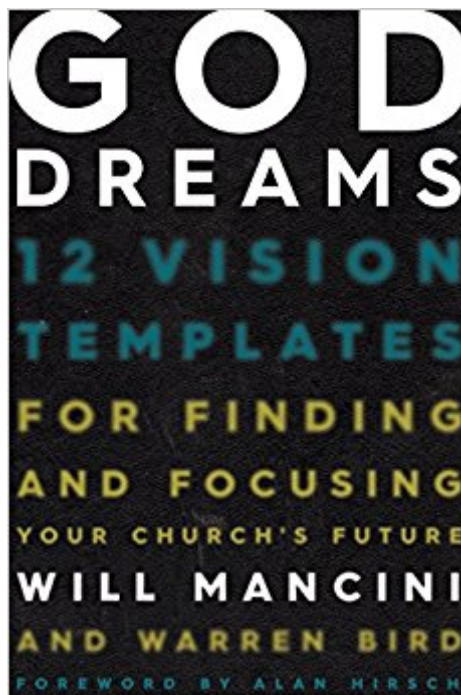




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God Dreams: 12 Vision Templates For Finding And Focusing Your Church's Future



Synopsis

Is your team excited about the next big dream for your church? You are a visionary leader and your church probably has a vision statement. Yet most churches are stuck in a trap of generic communication without a truly visionary plan. Just like a visionary restaurant needs a more specific focus than “serving food,” a visionary church needs something more than biblical generalizations like “loving God, loving people” or “making disciples and serving the world.” When a team doesn’t share an understanding of God’s next big dream, leadership grows tired, overworked by an “all things to all people” ministry approach. Too often there’s no unified picture of what success looks like. People can feel uninspired and your church’s programming can seem more optional than ever. Ministry without clarity is insanity. Are you ready for a better way? In this groundbreaking work, based on Will Mancini’s 15 years and over 10,000 hours of church team facilitation, God Dreams reveals a simple and powerful planning method that will bring energy and focus to your church like never before. First, God Dreams shows how to reclaim the role of long-range vision today by providing 12 vision templates, each with biblical, historical and contemporary illustrations. These vision starters will dramatically accelerate your team’s ability to find complete agreement regarding your church’s future. Second, God Dreams explains how to overcome the fruitless planning efforts that many church teams experience. With a tool called the Horizon Storyline, leaders can connect short-term action steps with the long-range dream, while leveraging the power of storytelling to make the plan “stick.” This tool will galvanize a diverse team of ministry leaders and volunteers with unprecedented enthusiasm. Imagine leading with a refreshed sense of freedom and confidence, with a totally new way to inspire your church. Imagine the ability to harness the energy and resources of your people towards a specific dream of gospel impact, in your church and in your lifetime. God Dreams is your passport to leading into a better future.

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Customer Reviews

Will Mancini is the founder of Auxano, a growing, nationwide nonprofit church consulting group. As a recognized thought leader and church vision consultant, he leads a team of "navigators" who help hundreds of churches each year to better realize their vision. He is also the creator of visionroom.com and the author of several titles including Church Unique and Innovating Discipleship. A seminary graduate, he has served on pastoral staff of the church where he is still an active member. Learn more at willmancini.com and follow him on Twitter at @willmancini. Warren Bird, Ph.D., is an award winning author (ECPA Gold Medallion and other awards) who has written or collaboratively authored 27 books for Christian leaders. With background as a pastor and seminary professor, he currently is director of research and intellectual capital development for Leadership Network, a nonprofit that helps leading churches move from ideas to implementation to impact. He is one of the world's leading researchers of megachurches and multisite churches. Follow him on Twitter at @warrenbird.

It has been said that a person becomes an expert after doing something for ten thousand hours. "God Dreams" is the fruit of Will Mancini's ten thousand hours of consulting among a diverse array of evangelical churches in North America. "God Dreams" forms a counterpoint to Mancini's earlier work, "Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, and Create Movement" (www.churchunique.com). "Church Unique" (whose content is summarized in an appendix of "God Dreams") introduced Mancini's process for discerning the answers to the "five irreducible questions" of an organization's "Vision Frame" which describe what makes one's church different from ten thousand others. A church's answers to the first four questions—its mission, values, strategy, and measures—are permanent or nearly so. But the fifth question—"Where are we going?", answered with "Vision Proper"—changes with time. "God Dreams" is a vast expansion on how to discern Vision Proper and how to lead according to it. Part One of "God Dreams" ("Restart the

Conversation") outlines why visions and dreams— including in an organizational sense—are essential for the church, for the kingdom of God, and even simply for being human. Chapter 3, "Obsessing with Now," contains an astoundingly provocative and inspiring list of "twelve compelling reasons to think long." In Part Two ("Discover Visionary Planning"), Mancini introduces the tool that is the core of the book, the "Horizon Storyline." The Horizon Storyline is the picture in the middle of the Vision Frame. It consists of four interlocking ranks of vision:

- Beyond-the-horizon vision, 5 to 20 years away
- one long-range, visionary picture
- Background vision, 3 years away
- four long-range, strategic areas of focus
- Midground vision, 1 year away
- one short-range, visionary picture and metric (corresponding to the original Vision Proper concept in "Church Unique")
- Foreground vision, 90 days away
- four short-range, strategic goals

In Part Three ("Find Your Future"), Mancini sketches twelve templates in four categories ("Advance," "Rescue," "Become," "Overflow"). The form of a church's beyond-the-horizon vision is invariably described by one or a combination of two of these templates. The content that fills the form is a product of the peculiar church and its ministry setting. Part Three contains powerful tools that greatly accelerate the process of discerning beyond-the-horizon vision. Part Four ("Focus Your Long-Range Vision") contains tips and exercises for depicting the beyond-the-horizon vision in words that serve as jet fuel for staff and volunteers for a decade or more. It also gives instruction for how to distill the four strategic priorities of the background vision that concretely shape long-range ministry decisions. Part Five ("Execute Your Short-Range Vision") teaches how to define a midground vision with a single picture and a single metric that rallies the entire leadership corps in the same direction for one year. Then Mancini describes general principles and a menu of mix-and-match methods for naming the granular, foreground goals that advance the church toward its destination in the week-to-week grind. "God Dreams" concludes with Mancini's expressed wish that the Horizon Storyline would enable pastors to "Lead with Freedom" (Part Six). Here an unanswered question arises. Mancini's final pep talk assumes a nearly indistinguishable alignment of the lead pastor's dreams and those of the church. But I do not believe that Mancini assumes that this is always the case. How, practically, does a pastor lead a church according to God's dream for it when he or she suspects that his or her own life is about to veer in a different direction, such as through semi-retirement or a completely different form or location of ministry? Other unanswered questions— these rather surprisingly unaddressed—are when, how often, and how to renew the long-range vision. Two years after shaping a Horizon Storyline, the 3-year background vision is at the same depth as the

1-year midground vision. What happens then? Are the background and beyond-the-horizon visions to be renewed once they are achieved, or sooner? The brilliance of a highly skilled practitioner is that he makes very difficult actions look easy. The brilliance of a highly skilled teacher is that he makes very difficult actions be comprehended and practiced easily. Mancini is both. The blurbs on the cover are no joke; after reading "God Dreams" it makes one wonder how a church could function faithfully without it. Obviously, the Holy Spirit has been around a lot longer than Mancini's genius, and he has been speaking to God's people in dreams and visions for millennia. But the thrill of "God Dreams" is as an amplifier to hear the Holy Spirit's voice . . . and as an amplifier to channel his power that courses through all parts of Christ's body as they serve his will. If "God Dreams" achieves its promise, it will have democratized discernment among myriad outposts of the kingdom of God.

God Dreams: 12 Vision Templates for Finding and Focusing Your Church's Future—Assisting congregations with vision is an art as much as it is a science. Putting into a book a reproducible process for congregations to use to become captivated by God's vision is a difficult task. Each congregation is different. Each visionary process is different. Standardizing the process of becoming acquired by God's vision is an inexact science. I suspect that few congregations do it exactly as this book indicates. What I see in this book is the spiritual calling, the giftedness, and the mastery of Will Mancini. Getting Will in dialogue with a congregation and their leadership is likely a thing of great beauty. At least that is how I perceive it from afar. Reading this book as a foundation for an experience with Will and others he has mentored is likely an important readiness exercise. Expecting the process in your congregation to be exactly like the book might cause you to trip over the God dream for your congregation. If you are thinking about vision casting, read this book. If you are thinking about having Will work with your congregation, then have your staff and key leaders read this book.

In his first book since Church Unique, Will Mancini challenges us to turn from lesser things and turn (or, as in my case, return) to lighting up your imagination and crafting a vision for ministry. Using his wide experience as a church consultant, marketing executive, and former engineer, Mancini lays out the why, when, and how of vision planning or, as he calls it, discovering your "horizon storyline." For those of us who put our long-range planning manuals on the back shelf several years ago, God Dreams is a challenge to re-discover the immense value to intentionally pursuing a God-given dream. To help us in doing so, Mancini gives us a step-by-step guidebook anyone can use to

discover one's community and plan for ministry short- or long-term. The strength of the book is in the breadth of its scope; everything you need is here (or accessible online). One caution: don't be confused or overwhelmed by Mancini's wide use of images or multitude of lists. He explains and guides us through using each one, and as he does they all become more understandable and pertinent to our planning. At first you may wonder about 12 templates, but you'll use everyone of them as you develop your storyline. I recommend God Dreams to anyone wanting to imagine your distant horizon and chart a course to get from here to there. I received an advance review copy of God Dreams from the author.

Best book I've read of its type. Will does something I have not found in other vision/planning books. Many books of this type get stuck either in "big picture" vision or lost in the tactical details of strategy or operations. This book, at least in my opinion, is able to move up to the highest level of vision (prophetic, big picture, 30,000 ft, whatever words you want to use), discuss how leaders are created to dream with God (big picture vision) but then walks into "vision templates" and then finally helps a leader walk through laying out a plan on paper. I actually found the first 2/3rds of the book more helpful than the last, but that might be because I was looking for a book that would deal with that specific content. I have recommended this to several pastor/church planter friends and the results have been favorable. It isn't the only vision book you will need but it plays a missing piece in regards to other vision & strategic planning books I've read.

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