

Identify your Overwhelmings and Your Desires (A Reflection)

David Ford's, The Shape of Living talks about how life's overwhelmings shape our lives and can show us how to live in the chaos.

"The wisest way to cope is not to try to avoid being overwhelmed (you can't run away), and certainly not to expect to be in control of everything (many do); rather it is to live amidst the overwhelmings in a way that lets one of them be the overwhelming that shapes the others.

That is the 'home' or 'school' in which the practicalities of coping can be learnt."

A Note from Chris & Mary: *Holy Family Catholic School and our larger faith community in the Church was to us what David Ford is describing above. God was "on the move" in our lives through the church by giving us a way to live and thrive through all the **overwhelmings** that we experienced. While our commitments to Holy Family & church contributed to our overwhelmings, we were able to use that overwhelming for good amongst the chaos. **Holy Family gave us a community of faith-filled people** who shared in our experiences, supported us, prayed for us, provided numerous ways in which to help us live out our baptismal commitments – to be disciples. It aligned with the best of our desires for ourselves and our children.*

Name and describe your overwhelmings. Before we can let God move in our lives, we have to acknowledge that which keeps us so occupied; so overwhelmed that we end each day exhausted. It is amazing how liberating it can be, even when our overwhelmings are good. Naming is a powerful act. The gift of a name lets us find a perspective in which we can start "coming to terms" with our situation by talking about it – to ourselves in our own thoughts, and to others. (Ex: career or work obligations, childcare issues, children's activities, volunteering, outside commitments, extended family obligations, the effects of coming from a broken home)

Our overwhelmings are: _____

Faces and Voices – that Shaping of the Heart: People are all around us, but they are also inside us. Each of us has a "community of the heart" made up of those people who are most important for us. Of all the sources of overwhelming, people are the most significant. Our most powerful feelings relate to them, feelings such as love, anger jealousy, rivalry, gratitude, hero worship, and status. A big part of our inner life is taken up with people, and they loom large in our memories, fantasies and hopes. The shape of our living is largely created by our relationships with people. (Ex: a sibling, a friend who seems to "have to all together", a mother who is a wonderful example, a past teacher who encouraged you)

Who are your (positive & negative) life-shaping people? _____

Life Shaping Desires: What is a desire? It may be just a wish, but it may also dominate the life of a person or group. Such dominating desires are life-shaping. Desires are a common form of multiple overwhelming, and sorting them out is a lifetime's task. A helpful exercise is to ask ourselves what our main life-shaping desires are for ourselves and for our family. This can help you create a "vision" for you and your family. Ask yourself:

- What do you want your family to look like?
- How would you like God to describe you and your family?
- What action(s) does God most want to take through your family?

Create a Family Mission Statement

(A Tool for your Spiritual Outline)

Reflecting on your responses on the reverse side, consider creating a Family Mission Statement.

What is our Vision? This is your first statement. Seek God's direction! You might consider using a favorite scripture verse or saying/phrase of your family. Examples are:

"Whoever loves God also loves His brother." 1 John 4:21. The Jones family values relationships and will be a model of kindness and respect to all – in and out of our home.

"As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15. The Smith family will glorify God by putting others first and being a model of service.

What is our Mission? Write a few lines on how you will accomplish this vision. Perhaps this will help:
Put your scripture verse/phrase or setting at top.

We believe God wants us to (vision statement). We will intentionally do this by concentrating on these areas this year:

With each other, we will _____.

With our neighbors and friends, we will _____.

With our extended family, we will _____.

With our church/faith body, we will _____.

To help our school community, we will _____.

When people think of our family, how do we want them to finish this sentence: They are a family that

TIPS:

- **Have a family meeting.** Each person in your family has different strengths, dreams and goals. When writing the mission statement, parents can consider strengths of the kids. This direction and articulation of purpose could help kids become involved in activities that are in line with what parents feel is God's plan for their lives – rather than doing every activity available.
- **Consider the overwhelms and challenges.** If you have a child that is challenged with hitting or biting, you might incorporate that into your mission statement. Example: "We will use our strength to love and protect one another," or "We will treat each other better than we treat our best friends."
- **Reflect on "faces and voices"** especially as you explore ministry goals. Those who have been a good example to you may be a good starting place. Use available resources at Church & school. Ask yourselves: Is there a group of people our family is naturally drawn to, those that could use our help and/or prayer?
- **Post your Mission Statement** where you and your children can see it. Visual reminders are valuable and gently help us stay on track.
- **Review and revise** each year and use them to help you write your annual Spiritual Outline for Holy Family Catholic School. You are on a pilgrimage – do not be discouraged if you fall short.

Keep in mind we all have seasons in life. The beauty of putting your mission statement in writing is that as you identify where you are right now, you'll start to see a glimmer of where God wants to take you and your family in the years to come. You may even find decisions easier to make, activities more enjoyable and your family life more satisfying. More important, you will help fulfill God's purposes for your family now — and intentionally prepare your children for the work He has for them later.

Sources: Ford, David, *The Shape of Living-Spiritual Directions for Everyday Life.*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan (2002).
<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/spiritual-growth-for-kids/writing-a-family-mission-statement> ;
http://www.gorelevant.com/docs/LG_Family_ID_Participant_Guide.pdf