

9 Forms of Generic Church Vision that Lead You to Do the Wrong Thing for the Right Reason

Most pastors are visionaries. **But to fully realize the vision of a church, a pastor needs more than a generic sense of the future.**

When it comes to vision, the biggest challenge to success is not your obstacles. **The biggest challenge to overcome is settling for a lesser vision and not knowing it.** If you grab on to a faulty tool—in this case the tool of vision—everything you try to build with that tool will be limited.

Once you move past a generic sense to a vivid vision, you will still have many obstacles to overcome, but those are the natural challenges of implementation. You still have the hard work to do. **But every action and every point of communication is more powerful with the vivid and compelling picture of the future in view.**

If you are living with generic vision, and I believe most pastors are, more of your implementation challenges have to do with clarity than you realize. In the last week alone, I have seen issues like staff hiring decisions, children's programming decisions, and campus launch decisions all present major dilemmas only because of unclear vision. Yet the lead pastor didn't recognize it as such.

How then, can we apprehend the generic church vision that plagues our churches? In my book, [God Dreams](#), I have identified nine forms generic vision to help you name it in your church. The nine stem from three healthy biases. That is to say, we empower generic vision with good motives most of the time. **We do the wrong thing for the right reason.** It's a good motive taken a little too far in application.

The three healthy biases are: accuracy, growth and efficiency. I will briefly describe each bias with the three forms of generic vision they create. Also, I will invite you to receive free God Dreams resources when they are available at the link below. [The next resource is a worksheet to help your team identify its specific form of generic vision.](#)

#1 – ACCURACY BIAS

A healthy bias toward accuracy can lead us to confuse Biblical statements with Biblically informed vision.

The story of church vision in the last two decades could be described as the great misuse of the Great Commandment (Mt. 22:34-40) and the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20). Most people have heard some variation of the following as a vision statement for a local church:

- *“Our vision is to love God and love others.” (Love God vision)*
- *“Our vision is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.” (Make disciples vision)*
- *“Our vision is to glorify God.” (Glorify God vision)*

These are biblical imperatives that should apply to all churches, but not as a vision statement. Why? **When Jesus summarized the law, He was not giving churches a vision statement.** This is a meaningful summary of the law, but it's not an answer to the question: if we're a church, what should our vision be for the next three to twenty years?

To summarize the problem, **in our efforts to be biblical we fail to be imaginative**, by cut-n-pasting verses as vision.

#2 – GROWTH BIAS

A healthy bias toward growth can lead us to substitute a grow-only vision for a growth-minded vision.

Some church leaders equate growth with vision. "If we experience momentum, we must have vision," they reason. Here are three examples of how growth becomes an end in itself as generic kinds of vision statements for a local church:

- *"Our vision is to reach more people for Christ."* (**Reach more vision**)
- *"Our vision is to build a bigger facility or launch more campuses in order to take the gospel to more places."* (**Build more vision**)
- *"Our vision is to change world."* (**More change vision**)

Every church should be reaching more people and multiplying disciples. And an increased response can certainly lead to more facilities and more campuses.

A healthy bias for growth might undergird a vision, but statements like these are weak by themselves. "Reaching more" and "changing the world" are too vague. And buildings and campuses might be important tools, but they are means to something greater, not an end in themselves.

#3 – EFFICIENCY BIAS

A healthy bias toward efficiency can lead to a done-for-you vision that neglects adequate do-it-yourself vision ownership.

Church leaders across the centuries have been drawn to learn from other churches where good things seem to be happening. **Often this happens with the best of motives: they suspect God is at work and they want to be part of it.** They appreciate the encouragement, the ideas, the tools, and the training from the other churches' leadership. They follow the spirit of 1 Corinthians 11:1 where the Apostle Paul said, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." A noble intent for sure.

But the passion that says, "We don't want to reinvent the wheel," while wisely seeking to improve efficiency, can lead to a debilitating blockage of the imagination. **Who wants to leverage the learning of others to the point of sacrificing the thrill of having a God-given, handcrafted vision?**

This bias shows up in several approaches to vision. But unlike the accuracy bias and the growth bias, the efficiency bias doesn't usually express itself in a written vision statement, but in the mindset of the leaders. I would label three expressions of this intent as follows:

- *Serve as a franchise vision (**be the first**)*
- *Offer the most vision (i.e., **more programs**)*
- *Be the best vision (**model church, top 10, etc.**)*

Of course I have much more to say about these nine forms of generic vision in *God Dreams*. But I bet this is enough to begin a meaningful conversation with your team.

The post will be unpacked in greater detail in [God Dreams](#), my fourth book. The subtitle is **12 Templates for Finding and Focusing Your Church's Future**.

I invite you to [sign up for pre-release specials](#) before the book is published in 2016 (link below). The biggest one will be a free visual summary that you won't want to miss! The next tool I am providing is a [generic vision worksheet](#).

[Get on the list for pre-release specials for *God Dreams* here.](#)

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Would you like to learn more about avoiding a generic sense of the future? [Connect with an Auxano Navigator and start a conversation with our team.](#)