

DECEMBER

FAMILY SUMMIT

ACTIVATION GUIDE



A good annual summit is fairly simple.

We reflect and evaluate what has happened over the past year and make strategic decisions and improvements for the coming year.

If this is your first family summit it might be easiest to follow an outline like the one below.

As you get more skilled at leading your family summits you can begin to craft a template of your own.

If you've done these in the past you may want to read through this template to see if there are any elements that you'd like to incorporate.

Let's get started!

Pre-work: Crafting the right environment for a summit.

WHERE?

Summits require setting aside a place as free from distractions as possible.

For a couple's summit this might look like reserving a night or two at a hotel preferably with a great lobby for long deep conversations. For a full family summit with older kids it might involve getting an AirBnB.

If the budget is too tight to afford a night or two away we recommend planning to get out of the house during the days on a predefined schedule for the full time period of the summit to places that can allow you to focus. For most of us home is place where we are surrounded by things that cause distraction and the work we're going to do is difficult and the distractions will often overwhelm our best intentions.

Brainstorm possible places for your summit.

If you're planning a stay-at-home summit list 3-5 locations within a short drive of your house you could visit to do the work of your summit. Places like libraries, hotel lobbies, quiet coffee shops, maybe even churches that are open to the public.

WHEN?

These can be done anytime of the year but we've found the most natural time for our family is between Christmas and New Years.

For those trying to pull of a full multigenerational summit it may be best to do this over the summer when everyone's schedules can sync up.

It's good to think about establishing a traditional time for your family. Don't worry about hitting that the first time but once you find the time that seems to work best you'll be a lot more consistent if that time of year just seems to draw you into summit mode because you've of the repeated summits of years past.

Discuss and try to agree on specific dates for your upcoming summit.

WHAT?

You'll be spending time both reflecting and strategizing so below is a list of things it's often useful to bring along:

- Journals
- Photos
- Calendars
- A few copies of your weekly rhythm
- Anything you've written about your family mission, vision and pillars
- Post it notes with sharpies

How to reflect



I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands.

Psalm 145:5

Before you push ahead in the future it's important to ponder what the Lord has accomplished through your family team over the past year. What were the big wins? What milestones need to be celebrated?

These elements are filed away in your memory and there are a few tools you can use to draw them out.

We like to start our summits in the evening like our Sabbaths and reflect and celebrate so that the following day we can fully dedicate to working on improvements.

If you choose to do this we recommend an evening schedule like the following:

5-5:30 pm: Orientation - Get settled in. Look over the agenda for the summit and read the sections above. Pray and the time.

5:30-6:30: Private Reflection - Each person answers the questions below in a journal.

6:30-8:30: Reflection Dinner - Find a quiet relaxed place to have dinner and go step by step through what was written.

8:30-???: Mommy & Daddy time - I hope you know what that means.

CALENDARS

One thing we like to do is flip through our calendars and jot down wins or milestones that come to mind as we think about certain events in our year.

We like to go quarter by quarter highlighting the biggest 2-3 wins of each one.

Our kids are older so our favorite thing to do is to take an hour cataloging the big wins and milestones, go out to dinner and go around quarter by quarter and have each family member share those wins and then discuss, reimence and praise God together for good and hard times we went through together.

CAPITALS

Many of our friends like to track progress through the five capitals. The concept here is that we tend to understand financial capital. This refers to the money we have stored up that is available to deploy into investments. But as believers we need to be growing assets in areas other than merely financial and money is often the least valuable of the five capitals.

They are, in order of importance:

Spiritual: How have you grown in your relationship with God and in your faith in the Gospel?

Relational: Are you most important relationships growing in health and intimacy?

Physical: How well did you take care of your body and physical fitness this year?

Intellectual: What intentional activities deepened your wisdom and understanding this year?

Financial: Is our financial house in order as we seek to reduce debt, control spending and grow income?

The great thing about reflecting on the capitals is that they provide a nice framework for improving or establishing rhythms and setting goals during the vision casting phase of the summit.

CULTURE

A final way to reflect is to take make an honest assessment on how your family is tracking with your family mission, vision and pillars.

This can be a great team discussion and will also be helpful as you prepare to plan improvements.

- Did we make progress this year in pursuing our mission and vision?
- Which pillar did we notice had the best impact on our family's culture?
- Which pillar seems to be the most neglected this year?

It's great to end a time of reflection through Thanksgiving. What is each person most thankful for about the previous year? Take some time to directly thank the Lord for what he has and is doing through your family team as you turn attention to making improvements for the coming year.

How to Plan Improvements

"The prudent understand where they are going, but fools deceive themselves."

Proverbs 14:8

This is point during most summits where you would set goals. Goals can be helpful for establishing a direction and focus for this next season but they tend to drive a family into imbalance. Families exist in a complex ecosystem of different priorities and so we recommend focussing on establishing and improving systems instead of setting goals.

"A goal is a specific objective that you either achieve or don't sometime in the future.

A system is something you do on a regular basis that increases your odds of happiness in the long run. If you do something every day [or every week], its a system. If you're waiting to achieve it someday in the future, it's a goal. If you achieve your goal, you celebrate and feel terrific, but only until you realize you just lost the thing that gave you purpose and direction."

- Scott Adams

If you've been around family teams very long you know that the main system we recommend for pursuing all the things your family is called to be and do is the weekly rhythm.

It's best to be constantly improving your weekly rhythm on a regular basis not just one time per year but the annual summit is a great time to evaluate if any large scale changes are in order.

Here's an example of one possible schedule for the main day of your summit

9-10:30	10:30-12	12-1	1-2:30	2:30-3	3-4	4-4:30
Simplify (over breakfast)	Establish	Lunch Break	Improve	Break	Reorder	Commit

Simplify (60 minutes)

It's important to start with knowing if there is just too much on your family's plate. We need to find those things that need to be removed so that the family can be more focused and sustainable.

The Bethke's do this by putting on post it notes the 15-20 regular parts of their life and picking up the most important pieces and then seriously consider eliminating the 3-4 that are left on the table at the end.

Establish (90 minutes)

Now from the discussion you had earlier about the five capitals is there some area of your life that has been neglected?

Is there a regular rhythm that you can establish that would improve how you or your family functions in that area?

Brainstorm those ideas on post-it notes and then discuss each one and see if there's a rhythm or two you would like to begin.

Improve (90 minutes)

On those post-it notes you kept from the simplify exercise try and rate on a scale of 1-10 how effective each rhythm has been at its purpose.

Take each one starting with the lowest number and discuss ways that might improve each one.

Reorder (60 minutes)

Looking at how you end each day of your weekly rhythm rate from 1-7 your favorite day to your least favorite day.

Take some time and look at how you rated each and if you have a couple of low rated days in a row those can really burn your family out.

Do you need to add some lighter activities on some of the heavy days?

Discuss how things might be reordered so that it will be easier and more enjoyable to get through your regular weekly rhythm.

Commit (30 minutes)

"Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you." Psalm 37:5

Take some time to look at all the plans you've made and commit each one to the Lord asking him to bless and make fruitful everything he's calling your family to do this year.