



## Preferable Future

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**Duration:** 6 hours    **Group size:** small groups of 5-8 people

“The future is as bright as the promises of God.”

– Adoniram Judson (1788-1850)

### Purpose

God is the designer of the ultimate future. However, for some space of time known only to Him, human beings possess freedom of choice and endowed ability to act in ways that significantly impact our planet as well as future generations.

The purpose of this activity is to create a shared vision through a participative process that motivates participants to work toward its fulfillment.

### Output

- A refined or newly created Vision Statement

### Preparation

- Build expectation. The world deserves a future created by people who are inspired by faith. Pray your way through the fog and imagine great things for God.
- Schedule this activity when participants are fresh and relaxed.
- It would be good to open this session with prayer.

#### Materials:

- √ Flip charts
- √ Colored markers
- √ Paper and pens

### Guidelines

Begin in small groups of 5-8 people and proceed with the following steps:

#### Step 1 – Who is this for?

- The first step is to identify and understand all the key audiences for the organization. Consider age groupings, interest groups, demographics, etc. within the organization as well as any external groups you hope to include.
- Create an individual flip chart sheet for each audience by writing its identity on the sheet. Fill up the rest of the sheet with as many characteristics of that audience as you can come up with.
- Discuss each audience's objectives and add them to the paper – start a second page if needed. What does this group want and/or need? What are their interests? What would they like to see changed?
- Before moving to Step 2, reassemble the full group, have a representative of each small group report on their findings, and capture highlights on a flip chart. Work for consensus on who the key audiences will be for the ideal future.

### **Step 2 – What do we want to offer them?**

- Return to the small groups and create a flip chart sheet for each audience the full group agreed should be considered.
- Focus on one audience at a time: what emerging issues are likely to be a concern to each group? What might we do to address those concerns?
- Discuss what we could offer each audience that might appeal to them or push them in a healthier direction - as well as fulfill our mission. Write these on a flip chart.
- If possible, have participants call someone they know who represents one of the audiences and ask for their input or response to your ideas. Add these to your flip chart.
- Reassemble the full group and discuss your findings.
- **This step is crucial and may need to be repeated to clarify and refine “the offer”.**

### **Step 3 – What are the key elements of the vision?**

- Return to small groups.
- Discuss patterns and themes that are emerging and note them on a flip chart.
- What do these suggest in terms of a long-range vision?
- Based on your understanding of our key audiences and their concerns in the future, if we were to move in a bold and creative new direction – what should it be?
- Reassemble the full group and have a representative of each small group report their suggestions for a bold and creative new direction.
- Capture the suggestions on a flip chart and engage the group in a discussion to identify key elements of the new vision.

### **Tips for facilitating group activities**

- Consider changing the usual meeting environment to stimulate creative thinking.
- Keep the end goal of decisive action in mind for the duration of the activity.
- Open with a brief overview of the activity so participants know what to expect.
- Be careful and consistent to maintain pre-set boundaries of time and task.

- Encourage small group self-management; suggest that each group select a recorder, a reporter, a time keeper, and a discussion leader.
- Work with the people, ideas, and motivations you have to find enough common ground to act rather than being bogged down or sidetracked with an attempt to resolve “deeper issues”.
- Seek global perspective on issues by allowing all opinions to be expressed, validating polarities, and by agreeing to disagree on issues that cannot be resolved quickly.
- Encourage people to stay engaged in spite of differences. Resist the urge to intervene unless you observe movement toward ‘fight or flight’. Allow the group to resolve its own differences or agree to set them aside.
- Provide plenty of easily available nutritious snacks and beverages
- Consider using a Church Futures consultant to add depth and breadth of experience.

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