
Malphurs, Aubrey. *Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st-Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*. Third Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013. 384 pp.

Reviewed by John Sun, a Ph.D. student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. His major is missiology, and his minor is church vitalization. He received his M.Div. at Southwestern, and he received his B.S. in biology at the University of California, Davis. He is currently the associate pastor of International Baptist Church of Arlington, Texas.

In an effort to help church leaders better prepare themselves for planning and tackling ministry, Aubrey Malphurs wrote *Advanced Strategic Planning*. In his book, he provides a detailed explanation for how church leaders can effectively plan and strategize for their ministries. Malphurs is a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary and is renowned for heading up one of the top church consulting groups in the world.

Malphurs begins the book with a boat analogy in which the navigator (i.e., the leader), the crew (one's team), and the boat (the rest) are each examined and assessed. His first chapter helps to identify the qualities and characteristics that would make for a strong leader. He gives a checklist of twelve steps for preparation, which touch on the various elements of planning (definition, biblical basis, need, purpose, team, time, cost, location, tools, and consultants). He then gives seven steps for preparing the leadership team surrounding the point leader (getting support, strategic recruitment, communication, assessing readiness, ministry analysis, time expectations, and spiritual foundation).

In the next section of his book, Malphurs gives definitions to several concepts. Mission is understood as a brief and biblically-based statement describing what the ministry is meant to be doing. Vision is a clear picture of the future ministry that one can conceive and pursue. Further explanation is given to differentiate the two terms (including a very helpful T-chart), and some steps are given to assist in the process of forming vision and then communicating the vision. The next few chapters continue with definitions, defining core values as constant biblical core beliefs and strategy design as the process for determining how a ministry will carry out its mission.

Malphurs then introduces five strategy activities. These include reaching the church's community, making mature disciples, building a ministry team, assessing a ministry setting, and finally, raising and managing finances. These chapters give in-depth instruction on how to carefully execute each of the strategy activities. The last two chapters serve to give some general principles for ensuring that the work is getting accomplished (through encouragement, responsibilities, accountability, and progress evaluations).

The book can be considered a compendium of information on how to strategize for ministry. Each one of the major terms is given with a very specific definition and explanation for why it is important. The details and

explanations can at times be overwhelming, as Malphurs does not shy from using large lists to give comprehensive treatment to his topics. Even in his very first chapter, his description of how to run a session for strategic planning is almost painfully detailed. This is good for the detail-oriented reader who wants a systematic guide to follow, complete with thorough instructions. However, it can almost bloat the book at times with an excess of information.

The use of checklists and charts provides very handy material for preparation and assessment for the reader. Such tools are quite practical for the reader to carry out the theory that is taught in practice (when told to assess or gauge, the reader is already provided with the tools to do so). The book is like a textbook, as it is filled with reflection, discussion, and application questions at the end of each chapter. As far as learning goes, an eager student will find much content to absorb in any one of the chapters.

The book is extremely strong in guiding a leader from the very beginnings of preparing to lead a church through change, in getting him through the nitty-gritty details of putting together a team that can establish a mission, and in organizing the structures of the ministries. Malphurs anticipates some of the challenges the readers may face in working through the planning process, and he preemptively addresses them throughout the book. While not every reader may find a need for all of the alternate solutions to problems, the comprehensive instruction of the book leaves little else to be desired, other than perhaps succinctness.

The book contains an enormous amount of information when compared to other church consulting books. At the same time, Malphurs is clear in definition and explanation, yet excruciatingly specific with his suggestions and instruction. This book may not be the best choice for someone looking for concise principles and advice that can be rapidly absorbed. It would better fit someone looking for a detailed methodology for approaching strategic planning for ministry.

McGavran, Donald A. *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005. 174 pp.

Reviewed by Ivan Yu. Ivan graduated with a B.S. in Science, Technology, and Society and a minor in Anthropology from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, this past fall of 2013. He is currently a Master of Divinity student at the northeast branch of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Schenectady, New York. He is serving as a pastoral intern at Chinese Christian Church of Greater Albany (CCCGA).

In *The Bridges of God*, the crucial question Donald Anderson McGavran addresses is, “How do peoples become Christians?” (1). McGavran answers this question by saying, “Peoples become Christians where a Christward