

## Introduction

### *Planning for Success*

**These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Deuteronomy 6:6**

On a Thanksgiving break in 2004 we were visiting my in-laws in San Antonio, Texas. At 38 years old, father of three, active in the church and community, and president of a regional manufacturing company, I rarely got a chance to catch my breath. I actually found myself in a comfortable chair beside the pool with time to daydream. Visiting my in-laws is always peaceful. I was away from work and an endless list of errands and tasks that itch at our family when we have down time at home. On this day my wife Julie, her sister and her mother were occupied in the kitchen - cooking and talking. The kids played outside in the yard, and I captured a rare moment to reflect. I thought about my business - how the year was coming together and what the prospects looked like for the coming year. In 2003 I had accepted the responsibility to lead a 65-year-old struggling manufacturing business that needed direction, leadership and energy to rebuild after the loss of their largest customer of 30 years. The owner and principal executive was in his upper 70s when I took over the business. Earlier in my career I worked for a Nasdaq public company where I led the rebuilding efforts of a small division that manufactured specialty graphic products, labels and nameplates for large computer and telecommunication companies. Following that position I led the

turnaround for a privately held service company providing contract labor to a variety of industries. In these jobs I was fortunate to have some great mentors and coaches that helped me learn the process for planning and leading the rebuilding of businesses. In my current role at the manufacturing company I had been running very hard to get the business moving again. I began thinking about the vision, mission and core values that we had put in place to provide a picture of where we wanted to go, a plan to get there and boundaries and beliefs that would guide our daily decisions. As I thought about my business and considered priorities, I began to think, *Why do I not apply the same discipline, energy and proven tactics of leading a successful business organization to my highest priority, my family?*

It was a question I knew I needed to give more time to consider. What immediately came to mind is that many of us invest the better part of our days and capacity of our minds reaching the hopes and dreams we envision for our business. But we have a higher calling and should have greater dreams for our families. At least that's how I interpret what Scripture calls us to as we live and love as a family unit.

I have always had a picture in my mind of what a successful family would look like. Julie and I have discussed long and short-term goals for our family. We have set priorities and have planned various activities. We have sent our kids to a private Christian school where professional educators plan outstanding curriculums and train our children. These educators provide measurements on the progress of our children in the forms of progress reports, report cards and standardized testing. Was all of this enough to realize the vision of successfully raising our children? Julie and I saw the difference between the small steps we had taken to set goals and implement what mattered most to

our family. But we also saw the huge influence that educators could have on our children in setting the stage for what they believed and how they carried themselves into their friendships and other non-classroom moments at school. It is said that if we fail to plan then we are planning to fail. None of us want to fail at parenthood, our highest calling. We invest our time and income in buying clothes, decorating rooms, paying for lessons and activities, investing in education, toys and hobbies for our children. We devote ourselves and our energy into our children. Why would we not invest the time it takes to put our hopes, dreams, goals and aspirations for our *families* into a written plan? Why would we not use a similar strategy that successful businesses have used to create a successful family model where each member of the family knows what he believes and how that guides his decision-making and actions? Have we established guiding principles, goals and measurements to monitor our family's progress? We practice these principals in our jobs and see the results of good planning and goal setting. Why would we not put in writing and commit to live from the values that we hold dear and want our children to follow? Quite simply, why don't we put as much planning to build our families like we do our businesses?

This is not a new idea. But you rarely hear about it – if ever – in Christian circles. Why is that? Scripture tells us in Deuteronomy 6:9 to write God's truths on our door posts and to speak of them to our children in all our daily activities. This is our highest responsibility. Most of us spend so much time on our professional lives trying to make money, please our bosses and gain recognition. These efforts certainly are rewarding, but are secondary to the responsibility of raising godly children. As Christians, we have been given the greatest gift to raise children and teach them to respect their Creator and us,

their God-given parents. We have accepted a great responsibility to train our children to know God's love and to reflect His love and His glory to each other, our family, their friends and anyone they come in contact with.

We know that each day we are given multiple opportunities to choose well and make a difference in the ups and downs of life. Life is an adventure. We can certainly meander along, hoping that the river of life will carry us somewhere safe and successful. Or we can grab a paddle, plot our course, live to higher standards and accomplish greater goals that God is preparing us for and calling us to.

I believe that this course starts with being intentional with your children. We have had success through our church of getting our kids involved in a ministry that they can relate to and are interested in, which I understand from others is key to introducing your children to live out the mission of serving. Our oldest son Drew (13) along with several of his friends have been involved in a puppet ministry in our church. Every Sunday they participate in the GIGL (Growing In God's Love) ministry to grade school kids. They do skits each Sunday as part of the children's worship and teaching. They love it and have also been able to participate with the adults for a very well-done Christmas puppet musical program where they perform 20 or more shows between Thanksgiving and Christmas to thousands of kids, parents and grandparents. Ben (11) is great with little kids. He also serves in the GIGL program and helps the 4 year old kids with crafts in their Sunday School class. As our daughter Summer (9) is old enough to serve we will seek to help her find a ministry where she will have fun and learn to use her unique gifts.

Our friends John and Shirley Meredith have two sons and have engaged them with an “at risk” school in Houston that has a mentoring program. For many years their family has mentored a child who was the same age as their two sons. Many weekends they pick up the child and he spends the weekend with the family. Their sons understand that he is to be as a brother and is a welcome part of the family. This has gone on for several years and the young boy joins the Meredith kids at their home on weekends, goes on family vacations and shares in nearly every aspect of their family. This experience and particularly the extended time together has taught their kids to share their stuff and has given them a broader perspective of life and the blessings they share. There are so many simple and convenient ways to be intentional in teaching our kids’ service to others. Our church has a ministry to the local food banks where our Sunday school class goes to a grocery store and politely provides lists of needs for the local food bank to people entering the stores. The patrons do their normal shopping and can pick one or many items off the list of needs and drop them off in our collection bins on the way out. It has provided an easy and convenient way for our family to provide a great service to the food bank and is a simple project to involve the kids. We typically break the schedule into shifts so your entire family can do the service project in a one hour shift. I bet that your church in your area or a community outreach ministry provides many opportunities for your family to serve where kids are interested and can relate and experience the fulfillment of serving others. I encourage you to get involved in something like this so that your children begin to see the importance and value of offering their time, energy, and heart to others. As they see you serve, they will begin to develop a heart to serve.

After all, we know that what kids see modeled before them is what they tend to do and who they become.

### **Planning for success**

So how do we “grab a paddle,” lead our families in the stream where God is working and accomplish great things for Him (rather than just ourselves or our family)? There are many successful businesses that plan from year to year and quarter to quarter and have not written down their vision, mission and core values. Likewise there are many successful families that live year to year and have not put into writing their visions and guiding principles for their families. I am not trying to discredit these successful companies and successful families but to challenge *you* to make the investment in a disciplined approach - to put in writing the hopes and dreams you have for your family and the core beliefs that you hold sacred and want to pass on to your children.

Statistics, whether you place much stock in them or not, show that businesses are much more likely to be top performers when they establish a written vision. I believe that we will be better leaders in our families and be more likely to reach the goals we establish and stay within the boundaries we set if we follow this course.

There is competition for our hearts and minds and for the hearts and minds of our kids. We are all challenged with so many activities and daily chores that take our attention. Our children are bombarded with messages from their peers, teachers, television, games, and a host of other forms of attention-grabbing means in their lives. The core beliefs of our families are under severe attack. The culture and media represented by select decision makers and influencers are always imparting their beliefs

and value systems on our families. By investing a small amount of time putting into writing the things you hope your family will become as well as the core beliefs you hope to impart to your children, you will make these concepts an accessible and important part of your daily decision making – and your kids as well.

When this concept first propelled me to take action during that Thanksgiving break in 2004, I put together a one-page letter that stated what I believed to be our family's vision, mission and core values. I began to use them as a reference when instructing our kids and periodically looking at our choices and activities to make sure they were in line with our core values.

As friends noticed these statements on our refrigerator and asked for a copy, I was encouraged to expand the statements into a book about how to incorporate your core values into daily family life. I never considered myself a writer but found it easy to write what was on my heart for my own family and also create a tool for others to be able to embrace the same concepts. I've been attracted to discipline and structure for as long as I can remember and during the process of starting this book, I learned about an education and training project targeted to Christians put on by Focus on the Family. The Truth Project teaches and helps Christians understand what the Bible says about every area of human existence and is a starting point for looking at life from a biblical perspective. I realized that what attracted me to the Truth Project was the systematic and disciplined study to understand and articulate what we, as Christians, believe. And once we contemplate, understand and believe the truths of the bible, we will be changed forever. They offer a statement to consider "If we *really believe* that what we believe is *really real* it should have a profound impact on our faith, perspective on the world, and impact the

choices we make in every area of our life. I found myself attracted to this program because of the similarity to my efforts to create and teach a simplified version of that for my family in the form of Core Values. To some, this disciplined and structured approach to leading your family may be of absolutely no interest. However, if you are wired like me this is the stuff that energizes me. The goal of the training was to train leaders to lead 13-week programs in their homes. When I heard about the program I felt strongly that I had to attend and prayed that I would be receptive to hear and act on the message God may be trying to communicate to me that, so strongly, drew me to attend this conference. The material was fantastic and I was receptive to this goal, but really felt God leading me to another action.

On the second day of the training I felt that I was being led to finish this book to help moms and dads develop their own vision, mission and core values for their families. May I mention that I was a C student in English and the thought of really writing a book was *never on my radar*. However, I left the training committed to being obedient to finish this book to give parents a tool to help them lead their families to know what they believe and hold as uncompromising principles for guiding life decisions and activities. In this book I will share tools of how to develop your personal vision, mission and core values for your family. I have provided formats and examples of the plan that we have put to use in our family so that you can consider and use them as you seek to organize and lead your family. It is my hope that you will be inspired to consider your family's deepest values, to establish guidelines, boundaries to live within, and that this will provide a way for you to measure your progress and to be a family that is recognizably different in your community.

## Chapter One

### *Leading Your Family*

In Genesis chapter 2, following God's magnificent creation of the earth, God concluded creation with his greatest and final act of creation. God instituted the family to rule over his creation as he created man, and from man's flesh, a companion suitable for him: woman. Family is God's holy institution created by Him and forms the foundation for human social structure and perpetuates the human race. The breakdown of the family unit in our generation has caused unfathomable damage leveling a severe toll on every area of society.

I have written this book to provide a tool that can be used by couples raising a successful family. But my heart and passion is for the men. It is the men who are commanded to impress God's commandments on the hearts of their children. It is the men who bear the ultimate responsibility for the leadership of the family and who, today, do not have a model to follow. Many have lost their confidence and are struggling to know *how* to lead. Many men gain their identity and define themselves by their career. When two men meet and enter into a conversation what is the first or second question that is asked? What do you do for a living? The answer to this question is the way men identify with each other and frame their stature and position in our society. Men are driven to pursue success in their career, and they find their career competing and all too often winning their energy and affections. In this book, I am seeking to leverage the training, experience and expertise that men and women gain from their careers and

challenge them to be the CEO and leader of their household. Even if you are not the CEO of your business it is highly likely your business has a vision, mission statement and core values that you follow. You have a CEO or manager to follow. You have examples to model. You train and practice your profession by knowing your goals, following instructions, and managing your talents and resources. You are recognized and rewarded for good performance and experience disappointment and reprimanding (even financial loss) if you fail to stay in the boundaries or meet your objectives.

If you are a wife or mother, it is you who are the glue that holds the family together and are absolutely critical to coming along side your husband to make the family work. However, far too often moms find themselves filling the role of head of household because of absent fathers or abandonment by the fathers. Or quite simply some fathers simply abdicate the leadership role to their wives. The fact is mothers know the details, set the pace and lead the way in doing most of the work. Moms are great managers and lieutenants that work tirelessly at caring for the basic needs of the household. As business leaders need the insight and support of the managers to shape the direction of an organization, husbands need the ground level perspective of the mom and the support and partnership of their wives in planning for the family and executing the needs of the family. It is absolutely essential that husbands and wives work together toward the same goals with the same standards and offer consistent images and messages to the family. In this book I will provide simple instruction and illustrations of my own efforts to lead my family as well as the perspective from other leaders to help you establish a clear picture, direction and boundaries from which you can consider as you raise your children.

I hope to provide men encouragement and tools so they can be confident in their ability to provide high level leadership to the family. There are many trends and personal opinions regarding the details of leading a family that I will leave for other books. This book is not meant to be an exhaustive study on leadership, but to provide simple, high-level planning tools for setting the course in a concise format that can be read on a short business trip, doctor's waiting rooms, in the carpool line at school, or any other setting in which you have time to read a book that isn't exhaustive (or exhausting to try to get through).

I intend the information to be shared by husbands and wives working together in agreement to develop a direction for their family. However, when the family unit has both a husband and wife I feel strongly, men, that it is your job to take the initiative to lead your families. I plan to show you that being the CEO and leader of your household is not as complicated and overwhelming as it may seem. I will share with you some of the applications of vision, mission and core values in my business and expand on these practices as I give details of my own personal journey to develop these in our family. Along the way I have interviewed other Christian business leaders and will share some of their experiences in leading their own families.

You will find that many of the decisions and direction for our families are the same things we do every day in our careers. Whether you work for a local bike shop or are the CEO of a Fortune 100 company, you are the leader or have leaders to model from in your business profession. You may have been trained to work: at a trade, as an educator, at a government agency. You may have graduated from medical school, law school or business school; but you are part of a business enterprise that delivers a product

or service in exchange for funds to perpetuate the business. Moms are especially critical to this since stay at home moms manage the most foundational enterprise in our country: the building up, growth, and needs of our families. We operate in business enterprises of various professions and practice the skills needed every day to make something happen and hopefully something of lasting impression. Applying these ideals to the family is something that you will find that you not only can do, but want to do as you see the impact and effect it has upon your spouse and kids. If you take the small steps now of creating and implementing a plan, with your spouse and kids involved, you will see great dividends in the months and years to come. Many of us spend countless hours looking at how to make our work better or our companies more profitable. In the same breath, we need, as I've learned, to make sure we are looking at how to help our families function with consistent messages about who we are, what we stand for, and how that shapes every decision we make. By investing in our families futures, we may experience exponential returns from good decisions made by our family for our family, our community and for future generations to come.

### **Why your work matters**

Your work matters, because that is where you invest the greatest part of your energy and the playing field that we practice and live out our Christian witness to the world. Our jobs have a direct effect on our personal life and shape much of our personal agenda. For many of us our work is our profession and trade where we realize the talents

that God has blessed us with. Certainly our work matters to God and matters to our families.

In May 2003, I stepped into a new job at a manufacturing company that had been suspended in time. The company had an outstanding legacy of working with Houston's greatest entrepreneurs and had been instrumental in successfully launching early products for the Igloo Corporation, NASA's first manned space flights, the first heart by-pass pump, the original Weedeater and parts for the first Compaq Computer. However, there wasn't a clear direction for the future. It was a stagnant environment where the office furniture, décor, equipment, systems and culture were 25 years behind during a time when the business world had undergone unprecedented change.

Typewriters were present in every office, email was barely known, data was written on cards and computer use was limited to a very few individuals. Our doors were closed to outsiders in an effort to protect ourselves from predators on our business. The industry was fast consolidating and moving to Mexico and China to follow the global OEMs, and we did not have a clear direction or strategy as to who we were going to be in the new millennium. My job gave me the opportunity to apply my God-given talents to serve others by providing direction and energy for the future. It gave me an opportunity for the business and the individuals in the company to testify to the great work that God is accomplishing in our business and in our individual lives. I consider my co-workers as an extension of my family and have the same hopes and dreams for them to testify of God's great works in their lives.

As the new president of a plastics company that manufactures parts for life science, energy, aerospace, and industrial products, it was now my responsibility to

provide clear direction for our company, to make plans regarding how we would get to our destination, and to provide boundaries and measurements with which to chart our course. Were we seeking to follow the path of globalization and outsourcing? Were we going to pursue highly engineered parts that required special processing equipment and specific knowledge for manufacturing engineering grade materials? The direction that we would take would significantly impact the materials, training, equipment, sales and support staff to accomplish our goal.

Establishing direction and goals is not the only important task for upper management in a company. We now have 75 employees who must work together as a team to provide a quality product on time. Employees need to have a clear picture and understanding of the direction in which we are taking the business. I believe they also need to know why we believe the path we have chosen is the best path for our collective success and have the opportunity to contribute their own ideas to help us succeed. So another important role for managers is to give those working with them a chance to voice their goals, desires, and vision so that everyone is part of the process and benefits from the direction and success of the company. This is also true with our families. Including your children in family decisions communicates that you value them and their ideas. Including your children allows them to “buy in” and take ownership in the decisions. What about you? What training, examples, and decisions are you making in your business that you can see applying to the good of your family too? Are you involving others in making decisions at your work or in your family? Doing this shifts authority and responsibility to those that participate in the decisions. This also allows you to serve them by helping them accomplish the tasks and realize the benefits personally and

professionally. Nothing embodies Christ's leadership model more than serving those that you lead to help them to grow and accomplish more.

### **Servant Leadership**

Our company has established a vision to be known as the "BEST" manufacturer of molded plastic parts in the south central United States. What we do is take small plastic pellets provided by companies like Dupont and mold them into plastic parts that are used in every common household or industrial product. Our vision establishes what we do, where we market our services and how we measure our success. I have adopted a "direct and serve" leadership model that I believe is the leadership model that Christ gave to us. In a direct and serve leadership model, the leader is responsible to show the path the organization will follow as they seek to reach their goal. Once the CEO has provided direction, he or she then switches to a servant role of helping others achieve their individual goals and achieve the mission of the organization. At this point the traditional leadership triangle with the Chief Executive Officer issuing orders from the top to employees is turned upside down.

How can any leader coach and assist each supervisor and employee to achieve success in their role of moving the company forward? I see it as my responsibility is to make sure that individuals have the tools they need to do their job. Are they connected to the people they need to be in order to achieve their goals? Do they have the facilities and equipment to give them the best chance of success? Do they have the training and support to achieve their objectives? As the leader I am not able to accomplish all the work that needs to be done. I can only be successful if I help the individuals in our company be successful both professionally and personally. Similarly, we are responsible

for developing our children by encouraging them to make decisions and serving them by supplying the tools, training, emotional, financial and physical support to see the successful outcomes of their decisions.

Christ demonstrated this leadership model in Acts where he instructed the disciples to go out to Judea, Samaria and the outer most parts of the world. Yet he also went out to various cities and country sides to meet with people, teach them, and serve them even if some didn't recognize him as the leader of their lives.

The authors of Leadership by the Book - Ken Blanchard, Bill Hybels, and Phil Hodges - point out that Jesus' example differs greatly from the norm. Kings and queens sent their people out to die for them. Jesus was the only king who decided to die for his people. In Mark 9:35 we read that Christ taught a service model to his followers, saying, "If anyone wants to be first, he *must* be the very last, and the *servant of all*" (emphasis mine, NAS<sup>1</sup>). He was the living example of a servant leader. John records the remarkable action of Jesus lowering himself to wash the feet of his disciples, teaching them that this is how they must act and showing them that no master is greater than his servant. Christ demonstrated a picture of servant leadership and then gave instruction to his disciples to follow in his footsteps. "For I gave you an example, that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them" (John 13:15-17).

As a parent are you modeling servant leadership to your kids? Are you leading but serving them at the same time and teaching them to do the same with their siblings and peers? Another way to think of this is that as we instruct our kids, we need to come

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture references are from the New American Standard unless otherwise stated.

alongside them to support and empower the direction that we're giving. Have you ever considered your personal leadership style? I asked my friend Jim Tomforde, Vice-Chairman Insurance Alliance and outstanding example of leadership and service to his wife Leigh and 2 daughters to comment on leadership styles in the family and I thought his comments on a dark side of leadership to be particularly insightful. Jim commented: "The dark side of leadership, that is the controlling side. Leadership is actually working yourself out of a job, sending others out to surpass what you can do. Far too many, especially in the Church, are all about dictating to others how they should live. When we do this to our children they resent us, they don't trust us. Children don't want to disappoint us, so they often follow along with our demands, but there will come a time when they know in their hearts that our leadership is really about controlling their behavior because it serves our needs as the parent. Children need to feel loved for how they are right now not loved for who we wish them to be. Then they will have the freedom to spread their wings and be who God created them to be (often not whom we, as parents may want or even recognize)."

For your family, have you considered how well, how often, and how consistent you are practicing your leadership style with your kids? Do you have a group of friends, parents or mentors that you can bring questions to, share your frustrations or seek their advice and support? Learning from friends and family has been valuable for Julie and me as we have sought to engage our children with a servant leadership style. We have encouraged our kids to explore a wide variety of sports, activities and hobbies. Soccer, gymnastics, swimming, baseball, basketball, guitar, ballet, piano, trumpet, hunting and the list goes on. Our children have expressed an interest in all of these activities and we

have done our best to encourage them, offer them good training and support them even at personal sacrifice to help them achieve their dreams. My daughter, Summer, started an introductory tumbling class after school in pre-kindergarten. She really enjoyed it and showed that she had the skills and desire to progress. We have supported her interest and made personal and financial sacrifices to get her to the gym 4 or 5 days a week for 3 – 4 hour practices. We have gymnastic equipment in our front hallway. The entire family has modified our weekend schedules to accommodate her training and meet travel schedules. We have all made the decision to support her in her interests and help her in any way we can to achieve her goals. Likewise, Summer has spent many afternoons at baseball practices and evenings attending little league baseball games. It is important that our children know our expectations that each person value the interests and activities of the other siblings. Our son, Ben, went through a moody stage where he would just get in a bad mood funk. It was fun to hear the others sincerely try to cheer him up with an idea for a fun activity or simply making the effort to talk to him. It didn't always work, but was nice to see them try. It is easy to discourage bad behavior, but do make a point to really recognize and praise your kids when we see behavior that you like. Jesus modeled servant leadership with his disciples and his disciples followed his example in modeling servant leadership to the church. It is our responsibility to model this to our family and our joy to see our children serving each and supporting each other as best friends and trusted allies.

### **The Hands and Feet of Christ**

When we are intentional about our servant leadership, God allows us to serve in ways that are beyond all that we could think or ask. On January 12, 2010, a group of

friends from the Houston Rotary had just landed in Port-Au-Prince Haiti for a trip where they planned to visit the local hospital and help with the area of the hospital that was working with diabetics. Forty-five minutes after their plan arrived, a 7.0 magnitude quake rocked Haiti and set off a series of events that no one could have imagined or prepared for. Roads buckled, buildings collapsed, fires started, communication systems ceased, thousands of people were trapped, killed and severely injured. In an instant an entire country was in absolute chaos and the lives of the Haitians and my friends were changed forever. My friends made their way to the hospital where they found dead bodies lined along the sidewalks and severely bleeding and injured men and women desperately searching for help and newly orphaned children.

Buildings were seriously damaged and there was no power, no medicine, and too few doctors to provide assistance to the desperate cries all around the city. With no medical training my friends distributed pain killers and medicine that they could find from the limited supplies in the pharmacy. Soon overwhelmed they found themselves simply praying with the wounded. And in the midst of the chaos my friend, Vern Swisher, found the best he could do was to sing praise songs to God. The story of the days to follow and their rescue was amazing. Their lives were changed forever. They were stripped of all human comforts, dropped into a natural disaster and were surrounded by death and desperation. It was at this time that they received the opportunity to be the hands, ears, voice and feet of Christ. It was in the midst of this time that they experienced the harsh reality of life and the overwhelming greatness of God.

After hearing of their experience when they returned, I realized how hard we work to protect ourselves and families from the world where God is at work. We go to

school, we work hard at our jobs, we live in safe neighborhoods, go to church and surround ourselves with others who do not threaten us and are most like us. We make plans and efforts to protect ourselves from the world and at the same time miss the work that God is doing *in* the world. When was the last time you were intentional about leaving your safe cocoon to put yourself in a servant leadership position to be used by God to accomplish His work? Have you ever joined a prison ministry, served in a homeless shelter, worked in the cancer ward of a hospital, gone to serve in a third world country?

The world is a messy place, but that is where our God works miracles and reveals Himself to those serving and those in need every day. No one better illustrates this example than Jesus who went out of his way to engage tax collectors, prostitutes and lepers that the religious community avoided or removed from society. I was challenged by my friend's trip to Haiti to be intentional about serving others and giving my family the opportunity to participate and experience the work that God is doing every day all around us. My friends lives have been changed forever and the lives of those they touched are changed forever. Are you thinking about opportunities to allow your children to be involved in the work that God is doing in the world? Are you exposing your kids to people and situations where they serve others in need? Are you modeling this lifestyle to your children? Are you praying over your children and expecting God to do a great work in them? These are just some of the things to think about as you consider the hopes, plans, and dreams for your family to be a family that models success that comes from being a family that loves Christ and seeks to be part of the larger body of Christ. Whether you are an arm, leg, foot, or head, you are and your children are

important parts of the body of Christ reflected to the world. And that is, after all, our greatest responsibility as parents, isn't it?

In the next chapter, we'll look at the first step in bringing to reality a family plan that you and your family will use for years to come as what defines you. As we've talked about, the path is clear for the reasons to have a vision and mission statement for your family. Similar to successful businesses, these vision and mission statements can create a lifelong reflection and encouragement for the family that binds you together in ways you could never have imagined. It's the backbone for all that you are and all that you intend to be as a family, particularly a family that seeks to reflect God's truth to others. It's time for you to think about what's important, write it down and begin implementing it with your family. Let's get going!