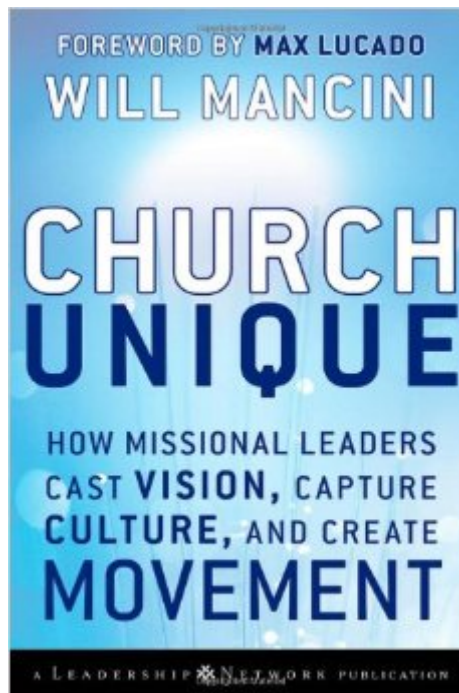


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Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture, And Create Movement



Synopsis

Written by church consultant Will Mancini expert on a new kind of visioning process to help churches develop a stunningly unique model of ministry that leads to redemptive movement. He guides churches away from an internal focus to emphasize participation in their community and surrounding culture. In this important book, Mancini offers an approach for rethinking what it means to lead with clarity as a visionary. Mancini explains that each church has a culture that reflects its particular values, thoughts, attitudes, and actions and shows how church leaders can unlock their church's individual DNA and unleash their congregation's one-of-a-kind potential.

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Customer Reviews

It's rare to visit a church, read its mission statement and then conclude, "What a great match!" For that to happen, the church's vision must be clear, appealing, and most important, truly reflective of the unique culture demonstrated by the church. Back in 1992, when churches were just beginning to think about vision statements, George Barna wrote a highly popular book called *Power of Vision*. In it he defined vision as "a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God." I predict Will Mancini's *Church Unique* (2008, 271 pages) will succeed Barna's classic as the go-to book for church leadership discussions because it does even more than help you articulate a vision for your church. It goes further. It helps you "cast vision, capture culture, and create movement," as the subtitle forecasts. The book affirms that your church is "stunningly unique," and then helps you turn your church's one-of-a-kind potential into a model of ministry that leads to a redemptive movement.

It understand that each church models a culture reflective of its particular values, thoughts, attitudes and actions. Using numerous specific-church examples, it walks you through the process of vision focus and alignment within the context of your church's unique culture. Mancini, a former pastor and now church consultant, also explores pitfalls that often trap churches, such as adopting the latest conference technique or following a Band-aid approach to addressing deep-set issues. CHURCH UNIQUE will benefit any type of church leader, whether megachurch or church plant, mainline or non-denominational. The book is release #25 in Leadership Network's series with Jossey-Bass.

This is not a terribly offensive book. It seems to be a natural outworking of the "church leadership" culture now reinvented under "missional" categories and preferences. Church growth for Generation Y. A primary diagnostic question of Church Unique is, "What can your church do better than 10,000 others?", and I worry that this is a very poor ecclesiological starting point. Paul's lack of eloquence in speech (1 Cor 1:17, Acts 17:18), his insistence on the lowliness of the Christians at Corinth (1 Cor 1:26-31), and the very universal application of the New Testament to every church and every believer seem to militate against the idea that the *one thing* your church needs to *create movement* is the method Mancini has created. Paul spends an entire letter (Colossians), and the unnamed NT writer does the same (Hebrews), attempting to show, prove, and convince us that Jesus Christ is sufficient for us. In Paul's own apostolic ministry, it's not his rhetorical training upon which he relies (i.e., his own competence) but Jesus Christ Himself (see esp. 2 Cor 2:14-3:6). I find it problematic that pastors are so flagrantly being sold something less than this. I think Mancini and the other folks in his industry tend to get the Gospel right and ecclesiology way, way wrong. Perhaps a revised version could be released that makes these things priorities. It would probably be called "Church Un-Unique, but Still Distinctive." This is not to say that Mancini hasn't got some good ideas. But his good ideas get lost in the marketing and sales pitches.

I read this on the advice of a friend who is church planting in Belfast, with whom I was discussing the thorny subject of vision. First a gripe: the jargon in these kind of books drives me mad! I know what Mancini and his ilk are trying to do - grappling for language that expresses new concepts - but I was never keen on alphabet spaghetti as a kid, and I'd like to read a leadership book without it now I am a man. Gripe done with; to the content... Doubtless many church leaders struggle to articulate a clear and compelling vision for their church, and even more fail to implement it. Vision is much agonized over and many books have been written about it. The thing is, we all know it when we see it! Certain leaders simply embody vision. There is something about them, some charisma,

chutzpah, pizzazz which just seems to make things happen, and which often denies analysis. These are the mega-leaders of the mega-churches. Men who are just somehow, well, different. So I am always a little bit sceptical about vision books, as I don't think just anybody can be turned into a great visionary leader. You've either got chutzpah or you haven't. But I do believe that all of us can work on our strengths, sharpen our edge, and do better at what we are doing. Does this book deliver at this level? To large degree I think it does. Probably the most liberating thing about it is the insistence not to simply copy another mans vision. Mancini warns against the 'Conference Maze' in which pastors jump from conference to conference and idea to idea trying to copy the latest successful model.

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