

Eight Steps to Dreaming Bigger Dreams

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A new year begins and what are you dreaming about praying about for 2022? How big is your God? I've always loved Ephesians 3:20. Here it is in The Message,

“God can do anything you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams!

What wild and humanly impossible dreams are in your head and heart.

Here are, “Eight steps to dreaming bigger dreams.”

Every leader needs a dream. Most leaders start out with a dream, but those dreams tend to shrink to the size of the situation they find themselves in. That's why we need to be stretched periodically.

The history of Saddleback is a testimony to the power of a God-given dream. In my first Saddleback sermon—during a trial service with 60 people—I shared the dream God gave me for the church. It was a big dream. When I stood up and shared that dream, no one thought there was a chance it could come true. But God did what he said he was going to do.

Great things come from small beginnings when God is in them. But you need to start with a dream. If you're struggling to discover God's dream for your ministry, here are eight steps to dream bigger than you've ever dreamed before.

1. Open your mind to God—The Principle of Inspiration

God's perspective is what makes your dream different from normal, secular goal setting. Proverbs 28:26 tells us, *“A man is a fool to trust himself! But those who use God's wisdom are safe”* (TLB).

That's why your dream should begin by getting God's perspective on your life. Schedule some time to sit down, get quiet, and ask God, “What is your will?”

When I sat down before starting Saddleback and began praying for God's will, he directly impressed upon my heart: “Go to a major urban area.” That's all I had. I didn't know where, but I knew God wanted me to go to a big urban area. At the time, I didn't have the slightest idea that it would be the Saddleback Valley in Southern California.

2. Do some research—The Principle of Information

After you spend time in prayer, you need some information. Don't make decisions out of ignorance. Proverbs 18:13 says, *“What a shame—yes, how stupid! —to decide before knowing the facts!”* (TLB). You need to ask yourself, “What do I need to know first?”

Then read books or listen to podcasts about, for example, the ministry you're dreaming of starting. Visit churches that have that ministry. Attend seminars. Often there are experts out there who are simply a phone call away.

3. Start asking for advice—The Principle of Consultation

Talk to someone who has already taken the risk and chased a similar dream. Proverbs 24:6 says, *"If you have lots of good advice, you will win"* (NCV). It is wise to learn from experience. It's even wiser to learn from the experience of others. None of us have enough time to make all the mistakes in life. Learn from the mistakes of others.

So, at this point, ask yourself, "Who else can help me?"

- Whenever I find that person, I ask:
- What things have worked the best for you?
- How have you tried and failed?
- What would you do differently today?

Too often, when we're struggling to achieve our dreams, we choose to fake it rather than ask for help. We fear that others will think we don't know what we're doing. But without the right advice, you're going to appear foolish anyway. That's why the best thing to do is humble yourself and ask for advice.

4. Establish some priorities—The Principle of Selection

You need to tackle your dream in a logical order. When I came up with the Saddleback Vision, I knew it wasn't going to just happen. I needed a clear-cut plan. In fact, I made a 12-week plan for everything that needed to get done leading up to the church's launch.

You need to prioritize what needs to get done as you chase your dreams. The Bible describes it like this: *"Sensible people keep their eyes glued on wisdom, but a fool's eyes wander to the ends of the earth"* (Proverbs 17:24 NLT).

Ask yourself, "What is my target?" You don't have time to do everything. The secret to success is selecting the right priorities.

5. Evaluate the cost—The Principle of Evaluation

Take a calculated risk. Proverbs 20:25 says, *"Don't trap yourself by making a rash promise to God and only later counting the cost"* (NLT).

As you chase your dream, ask yourself:

- Is it necessary? (Can I reach my goal another way?)

- What will it cost? (Everything valuable in life will cost you something in time, energy, money, or reputation.)
- Is it worth it?

When I began to dream about Saddleback Church, I asked myself the question, “Is it worth it?” Eventually, I concluded that it absolutely was worth it, but I had to ask the question.

6. Plan for problems—The Principle of Preparation

Never ignore a problem. Why? Because a problem won’t ignore you. You will likely face problems as you set out to reach your goals, but you can choose to meet those problems on *your* terms. The Bible says, “*A sensible man watches for problems ahead and prepares to meet them. The simpleton never looks and suffers the consequences*” (Proverbs 27:12 TLB).

Ask yourself: “What can go wrong with this dream?” Then ask, “What will happen if it does?” The Bible says that’s being sensible.

7. Be willing to take risks and face your fears—The Principle of Confrontation

We must face our fears if we want to achieve our dreams. The Bible says, “*Fear of man is a dangerous trap, but to trust in God means safety*” (Proverbs 29:25 TLB). Fear isn’t a sign of a weakness. It’s a sign of humanity. Courage is moving ahead despite this fear.

I was terrified when I shared the Saddleback Vision with the people at our first service. But I also knew the safest place to be doing what God called me to do. When you do what God is calling you to do, it will build your confidence.

8. Do it now—The Principle of Initiation

At some point, you need to stop talking and start acting. Once you’ve decided your dream is worth the risk, go for it. Proverbs 16:3 says, “*Commit your actions to the Lord, and your plans will succeed*” (NLT).

Think of a trapeze artist. The trapeze artist has to let go of one bar in order to reach the next one. Without letting go of the first bar, the trapeze artist will simply swing back to where they started.

You need to come to the point in your life where you courageously reach for the dream God has called you to—despite your fears.