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Review of God Dreams: 12 Vision Templates for Finding and Focusing your Church's Future, by Will Mancini and Warren Bird

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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

the use of templates (p. 68). The 12 vision templates are a meaningful contribution to visionary leadership in that they provide starting places from which to explore vision, and they give practical steps for gaining clarity. The templates bring an element of objectivity into the oft intangible world of visioning. These templates are grouped into four “quadrants” of vision—a vision that advances, rescues, becomes, and overflows. Each category is further broken down into three templates. Each template provides a place for conversation to start.

Additionally, four questions are used to score each template, offering an objective scoring system to help give clarity. The four quadrants and 12 templates are effective tools to help churches see themselves. One template will not match their vision while another gives articulation as to how they recognize God moving.

God Dreams has additional value for church visionaries through its intentionally clear visual layout. The illustrations and structure of the book contribute to the desired goal of clarity. The preface includes a visual overview of the entire book. Each template is captured by an expressive and memorable graphic that aids in visualization. Further, each template is described with a pattern that colors in the template from different angles. For each template there is a quick definition, personal snapshot, biblical reflection, metaphor for communication, historical example, contemporary example, and a personal exercise.

Additionally, the book is filled with illustrations and examples that help clarify the vision process. The Horizon Storyline itself, being displayed like a picture, is designed to be visual for better vision communicating. Additionally, *God Dreams* offers online resources, graphics, and

tools that complement the material in this book.

This book could be improved by condensing the material that serves as the introduction to the Horizon Storyline, which is not introduced until chapter 5. These first four chapters offer a meaningful apologetic for clear vision. They point out the need for vision and motivate the reader toward clarity. Some of this is necessary, but a significant amount of time spent on this takes away from the value of the primary tool offered in the book, the Horizon Storyline. It feels as though the early chapters are trying to sell a tool, but the sales pitch takes too long before introducing the product. The reader is left to wonder if the tool will live up to the build-up. It is a welcomed surprise to realize that the tool has a standalone quality that shines without lengthy persuasion. The overall intention of this book would be better served if the beginning section was reduced and the Horizon Storyline was introduced sooner.

God Dreams is quality work, a product of more than ten years and 10,000 hours of church vision consulting. I highly recommend this book for church leaders who desire a quality guiding structure for visioning and planning. The visionary planning process outlined in this book is visually comprehensible, accessible, compelling, and reproducible. Ultimately, *God Dreams* seeks to invite leaders and churches into the “freedom and confidence that is possible with a vision marked by increased clarity” (p. xxi).