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## Book Review: Making Your Vision a Reality: Proven Steps to Develop and Implement Your Church Vision Plan by Paul Cannings

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**Lewis: Book Review: Making Your Vision a Reality: Proven Steps to Develop** team on the same ideals, goals, and methodology, even if the actual programming ideas and logistics differ.

From a critical standpoint, *Size Does Matter*'s only disappointment was that the readers would greatly benefit from more theological and exegetical depth in Vernon's application of Black liberation theology to his ecclesiology. The uniqueness of Vernon's arrival at the same point of the current "missional" movement, but from a completely different place, is both interesting and deserving of more depth. This is especially important in light of the criticism levied at the liberation theology movement from conservative evangelical camps in the late seventies and eighties. These same camps have wholeheartedly embraced the tenets of "missional" ministry. This book would have benefitted greatly from a more detailed explanation of his theological conclusions and an exegesis of the Matthew 25 and Luke 4 passages alluded to in the book (95). This would have fit well within his stated purposes for the book as well as shed light on an interesting theological vantage point in the areas of church growth and missional ministry.

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*Size Does Matter* is a book that offers a unique and interesting perspective on "missional" church ministry from a pragmatic, methodological approach. Though it is written from more of a testimonial standpoint, this is still a relevant work for any pastor or leader who is seeking specific examples of what "missional" ministry looks like, particularly in an urban context. This book is useful as a tool for sparking creativity in ministry, as a primer for a church-planting team or core group, or as a challenge to pastoral teams of megachurches to stay committed to making a tangible impact in their communities. It also is useful as a resource for church leadership teams that endeavor to stay faithful to a missional vision. Inspiring, insightful, and challenging, *Size Does Matter* is a must-read for those committed to ministry in the twenty-first century.

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Cannings, Paul. *Making Your Vision a Reality: Proven Steps to Develop and Implement Your Church Vision Plan*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2013. 176 pp. \$10.64.

Reviewed by Kenneth Lewis, M.Div., Mid-America Baptist Seminary. Ken is currently a Ph.D. student in practical theology at MABTS. He is the church planter and pastor of Christ Hope Church in Cordova, TN.

Leadership is a critical component of the pastoral ministry. While not neglecting the critical ministries of the Word and pastoral care, the pastor must effectively lead God's people entrusted to his care as a faithful steward of his calling. Cannings acknowledged the struggle among many pastors who, while

Great Commission Research Journal, Vol. 5, Iss. 2 [2014], Art. 12 committed to their congregations, find themselves in “an endless repetition of short-term plans with no overarching mission or vision” (7).

Cannings provided this book as a guide to help pastors craft a vision, devise strategies to implement that vision, and lead their congregations in light of the overarching vision. Cannings described this book as a “nuts-and-bolts book that outlines a systematic process that will help shape your church’s vision statement” (11). Beyond shaping the vision, this book provides practical ideas and methods for implementing a vision within the local church. Cannings’ intent for this book was “to guide any church through the critical development and implementation of its vision” (11).

Cannings arranged the book in a logical manner from the inception of a vision to practical matters of organization, leadership, staffing, and budget. He established the need and biblical foundations of vision in the first two chapters. He then proceeded to the development of a vision statement and a strategy to implement the vision. The strategy resonates and activates through the ministries of the church such as preaching, discipleship, outreach, and youth ministries. The vision also informs the church’s strategy in leadership, organization, staffing, and administration. The remaining chapters discussed various topics of church leadership and administration that enable the church to fulfill its mission as driven by its vision. Cannings declared the unifying purpose of vision as “a powerful mechanism that impacts every aspect of the church” (33).

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Throughout the book, Cannings used his church, Living Word Fellowship, as a model of discussion and point of reference. He used his church’s vision statement, strategies, and ministries as examples throughout the text. These examples provide insight in how an actual church developed and implemented its vision.

A key aspect in implementing the vision in the life of the church is its organization and structure. Cannings discussed the key leadership positions and functional ministry areas necessary for fulfilling the church’s objectives. The objectives relate to ministry areas and emanate from the vision statement. These objectives also provide the bridge from vision to ministry (52). The functional ministry areas are biblically driven and correlate to Scripture in their purpose and role.

Cannings presented organization and ministry charts in the appendix of the book to demonstrate how a church can organize to fulfill its mission. These ministry flow charts and other specific examples allow the reader to see the book’s theory and practice carried out in a real church. The church-specific examples, however, may be applicable only to churches with a similar organizational structure

**Lewis: Book Review: Making Your Vision a Reality: Proven Steps to Develop** or a high degree of organization. The pastor or church leader in a smaller or less organized church may find these charts overwhelming or mostly irrelevant.

The writing style of this book is didactic and flows in an orderly and instructional manner. The author arranged much of the material in a brief and outlined fashion that facilitates comprehension and application. This arrangement allows the reader to use the information in this book as a quick reference guide or resource for teaching or presenting to others.

Cannings went to great lengths in this book to emphasize the biblical basis of vision and how Scripture applies to every functional area of the church. He described the biblical philosophy of each functional area with various Scripture references. He stated that “each ministry outline is done from a purely exegetical evaluation of the Word of God” (52). The scriptural use and application to ministry were one of this book’s greatest strengths. The scriptural foundation for vision and ministry distinguishes this work from other similar works that adopt or integrate a secular paradigm.

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Although the book’s primary topic was vision, the majority of its contents focused on church leadership, organization, and administration. The latter half of the book seemed to focus on church leadership and administration in general without a strong correlation to the book’s thesis of vision. For instance, Cannings provided brief descriptions and bulleted lists for the qualities and qualifications of leaders and staff. These descriptions and lists are helpful but need more elaboration in how they relate to the church’s vision. Cannings also dedicated a chapter to budgeting that provided some sample sheets but lacked a strong connection to how such budgeting can be a catalyst to implementing the church vision.

Another critique of this book is the absence of an index. Although the book is relatively brief in content, an index would have made it a more useful resource for reference and research. A scriptural index would have been quite helpful since the book makes good use of relating church ministry, leadership, and organization to passages in the Bible.

Overall, this book is a helpful and practical resource for introducing the concept of vision and visionary leadership to pastors and church leaders. Cannings wrote in a comprehensible style that makes this book accessible to a broad audience. Although the book needs more detail in several areas of discussion, its biblical application to vision and leadership make it a worthwhile read. While using Cannings’ church as an example, the book could have benefitted from using more churches in its case studies. However, the pastor or church leader who needs

Payne, J. D. *Pressure Points: Twelve Global Issues Shaping the Face of the Church*.  
Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013.

Reviewed by Scott Zeller, residing in South Asia, student at The Southern Baptist  
Theological Seminary.

Via the smartphone in the pockets of most who will read this review, access to  
near total knowledge of both history and current trends on a global level is  
accessible with the touch of a finger. Past generations would now marvel at the  
ease by which a Google search can answer any question and a tweet can summon  
news from any section of the globe. Under such an onslaught of information and  
awareness, a million meaningless distractions often overwhelm the truly important.

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J. D. Payne, pastor of church multiplication at The Church at Brook Hills in  
Birmingham, Alabama, has served believers well by sifting through the milieu of  
contemporary crises to highlight twelve key issues with which those engaging in  
world impact must grapple. The “big twelve” as he sees them are unreached people  
groups, the West as a mission field, growth of the Majority World church,  
pluralism and the plurality of faiths, international migration, globalization,  
poverty, growth of the cities, children and youth, health care, oral learners, and the  
pornification of societies.

Using the metaphor of “pressure”—a force that can “be both damaging and  
beneficial” (ix)—Payne points out that these issues can be productively engaged as  
opportunities to “innovate for the advancement of the gospel as the pressures of  
the age apply force and create challenges for the mission of the church” (xiv). The  
metaphor is effective and put to good use as Payne walks through each issue,  
focusing not on the problems it causes but on the opportunities it presents for the  
gospel of Jesus Christ.

Payne recently transitioned to the role of pastor of church multiplication at  
The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Alabama, having previously labored as  
a seminary professor. His scholar’s dedication to details is seen in the succinct yet  
engaging summary of each pressure point. The heart of the pastor then follows  
each one with an optimistic summons to action through gospel-centered, church-  
oriented connections. Each chapter follows this format with very accessible, almost  
casual prose. Payne leans heavily on first-person illustrations almost to a fault. He