

Writing a Personal Mission Statement

Leaders, medical researchers, and personal productivity experts have known for a long time that people who have a sense of purpose, mission, or call on their lives are healthier, and more productive, than people who wander through life aimlessly. So, it is crucial, if you are to thrive in life, love, work and leadership, to consider your life's mission. And the best way to hold you accountable to living it authentically is to commit it to writing.

Your personal mission should arise from your values and your life philosophy (worldview). It will outline what you sense your unique contribution to humanity will be. Obviously, that will depend on your unique character, giftedness, and passion. It should answer the following four questions:

1. What will be the center of my life?
2. What will be the character of my life?
3. What will be the order of your values?
4. What will be the contribution of my life?

A personal mission statement will benefit you in the following ways:

- Gives life meaning & purpose
- Points the direction of your life
- Defines success and greatness for you
- Helps you define and prioritize your values
- Builds unique worthiness and value
- Determines how you steward your resources
- Clarifies your roles
- Helps formulate your goals

Identify Your Values

What you treasure the most in life constitute your highest *values*. Knowing, pursuing, and living your highest values adds immense satisfaction and meaning to life. Unfortunately, many people live reactively out of their *de-values*, those painful things in life they try hard to avoid. Proactively living your values requires a focus and attention that those who gravitate into avoiding de-values don't have. As you begin your personal mission statement, your first challenge is to choose your highest values, and then to reprioritize them in the order you believe God wants you to live them. This part of the exercise is often a life changing experience in and of itself. In our live workshops, many participants have commented on the tremendous benefit this has been to them.

When you are ready for this exercise, use the Values and Devalues Master List on page 3 and the Worksheet on page 4. From the master list select your top eight to ten values (the list is not exhaustive, and you may add your own) and place them in column one in the order that you truly live them now. You need to be very honest, and you may ask others about their impressions of the order you live them.

Secondly, look at the list of possible de-values that may be driving your life. Closely examine yourself for these and list them in order from the most painful to the least. Many people don't realize how much they are driven by default by their de-values. Recognizing them can indeed be life changing.

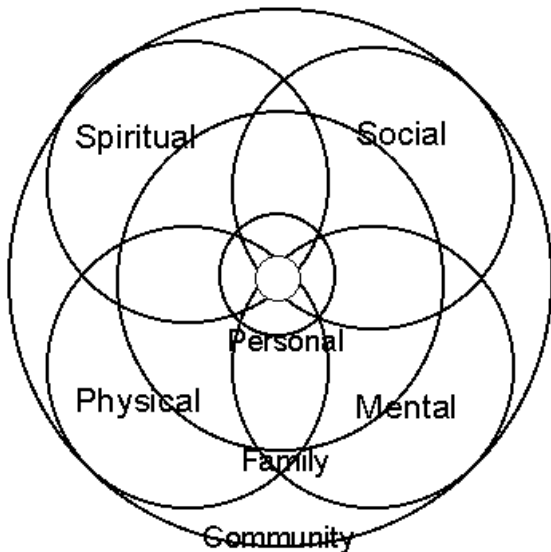
Thirdly, reprioritize your values in column two in the order that you believe God would have you live them. As you begin, pray that God will show you where change is needed. You may find that you drop some values in

column one, picking others from the master list as God would direct. Make sure you have values from each of the *four pillars*—physical (body), mental (mind), social (heart), and spiritual (spirit). If you listed strong de-values, prayerfully consider adding the compensating value to counterbalance it. For example, if Loneliness is a de-value, add Friendship to your new list of values. Don't rush this process. You may take several days to fine tune it. Scan your list for possible value conflicts and circle them. For example, if your number one value is Adventure, with Security as number two, you will have intense inner conflict trying to decide on leisure activity. For example, skydiving may be adventurous, but you worry for days about what will happen if your chute doesn't open. Another common scenario is where people attempt to put two values on the same line, such as Spirituality and Family. Here again, intense inner conflict occurs in trying to decide between two important areas of life.

When you finish this exercise, copy your new list of values to the front of your paper planner, or into your smartphone. Refer to it frequently during your personal solitude, or during the day when faced with decisions or problems. It will become a powerful compass to help direct the mission of your life. Next, you will use these values to help write your personal mission statement.

Writing your mission statement

You will now craft sentences around your values, describing how you know that you are actually living and achieving this value. Commonly, phrases such as, "I will," "I pledge to ...," or "I will endeavour to ..." are used. Be creative. Another sentence form might be, "When I (*your value*), then I ..." The diagram will help ensure that you include the essential components.



Make sure that your statement balances the *four pillars* around a core centre. That core centre will determine what or who is god to you. If you adhere to a Christian worldview, it should be God. Next, your mission statement should focus on your personal character, followed by family values, and finally what your contribution will be to the greater community.

Personal mission statements vary in length from a sentence to several paragraphs. It should be detailed enough to cover the areas above as outlined, but not so long as to become too tedious to memorize or read regularly. A well prayed through mission statement will likely only change slightly as you revise it over the years. It is likely to become an enduring guide and compass for your life.

For additional resources on writing a personal mission statement, I recommend Stephen Covey's books, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and *First Things First*.

Values and De-values Master List

Values	De-values
Accountability	Anger
Achievement	Conflict
Adventure	Discouragement
Ambition	Disrespect
Appearance (personal)	Greed
Art	Guilt
Compassion	Helplessness
Courage	Inadequacy/failure
Creativity	Loneliness
Excellence	Procrastination
Family	Rejection
Financial independence	Selfishness
Freedom	Shame
Friendship	Surrender
Fun	Worry
Generosity	
Giftedness	
Godliness	
Health/energy	
Humour	
Integrity	
Intellectual growth	
Knowledge	
Leadership	
Love	
Ministry	
Morality	
Music	
Patriotism	
Peace	
Perseverance	
Security	
Self-worth	
Service	
Sexual Intimacy	
Spirituality	
Success	
Teamwork	
Trust	
Unity	
Worship	

Values Worksheet

1. Use the values master list and select your highest values (approximately 10 and you may add your own that are not on the list).
2. List them in column one in the order that your PRESENTLY live them (be absolutely honest with yourself). List the de-values that drive your life.
3. In column two, re-order them in the way you believe God WANTS you to live them.

Your values as you live them now

Your values as God wants you to live them

Your de-values
