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Review of The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way you Lead Forever, by Michael Bungay Stanier

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that can help any church move from merely being healthy to effectiveness and greatness. This section begins by discussing the first-time guest, then talks about discipleship and leadership, and concludes by examining outreach. A more welcoming church will have a far more significant impact on the lives of its guests; many people who attend smaller churches expect to be noticed and to be a part of the conversation. People usually visit a church because a friend invited them, and when they choose to stay, it is because they have made friends.

One of the significant benefits of this book is the GIFT plan for developing a friendlier church. Being intentional and planning for a more welcoming church is by far the most valuable aspect of this book, and it applies to churches of all sizes. The plan outlines a weekly effort for church leaders and members to:

- 1) Greet someone you've never met before;
- 2) Introduce people to each other;
- 3) Follow up with someone you met recently; and
- 4) Thank someone who did something you appreciate.

The discipleship chapter is short when compared to the space allocated for the other essentials of leading a healthy small church. Although there is no shortage of books available today on the topic of discipleship, the author takes a rather simple approach to discipleship—mentoring new believers. The simple principles outlined in the book are an effective method of discipleship that has its origin in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Planning is another practice that must be intentional for small church success. Taking time away from the busy routine of life is essential for the small church pastor. Get to your cal-

endar before everyone else does by scheduling time every week to plan church events. Vaters prepares in advance, with a 3-2-1 planning system that is easy to implement and effective for the busiest small church pastor. The checklist for effective leadership team meetings is relevant and useful for successful, focused, and productive meetings. The author should be commended for including encouragement to do ministry away from the church, not just in the church—a call to get out of your comfort zone.

I recommend this book to any pastor or church leader who desires to fulfill their God-given purpose in leading a healthy congregation to become innovative and faithful to the gospel commission in a small church context. This book will challenge your thinking about the impact and effectiveness of small churches while encouraging one to see ministry in small congregations in a refreshingly new way. One will be inspired by the insights and proven principles that can help pastors lead a healthy small church in having a big impact.

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THE COACHING HABIT: SAY LESS, ASK MORE & CHANGE THE WAY YOU LEAD FOREVER

*By Michael Bungay Stanier
Toronto, ON: Post Hypnotic Press
(2016)
Kindle version, 251 pages*

Reviewed by SAMUEL RIEMERSMA

Michael Stanier's focus is summarized in the title of the book: "How to

coach people more effectively by saying less and asking more.” Coaching is one of the most effective leadership strategies; however, the problem is that few leaders embrace this leadership method. The few who do embrace it don’t seem to be very effective at coaching (loc. 132). This book encourages the reader to create specific coaching habits and does so in an informal, accessible writing style.

Stanier encourages the reader to incorporate seven questions into their professional interactions, using these questions in such a way that they will become habits. He ends each chapter with a “habit formation challenge,” in which he encourages the reader to identify the trigger that sets off the wrong behavior; he then encourages them to make a tangible step towards replacing this with specific new behavior.

The book spends considerable time explaining the need for creating healthy communication habits and demonstrating the science behind successful habit formation. For this topic, Stanier leans heavily on research by Charles Duhigg, author of *The Power of Habit*. The frequent borrowing of ideas is characteristic of this book, as it contains many references to a great variety of authors. Some readers might leave with the impression of well-rounded research; however, to others, especially those who have read extensively on the topic of coaching, this might seem like a recap of existing research in a new package.

Before the book launches into the first question, it addresses the proper way to ask a question by encouraging the reader to ask one question at a time, and not to practice “drive-by questioning.” This seems like common sense, but the natural response of people is to bombard their co-workers with questions, which makes

the conversation feel more like an interrogation (loc. 208).

The power of this book lies in its simplicity. The content revolves around the seven coaching questions, and each of these questions is so simple that a child can understand them. The questions are common sense, and they work. It is surprising to realize how many times we create unhelpful habits and say things in our counter-productive interactions. The book is filled with many real-life examples that make the theory come alive and help the reader to see the power of the specific question (loc. 662).

Stanier filled this book with practical applications for Christian leaders and anyone with careers in ministry. One of the practical nuggets in the book has to do with “taming the advice monster” (loc. 464). A 1984 study is quoted that found that the average time for doctors to interrupt their patients was 18 seconds. Examples like this make the reader wonder how long we listen to our conversation partner before we interrupt them. It also shows the need for a method to counteract our instincts to give advice. Asking the “And what else?” questions not only help us tame the advice monster, but it is also a “way to uncover and create new possibilities” (loc. 502).

Another piece of practical advice for every person involved in ministry is the understanding that one can only coach a person in front of him or her. If the conversation revolves around the problems of some other third person, the best question to ask is, “What is the real challenge here for you?” This puts the focus back on the conversation partner instead of some other person or circumstance that we cannot change.

This book contains another extremely relevant chapter for Christian leaders, the chapter on

being helpful. Pastors especially are under great obligation to please their parishioners and set an example of Christian service. The problem the book brings to the forefront is the fact that, in their desire to be helpful, leaders often step in and take over (loc. 928). By doing so, they raise their status and lower the status of those they are trying to “help.” By asking, “How can I help?” we allow those around us to determine the kind of help they need, if any. Also, this gives leaders the final say in whether they can fulfill the request.

I give this book my strongest recommendation for any kind of leader who wants to be more effective in their interactions—especially those in ministry. This book is good for anyone who deals with people daily and who is looking for practical ways to improve their coaching skills. The easy reading style and many practical examples make the material stick. If, after reading this book, only one of the coaching habits becomes a habit in the reader’s life, reading the book will have been worth it.

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GOD DREAMS: 12 VISION TEMPLATES FOR FINDING AND FOCUSING YOUR CHURCH’S FUTURE

*By Will Mancini and Warren Bird
Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group
(2016)
Paperback version, 261 pages*

Reviewed by RYAN ROGERS

Mancini, Bird, and the Auxano team offer a useful visionary planning tool in the Horizon Storyline featured in *God Dreams*. The authors

model their value for clearly articulated vision by stating the aim of the book: “*God Dreams* is about visionary leadership in the local church.

Specifically, it’s about articulating a visionary plan in a way that’s compelling, measurable, and marked by stunning clarity” (p. xix). They first expose the great need for clearly articulated vision. They argue that when a church is pursuing God’s dream for their congregation, they must not settle for a generic, fuzzy vision or fall into the pit of “obsessing with now.” The rest of the book unfolds a practical tool, the Horizon Storyline, designed for helping leaders achieve visionary planning in their church.

The Horizon Storyline achieves a harmony of accessible simplicity and compelling structure. It is accessible in that a church’s visionary plan can be shared in a single picture that can be sketched on a napkin in two minutes. It places short-term priorities and long-range vision on a single page, within the same frame. It includes a compelling structure by offering four distinct depths of vision in the four different horizons of a picture. The priorities for the next 90 days catch the eye in the “foreground.” They are easily associated with the single most crucial emphasis for the next year in the “midground.” The “background vision” includes the four most important strategies for the next three years. All of this moves toward one clear vision for the long-range (5-20 year) future of the church, which is referred to as “beyond the horizon vision.” The accessible and compelling visual that this tool provides has the potential to communicate church vision with remarkable clarity and in a way that draws people in.

God Dreams speeds up your team’s ability to picture the future through