

Composing a "MISSION STATEMENT" For Your Marriage

(From the book, *Marriage Clues for the Clueless*)

In his best-selling book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, author Stephen Covey Advocates the practice of writing a "personal mission statement." Such a unique document "focuses on what you want to be (character) and to do (contributions and achievements) and on the values or principles upon which being and doing are based."

Many individuals have found that such a written creed has helped them stay focused on what matters most in life. Acting as a kind of "personal constitution," a mission statement serves as a helpful guide for daily decision making. It keeps us on track spiritually, morally, and relationally so that when we get to the end of life we do not look back and feel large measures of regret.

Married couples can also benefit greatly from this process of careful planning and intentional living.

Here are some ways you can stop reacting to life and start living proactively in your marriage:

1. Take a long, hard look at your own character. Assess your strengths and weaknesses. Take stock of your gifts and abilities, as well as the blessings and experiences God has put in your life. Think back over your successes and failures. Analyze your God-given passions (e.g., a desire to make a difference in a certain area).

- What do you need to change about yourself?
- Where do you need divine help?
- What qualities are you proud of?
- What habits do you need to eliminate?

This can be a very uncomfortable, even painful exercise. But by honest assessment, you can begin minimizing your weaknesses and maximizing your strengths. Also (as AA has discovered), it's only when we admit we have problems in certain areas, that we begin to seek humbly for help.

2. Envision yourselves at the end of life. It's your sixtieth or sixty-fifth wedding anniversary, say, and you're gathered with your children and grandchildren (maybe even great-grandchildren!) They are throwing a big surprise shindig for you, and reflecting on your life together. They are telling stories and expressing their love.

- What memories do you want them to have?
- What accomplishments do you want to be able to look back over—relationships (with God and with others), impact on the world for eternity's sake, service to your fellowman, career achievements, etc.?
- What character qualities do you want them to remember about you?
- What values do you want your children and their descendants to have caught and to be in the process of passing on?
- In short, what kind of legacy do you want to leave?

3. Talk to your spouse at length about your values, hopes, dreams, and ideals. (This may even be the subject of a weekend away together.)

This is deeper than, *"One day I hope we can buy a boat and a camp on a lake in the country."* This is more along the lines of, *"I want us to be a family that is radically committed to Jesus Christ in every way!"* or, *"My dream is that it could truly be said of us that we poured out our lives in love for and service to God and people."*

Think specifically about these matters. Plan on spending a long time on this exercise. Don't imagine you can complete this assignment while you're watching Wheel of Fortune! In essence you are trying to summarize all that you want to live for into a concise statement. You are writing your epitaph in advance.

4. Prayerfully begin backing up. Envision what you need to do now to get to where you'd like to end up. This is where goals come into play. You need long-term goals to point you in the right overall direction, and you need short-term goals to keep you on track day by day, and week by week.

Marital Goal-Setting* (*after you've established an overall mission statement).

What specific things do you want to accomplish:

- **Spiritually** (i.e., relationship with God)?
- **Familiarly** (i.e., in terms of relating to parents, children, etc.)?
- **Physically** (i.e., in terms of maintaining your health and fitness)?
- **Financially** (i.e., in terms of giving, saving, and spending money)?
- **Socially** (i.e., in terms of maintaining and developing friendships)?
- **Vocationally** (i.e., in career and/or employment situations)?
- **Recreationally** (i.e., in terms of leisure activities, vacations, etc.)?
- **Intellectually** (i.e., in terms of continued mental growth and stimulation)?

Sample Mission Statements:

Your mission statement will be printed nicely, put in frame, and placed on a prominent wall in your home for all to see. It can also be placed in the wedding brochure and used in the ceremony.

Our Family Mission:

To love each other . . .

To help each other . . .

To believe in each other . . .

To wisely use our time, talents, and resources to bless others . . .

To worship together. . .

Forever.

Our Family Mission Is to:

Value honest with ourselves and others,

Create an environment where each of us can find support and encouragement in achieving our life's goals

Respect and accept each person's unique personality and talents.

Promote a loving, kind, and happy atmosphere.

Support family endeavors that better society.

Maintain patience through understanding.

Always resolve conflicts with each other rather than harboring anger.

Promote the realization of life's treasures.

Our family will be a place where our family, friends, and guest find joy, comfort, peace, and happiness. We will seek to create a clean and orderly environment that is livable and comfortable. We will exercise wisdom in what we choose to do, read, see, and do at home. We want to teach our children to love, learn, laugh, and to work and develop their unique talents.

Our Family Mission:

To always be kind, respectful, and supportive of each other,

To be honest and open with each other,

To keep a spiritual feeling in the home,

To love each other unconditionally,

To be responsible to live a happy, healthy, and fulfilling life,

To make this house a place we want to come home to.