement.

Dear friends,

Below I'm sharing a few sample value, vision and mission statements as a launching off point for you. I know one of the hardest parts of living with intention is knowing where to start, especially with anything that requires words. So read the samples below and let them inspire you to create your own.

I hope this Bible study and mission statement process has been life-changing for your family. I am praying for you to be empowered to go out in the world around you and live on mission this year and for years to come! I hope you'll stay connected to gatherandgrow.co where I'll continue to provide simple tools to help your family gather together and grow in faith.

Blessings to you this year!

Jess



For more simple faith-growing resources for your family visit
gatherandgrow.co

Family Values, Vision and Mission

Sample Statements

Values

In this house we. . .

Read the Bible
Pray everyday
Treat others with respect
Invite others in
Gather often
Serve each other
Practice gratitude
Believe the best
Find the bright side
Share our feelings
Encourage others

Work hard
Learn from our mistakes
Never give up
Take care of our things
Get outside
Seek adventure
Care about the world
Share the Gospel
Have fun
Choose joy
Love big

Vision

To share the love of Jesus through our daily lives at school and in the workplace while seeking God's direction as we grow our family business.

To be a mission-minded family by reaching out to others in our community with the love of Jesus as we seek God's assignment overseas.

Mission

The purpose of **The Jones Family** is to **share the love of Jesus in everything we do**. We will be **kind and servant-hearted contributors** to our local community as well as keeping our hearts and minds open to **learning about and loving God's great big world**. We are **committed to doing the hard work of growing our family business** so we can **serve our customers and give back through God's abundant provision**. We will **live life simply** in order to have plenty of **time and resources to share with others**.

The purpose of **The Bates family** is to **live a mission-minded life**, committed to **spreading the Gospel in our community and the world**. We will use any opportunity given to us to **share God's love and rescue plan through trusted relationships**. We will seek God's **long-term missionary assignment** for our family through **prayer, research and wise counsel**. When the time comes, we will be ready to **go and live this mission** in whatever region God calls us to. In the meantime, we will **faithfully serve him and each other** as he leads.

EACH PERSON'S
LIFE IS A STORY
THAT IS TELLING
ITSELF IN THE

living.



WILLIAM THROSBY BRIDGES



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