



Visioneering

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About the Author

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Introduction

Everyone ends up somewhere in life. Some people end up somewhere on purpose. Those are the ones with vision. They may have other qualities also, but they certainly have vision for the different roles they carry in life. They have also mastered the process of *visioneering*.

Visioneering is the course one follows to make dreams a reality, to turn ideas into something of substance. This book is about visioneering.

A clear vision, along with the courage to follow through on it, greatly increases your chances of coming to the end of your life satisfied, and able to say, "I did it. My life counted." Without vision, odds are you will come to the end of your life and wonder. Vision changes how you approach life, transforming the mundane into the meaningful. In particular, vision brings four things into our daily lives:

1. Passion. Vision evokes emotion—there is no such thing as an emotionless vision! And the clearer the vision, the stronger the emotion.
2. Motivation. Vision-driven people are motivated people. Find someone who lacks motivation and I'll show you someone who lacks vision.
3. Direction. Vision sets a direction for our lives, simplifying our decision-making. Anything that moves us towards our vision we embrace; anything else we approach with caution. Vision prioritizes our values and helps us determine what is most important.
4. Purpose. A vision gives you a reason to get up in the morning.

You have probably heard those things before, in any self-help book. But there is one other element we need to include. For a Christian, our lives are intended to honor God, which includes discovering what HIS vision is for our lives. Until we discover His purpose for us, there will always be a hole in our soul.

Chapter 1: A Vision is Born

Vision often begins with the inability to accept things as they are, which develops into a clear picture of what could be. As opposed to just a dream, vision also carries with it a sense of conviction that something *should* be done, not just the idea that it could be.

Vision is a clear mental picture of what could be, fueled by the conviction that it should be. For a vision to become a reality, it means someone must put his or her neck on the line. However—a vision doesn't necessarily require immediate action. Often people feel that they must charge forward as soon as their vision is clear, but often that results in failure and disappointment.

Why does that happen? Why can't we just jump in? Three important things happen while we wait.

First, the vision matures in us. Time allows us to distinguish between good ideas and visions worth giving our lives to. Honestly, any good speaker can cast a compelling vision; with time, you can distinguish between God's ideas for you and other people's.

Second, we mature as we wait. Often God has to grow us into our vision. The need can seem so urgent that it is irresponsible to wait; however, if you aren't ready, the whole thing will come to naught. Vision precedes preparation, because your vision will usually exceed your competency. God needs to grow you into your vision.

Third, God is at work behind the scenes preparing the way. Remember, your vision is just one piece of a much larger puzzle. God is preparing people and situations to come together at the right time in order to propel your vision into reality.

One of the most difficult aspects of visioneering is discerning between good ideas and God ideas. Two things can help you make the distinction:

1. A God-ordained vision will eventually feel like a moral imperative. Giving time allows God to make the transition in your heart from a good idea into a moral compulsion.
2. A God-ordained idea will be in line with what God is up to in the world. It will be tied into God's master plan in some way.

Chapter 2: Praying and Planning

The waiting time is important, but also dangerous. Visions can often die during this time; it is discouraging to dream about something that seems to have no chance of happening. What can you do to keep the dream alive? You can pray, and you can plan.

Prayer is critical to vision development. It keeps our burden fresh, and it keeps us looking for God at work. It almost ensures we won't miss the opportunities God brings our way.

We tend to pray for miracles to happen. It would be better to pray for opportunities to move forward. Dreamers dream about things being different; visionaries envision themselves making a difference and changing things. In addition to praying for opportunities, we pray for favor—that God will act on our behalf as we step out on those opportunities.

The second thing we can do in the waiting period is to plan. Planning a strategy will feel like a big waste of time—but what else are you going to do? Develop a plan: if you had the resources, what

would you do? If you had the time, what would you do first? Plan as if you knew someone was going to come along and enable you to pursue your vision. Having a plan enables you to act when the opportunity comes; without it, you may miss God's time-table.

New visions die easily. Praying and planning help keep them alive, and that is critical, because when your vision dies, part of your soul dies also.

Pray for opportunities and plan as if you expect God to answer your prayers.

Chapter 3: Positions Please!

From the outset, just about every God-ordained vision appears impossible. And the reason it appears that way is because it is. They are always too big for us to handle, and we shouldn't be surprised—consider the source. When God births a vision, there are always obstacles, a lack of resources, and more questions than answers. If that is true for you, you may be on the brink of something divine.

We hear that and wonder how it relates to where we are now, doing something that may have nothing to do with what God has put into our heart to do. But God knows exactly what he is doing. Consider this: perhaps God is using your circumstances to position and prepare you to accomplish His vision for your life. It is no accident that you are where you are. Your present circumstances are part of the vision; you are not wasting your time.

One of the reasons we have a hard time grasping that is we confuse *success* with the *rewards* of success. Success is remaining faithful to the process God has laid out for you. The rewards of success are the raise, the promotion, the recognition, a happy home, wonderful children, etc. Those show up later. Unfortunately, we often don't consider ourselves successful until we experience the rewards.

If you measure your success by whether or not your vision has materialized, you are a candidate for discouragement. Confusing success with the rewards of success is one of the primary reasons people abandon their dreams. We must see success for what it is: faithfulness to the process. You are a success every day you get up and show up for duty. Rewarding? Maybe.

Successful? Absolutely.

Chapter 4: The God of How

You will know *what* God wants you to do long before you know *how* he intends to bring it about. That can be agonizing! While how is often a problem for us, it isn't for God; how is his specialty.

Not knowing how God is going to bring the vision to pass can lead to one of two errors on our part. The first is to give up. If we can't figure out how to make it happen, we lose faith and let go of the vision, forgetting that our job is to be faithful while waiting for God to intervene.

The second error is the opposite. Rather than giving up, they adopt the approach of “full steam ahead.” No mountain is too high, no problem too complex for them and God. Their assumption is if the vision is from God, the green light is automatically on. While their commitment is admirable, their timing is often terrible.

There is a middle ground—actively depending on God while waiting for Him to reveal the *how* and pull the pieces together.

Chapter 5: Faith, The Essential Ingredient

Fewer things test our faith more than a divinely-ordered vision. “Faith” is confidence that “God is who he says he is and that he will do what he has promised to do.” When we embrace a vision before anything has really happened, we are making a statement about our confidence in the nature and character of God.

Pursuing a vision requires faith. Pursuing a great vision requires great faith. Pursuing a vision will test, stretch, and at times exhaust our faith. The challenge of faith becomes especially clear when our dreams begin to come true. Success often leads to self-sufficiency. Rare is the visionary who is able to maintain a spirit of dependency and humility in the face of public success. Because of that, God uses the time before our vision is launched to fasten our faith on him. The waiting period allows us to anchor our faith in him and not in our own ability.

The bigger the vision, the more important it is that your faith is grounded in his ability, not yours. Before God can entrust you with the rewards that accompany success, you must be dependent. He brings you to that place by stretching, and even straining, your faith.

So be encouraged—the agony you are experiencing is normal. God is bringing you to the end of your self-sufficiency so your faith will be grounded in his ability, not yours.

Chapter 6: Taking Inventory

When God first lays something on your heart for you to do, don’t tell anyone. To begin with, nobody is going to be as excited as you are, and their lack of enthusiasm can shut you down before you get started.

In addition, there is usually some background work that needs to be done before you go public. You will probably need to do some fact-finding—some homework—before you start telling people what you are up to. It is not a lack of faith to learn what you are up against; it is wisdom. It is important to know everything that you can before moving ahead.

Once you announce your vision, you open it up to discussion, and to criticism. Everyone will have the same question: HOW? If you haven’t taken the time to investigate properly, you can easily get your enthusiasm squashed. You need to be able to answer as many questions as you can.

In the early stages of the visioneering process, there will be many questions that don't have answers. But you ought to know all there is to know before you open your vision for questioning. It is easy, in the beginning, for the excitement of a new idea to take over. Many people who have gotten a vision have announced it and then collided with reality...in a way that was fatal to the vision. Many of those fatalities could have been avoided if the proper homework had been done.

Investigation will accomplish at least one of three things: it will confirm the divine origin of your vision, give it further definition and focus, or tip you off that you were mistaken about the vision altogether.

God-ordained visions often appear to be impossible from a pragmatic perspective. But if the vision *is* from God, there will be an element of confirmation in the data you accumulate while investigating. Second, investigation often further defines and focuses a vision. Few visions have all the details right from the very beginning! To make an adjustment is not giving up on a vision; it is cooperating with God to make it actually happen.

Finally, investigation will help you distinguish between a good cause and a God-ordained vision. Recognizing a need is not a vision! It may be compassion, and while that is important, it isn't vision. Don't commit in response to the passion of the moment. Emotions fade, and so do emotional commitments.

Investigation is also important for the sake of those who work with us. God-ordained visions usually involve other people, and those people need to know the facts if they are really going to commit and support the vision.

Chapter 7: Going Public, Part I

All God-ordained visions are shared visions. Nobody goes it alone. But God generally raises up a point person to paint a compelling verbal picture, which captures the hearts and imaginations of those whom God is calling to the task. He raises up someone to *cast the vision*.

A compelling vision includes four vital components:

1. The problem
2. The solution
3. The reason something must be done
4. The reason something must be done *now*

Until you can address these four issues clearly and succinctly, you are probably not ready to begin talking about your vision. Effective vision-casting communicates your vision as a solution to a problem that must be addressed immediately.

1. The Problem

Vision-casters rarely bring new information to the table, but visioncasting always includes an element of waking people out of their apathy. Effective vision-casters bring an impassioned concern about an existing problem.

Key questions include: What problem will your vision potentially solve? What need will be met? What kind of conflict do you propose to ease? When you have a clear, concise answer to those questions, you have taken the first step in preparing to cast your vision.

2. The Solution

A vision is always a solution to a problem. If given the opportunity, could you communicate convincingly, in one sentence, exactly what you feel God is calling you to do? This is a critical step. While a clear explanation of the problem engages the mind, the solution engages the imagination. A vision invites us to imagine the future in a way that demands change in the present.

What about you? Has your vision gripped your imagination? Do you daydream about what could and should be? Do you have a clear picture of how the future could be? If not, do yourself and everybody else a favor and don't talk too much about your vision. It is too early. You are not ready.

The horsepower behind a well-cast vision is a thoroughly developed verbal picture of what could be that can be accurately reproduced in the minds of the listeners. No one accomplishes a God-given vision alone; it takes a team- A team whose imaginations are in alignment.

3. The Reason

The fact that something *can* be done does not necessarily mean it *should* be done. Communicating *why* something should be done helps distinguish between the two.

All divinely inspired visions are in some way tied into God's master plan. Whether it is loving your spouse, raising your kids, witnessing to your neighbor, or starting a company, as a believer there is a larger, more encompassing context for everything you do.

We must recognize the link between our vision and God's master plan. Buried in that relationship is the divine mandate as to why you must follow through with your vision. What makes your vision compelling is the fact that your project is one small but vital part of what God is doing.

A compelling reason will engage the heart. The vision calls us to imagine what could be. The reason behind what *could be* moves us to believe that it *should be*. When you zero in on *why* your vision must be accomplished, you will be energized, and your conviction will come across in your communication.

You can't effectively cast vision until you are convinced not only of what could be, but of what should be.

4. The Timing

The fourth element of visioncasting deals with timing: Why should this vision be pursued *at this time*?

The most powerful sign you can point to, as a vision-caster, is the involvement of God. A divinely authored vision will bear God's thumbprint throughout the process. If this is a vision from God, we should be able to point out how God is moving *now* to accomplish it. People want to be part of something God is up to. They will join in your vision if they are confident it is not simply *your* vision. And they will give their time, energy, and money to help accomplish it.

People are looking for something to give their lives to. If God has given you a vision, he is going to raise up a team to work with you to that end. So prepare to cast your vision.

What is the problem?

What is the solution?

Why must something be done?

Why must something be done now?

Answering these four questions gives you the potential to engage people's minds, hearts, imaginations, and energy. When you can clearly verbalize the answer to these questions, you are ready to go public with your vision.

Chapter 9: The Power Of Vision

We are all vision-casters. We cast visions for people all the time. You may have cast one today. At some point you made a comment about what could be or should be in a person's life. It may

have been positive or negative, but it contributed to shaping their picture of the future and setting their direction.

The position we hold in people's lives determines the weight of our words and thus our potential to shape their future. All of us have been impacted by the visions people intentionally or unintentionally cast for us. Just as you have been influenced by other's words, so you too have the potential to set or alter the course of another.

Moms and dads, we are the premier vision-casters. We must paint a vivid picture in the hearts and minds of our children of what they can become in their character, conduct, and careers.

Chapter 10: Vision Has Its Price

Any vision worth pursuing will demand sacrifice and risk. You will be called to give up the actual good for the potential best. If God has birthed a vision in your heart, the day will come when you will be called upon to make a sacrifice to achieve it. And you will have to make the sacrifice with no guarantee of success.

I talk to people all the time who have what seem to be "God ideas" but who are unwilling to commit with both hands and feet. The difference between those who pursue their vision and those who don't isn't a question of resources; it is a willingness to take risks and make sacrifices. A vision always requires that someone go first. If you are consumed with a picture of what could and should be in a particular area, chances are God is going to call you to make the first move. This is especially true if the success of your vision depends on the willingness of others to join you. You cannot lead people any further than you are willing to go yourself. You cannot cast a compelling vision for people if you have not demonstrated your willingness to make sacrifices and take risks. Don't expect others to take greater risks or make greater sacrifices than you have.

Chapter 11: Warding Off Criticism

If you didn't already know, you will soon discover that:

- Visions are easy to criticize
- Visions attract criticism
- Visions are difficult to defend against criticism
- Visions often die at the hands of the critics

Two elements of vision often cause them to attract negative attention: change and gaps.

Whenever you attempt to bring about change, it is often perceived as a threat. People grow accustomed to the way things are, and visions often stir up negative emotions in people—which are expressed as criticism

Visions are also easy to criticize because of their inherent gaps. The very nature of a vision is that there is far more solid information on the *what* side of the equation than on the *how* side. There are holes in the plan, at least initially, which makes for easy targets for criticism.

Whether it comes in the form of a direct statement or packaged in a subtle smile, criticism can be devastating to a vision. If you internalize it, you will eventually get discouraged and give up. So how should we respond? Three keys to a healthy response: Pray; remember the source of the vision; revise the plan if needed.

By turning to God when we are criticized, we avoid some dangerous traps. First, we avoid the mistake of letting our enemies become the focus of our attention. Our natural response to criticism is to defend ourselves, yet in doing so, our focus begins to shift from our vision to our critics. And somehow the issue becomes about us instead of the vision.

Second, we need to remember the source of the vision. When criticized, it is easy to second-guess ourselves and even abandon the vision. At those times we need to remember the Lord who led us into this. Remember when he first birthed the vision in your heart; remember the scriptures he gave you, and the ways he has acted on your behalf. Keep your eyes on Him and not on the critics.

Third, revise the plan if necessary. There is a delicate balance between walking by faith and leading strategically. While trusting God, we cannot abandon our responsibility to do what we can to further the vision. It's important to not confuse our plans with God's vision. When we lose sight of that distinction, we set ourselves up for discouragement. Failed plans are not the same as a failed vision. Here is the difference:

--A vision is what could and should be.

--A plan is a guess as to the best way to accomplish the vision.

It may be an educated, informed, prayerful guess, but it is still a guess—and you are capable of guessing wrong. It is easy to lose sight of the vision when your plans don't work out. Failed plans always generate negative emotions that you have to work through. And if you have internalized that failure, then it feels like *you* failed, and not just the plan.

I have never met anyone or heard of anyone who accomplished something significant for the Kingdom who didn't have to revise their plans multiple times before the vision became reality. Visions are **refined**—they don't change. Plans are **revised**—they rarely stay the same.

Respond to criticism with prayer, remembrance, and if necessary, a revision of the plan.

Chapter 12: Alignment

Regardless of how effectively you cast your vision initially, eventually a team member or two will work his way out of alignment. He will develop an agenda that is off-center to the vision. Instead of working with the rest of the team, he will be pulling slightly in a different direction. This usually transpires well into the implementation stage of a vision. What causes teams to lose their alignment? Time, and bumps.

Over time, people get distracted, bored, or they develop their own agendas. It isn't necessarily anybody's fault when this happens; it is just a fact of team life. In spite of that, you still need a measure of alignment among team members if you are going to deliver on your vision.

The other thing that causes teams to lose alignment is an unexpected event, like a crisis. Bumps like that demand attention, but be careful not to allow the pursuit of your vision to be replaced with crisis management.

Visions thrive in an environment of unity; they die in an environment of division. Division is another way of saying "non-alignment." Division, or non-alignment, reveals itself in several ways:

1. They attempt to control rather than serve.
2. They manipulate people and circumstances to further their own agenda.
3. They are unwilling to resolve differences face-to-face.
4. They are unwilling to believe the best about their teammates.
5. They focus on personal success rather than team success.

Just as the front end of your car will never work itself into alignment, people don't either. Outside intervention is required, and the sooner the better. It is okay to have problems, but not to ignore them. Alignment problems are a fact of life; how big they become will be determined by your willingness to address them. The longer you wait, the bigger and more complex they become.

Chapter 13: Moral Authority

Your influence is far more critical to the success of your vision than your position. Generally speaking, it isn't people of position that give birth to great visions.

Visionaries must be influencers if they are going to see their visions through from start to finish. You must be able to move people from where they are to where you believe they could and should be. Position is optional; Influence is essential.

Often the passion that accompanies a clear vision from God is all it takes to elevate a visionary's influence.

Every great leader who has ever followed through successfully on a God-given vision has possessed a form of authority that rests not on position or accomplishment, but on an inner conviction and the willingness to bring their life into alignment with that conviction. It is the alignment between a person's convictions and behavior that makes his life persuasive. Herein is the key to sustained influence.

The phrase that best captures this dynamic is moral authority. Moral authority is the credibility you earn by walking your talk. It is the relationship others see between what you say and what you do. A person with moral authority is beyond reproach: when you look for a discrepancy between what he says he believes and what he does, you come up empty.

Nothing compensates for a lack of moral authority. We will not allow ourselves to be influenced by those who lack moral authority in our eyes. Inconsistency between what is said and what is done inflicts a mortal wound on a leader's influence. For this reason, moral authority is a fragile thing. It takes a lifetime to earn, but can be lost in a moment.

Moral authority is not a method or a technique to get things done. Genuine moral authority is not something a leader sets out to develop in order to become a better leader. Leaders and influencers who are driven purely by a desire to be better leaders and influencers rarely maintain their moral authority. Why? Because great leadership is rooted in something other than a desire to be a great leader. Influence is rooted in something other than a desire to be an influencer.

Moral authority is the result of a commitment to do what's right, regardless of the cost. As a leader, you must be willing to do the right thing—*even if it jeopardizes your vision!* You must be willing to abandon your vision if that is what is necessary to maintain your moral authority. Vision is important. But maintaining your moral authority must take priority over the pursuit of a vision. Developing and maintaining moral authority requires three things: character, sacrifice, and time.

Character is simply the will to do what is right, as God defines right. The issue here is surrender. To be a man or woman of character requires you to surrender to God's standards, values, and principles, both when it benefits you and when it sets you back.

Sacrifice is the clearest demonstration of your commitment to something. People will generally not invest more in a vision than the one who originally cast the vision. When you make a genuine sacrifice for the sake of your vision two things happen:

1. The people around you catch a glimpse of what's in your heart
2. You catch a glimpse of what's in there as well.

Untested devotion does little to move the hearts of others. But once you demonstrate your commitment by personal sacrifice for the sake of the cause, your potential for influence escalates.

Moral authority is not achieved overnight. It is not something you can manufacture at will. It is developed through a proper response to circumstances, circumstances over which you have no control. You can involve yourself in exercises and disciplines that will strengthen your character. But moral authority can only be achieved when your character is put to the test.

If you have lost your moral authority, regaining it is going to cost you. Rebuilding it will require the same three ingredients, but will take more time and more sacrifice. To regain your moral authority, you must take responsibility for the practical ramifications of your actions, which will almost certainly mean some sort of sacrifice.

Chapter 14: Distractions

Regardless of the nature of your vision, if you are not careful, you will get distracted. The daily grind of life is hard on visions. Life is now; bills are now; crisis is now. Vision is later. Three particular types of distractions that can kill a vision are opportunities, criticism, and fear.

Every day opportunities come along that have the potential to distract us from the main things that God has called us to do. Often the opportunities with the greatest potential to distract are good opportunities. To accomplish the most important things you must learn to say no to some good things.

The second distraction we face is criticism. Not just criticism of the vision; criticism of us. What makes this so painful is that men and women with a vision are often accused of trying to do the very opposite of what their vision is about. That makes it more painful and difficult to ignore. It becomes an emotional issue. Here is the danger to your vision: anger is a form of focus. The emotions brought up by the words of your critics have the potential to distract you from your vision. The worst thing you can do is allow your anger to shift your focus. Pour out your heart to the Father, and then get back to work.

There is another dynamic at work also. Not only will you be accused of the very thing you are trying not to do, you will probably be accused of whatever it is your accusers are guilty of. People with impure motives question the motives of those around them. It's called projection. Since their hearts are filled with their own selfish ambitions, they assume everyone else's are also.

The best way to silence your critics is to see your vision through to completion.

The third distraction is fear. Every vision involves elements of the unknown. Especially in the early stages, there is more unknown than known. Every visionary must work through the “what if” scenarios, especially the big one: What if I fail?

Like anger, fear is a form of focus. We can get so focused on what might be that we lose sight of what could and should be. If we give in to it, we begin shrinking back from our vision, and start to evaluate our situation based on what bad thing might happen rather than what good thing we want to see happen.

Don't allow fear of the unknown to cause you to miss out on what God wants to do through you. Don't allow fear to rob you of your vision for your marriage, your finances, your career, or your ministry. Don't allow fear to distract you from what you believe could and should be.

Chapter 15: The Inexplicable Life

While you are busy pursuing your vision, something is going on behind the scenes that you are probably unaware of. It may not become apparent until your work is accomplished. While you are at work on your vision, God is at work on a parallel plan that will ultimately complement and give deeper significance to the vision that absorbs your attention.

As we sash through the brick and mortar phase of pursuing our vision, we are to live lives that reflect the character of Christ. We are to conduct ourselves in such a way that causes people to take notice.

God's ultimate plan for your life reaches beyond the visions he's given you for your life. He has positioned you in your culture as a singular point of light, as a beacon in a world that desperately needs to see something divine. Above and beyond the achievements associated with your vision, He wants to draw people to himself.

The truth is, our secular pursuits have more kingdom potential than our religious ones. For it is in the realm of our secular pursuits that secular people are watching. There are three things that consistently attract the attention of those who stand outside the faith. These three are hard to miss and almost impossible to ignore. They are the marks of an unexplainable life.

Peace is the first mark. Peace shines so brightly in the world because everyone imagined it as part of their future. They probably called it “happiness,” but regardless, they often don't have it. Life hasn't turned out the way they expected. Regardless of how much they have accumulated, on the inside they are empty. So when they finally meet someone who has peace, they take note.

A second thing that causes this world to sit up and take notice is a successful relationship. We live in a relationally challenged world, and people are often disillusioned. Then they see a healthy marriage, a happy family, or kids who enjoy going home for the holidays, and they wonder.

What does this have to do with vision? Everything! We are not much of a light on a hill if we sacrifice people and purity for the sake of achieving our vision. There are plenty of successful

entrepreneurs whose families are in shambles. Find a man or woman who has built a great organization *and* whose family is thriving, and you'll see an opportunity for God to draw big-time attention to himself.

A third thing that positions us as a light on a hill is character. For the Christian, character involves doing what is right, as God defines right, regardless of the cost. Character in our day is such a rarity that people often eye it suspiciously. Doing right for right's sake is unheard of. This, of course, is why it draws so much attention and has so much kingdom potential.

People are looking for something authentic, something that works. When they see it, they will ask about it. When you pray, don't limit your requests to "protection" and "blessing." Pray that God would establish your family or organization as a light in your community. When you pray for success, ask God to give it in such a way that those outside the faith take notice.

God is after more than your success—he is pursuing a divine, eternal end.

Chapter 16: The End Of The Line

God always reveals himself in the midst of visions he has authored. When he does, attention generally shifts from *what* has been accomplished to *who* fueled the accomplishment.

Your visions are not only avenues God will use to do something through you. They are also avenues God will use to do something *in* you. For the natural response to his intervention is worship, surrender, and obedience. When God intervenes, the attention shifts to him. This is God's ultimate agenda for the visions he has given you. He is at the end of visions he has authored. Your visions are for his glory. He is the end of the line.

God's vision for you and me is maturity. Spiritual maturity is measured by how readily we respond to the person of God rather than the promises of God. It involves coming to the place where *who* is asking is more important than what we are being asked to do. Your vision is an avenue God will more than likely use to bring you to that place.

Ultimately, our visions are about God, not about the specific vision. The end of a God-ordained vision is God himself.

Chapter 17: Maintaining Your Course

In your pursuit of the various visions God has placed before you, you will be prone to drift. There is a current that is constantly pulling us towards compromise, self-sufficiency, and expediency. Without a clear point of reference it is easy to justify just about anything.

In order to compensate for the constant tug toward moral and spiritual compromise, you must develop a clear standard of beliefs and behaviors to refer to along the way. Your core beliefs and behaviors serve as moral and ethical guardrails as you pursue your visions to completion.

To keep a vision moving in the right direction, those involved must embrace a mutually agreed upon code of conduct. In his best-selling book *Built to Last*, Jim Collins found that one of the common characteristics of visionary companies was an uncompromising commitment to a set of core values. In visionary companies it is understood that these principles are never to be compromised, even for the sake of financial gain.

Visions, by nature, are exciting in their initial stages. But it takes more than excitement and determination to successfully complete what God has birthed in your heart to do. What could be, and should be, will not be apart from clear moral and behavioral guidelines. Maintaining your vision requires an uncompromising commitment to a set of core beliefs and behaviors. Assembling these is no easy task, which is why so few people take the time to do them.

Chapter 18: The Leader's Mandate

There is no autopilot in the enterprise of visioneering. Sustaining a vision's forward motion requires the visionary's constant attention. Over time it is easy to lose sight of the vision or for standards to decline. Eventually there are trends that must be reversed, wrongs that must be righted, issues that must be resolved, and conduct that can't be tolerated. Addressing these calls for bold leadership.

Don't be afraid to hold people accountable to previously agreed-upon standards. If you haven't formalized your beliefs and behaviors, begin immediately. Don't tolerate those things that have the potential to derail your vision. Deal with them. Vision demands constant attention. Stay fully engaged.

Conclusion

Developing a vision, and committing to see it through to completion, is challenging. It will call for risk-taking and sacrifice. You will be tempted to compromise, you will have to face criticism and fear, and you will be tempted by distractions. Don't compromise; protect your moral authority. It makes you a leader worth following.

Most importantly, remember that there is divine potential in all that God has put in your heart to do. Allow your heavenly Father to exploit the visions you are pursuing for his glory.

Everybody has a mental picture of what could be and should be for his life. But not everybody will pay the price to turn that mental image into reality.

Pay the price. Embrace the vision. After all, everybody ends up somewhere in life. You have the opportunity to end up somewhere on purpose.



From the Pastor's Perspective

I read a lot of books about leadership, and most of them have a chapter or two about vision. Stanley takes the usual wisdom about vision several steps further, and breaks it down with a lot of very practical wisdom.

I think his insights into waiting and planning are especially helpful. As someone who is visionary by nature, I know how easy it is to get excited about something and want to get moving on it immediately. And, I know from experience how that doesn't always work! Taking the time to investigate, think, plan, and pray before sharing the vision with others, or taking action on it, greatly increases the odds of success. It is hard to do, and not as exciting as just jumping in, but in the long term it is more likely to result in the vision actually becoming reality.

The other thing that stands out to me is his approach to vision-casting. The four elements (problem, solution, why something must be done, why it needs to be done now) are essential for effective vision-casting. Identifying them specifically gives any visionary a tool to use in clarifying vision, and a checklist for good communication. Paying close attention to those four elements will greatly improve any leader's ability to cast vision effectively.

Finally, Stanley's insights into the importance and power of moral authority are invaluable. Every effective leader I know, every leader that I look up to and respect, has carried real moral authority. I think the greatest need in the church today is leaders who have real moral authority, and I'm glad Stanley included it. Leadership techniques and strategies are important, but they don't compare in importance to moral authority. I'll take a leader with moral authority over one with great technique every time.