



cpas

Making Mission Possible



GROWING LEADERS

- **Introduction to Part 2**
- **Introductory Video**
- **Leaders' Guide**
- **Handouts 1-7**
- **PowerPoint**



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**DISCERNING
DIRECTION**

PART 2: INTRODUCTION

Part 2 Contents

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Discerning direction (24 hours away)
2. **Session 6**
Developing leaders
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A Prayer

Loving Father,
equip your people
to lead your church.
Give them grace to lead well,
patience to care for all,
and wisdom to know the way.

We pray that your people
may grow in Christ-likeness
and reach out in love
with your gospel,
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

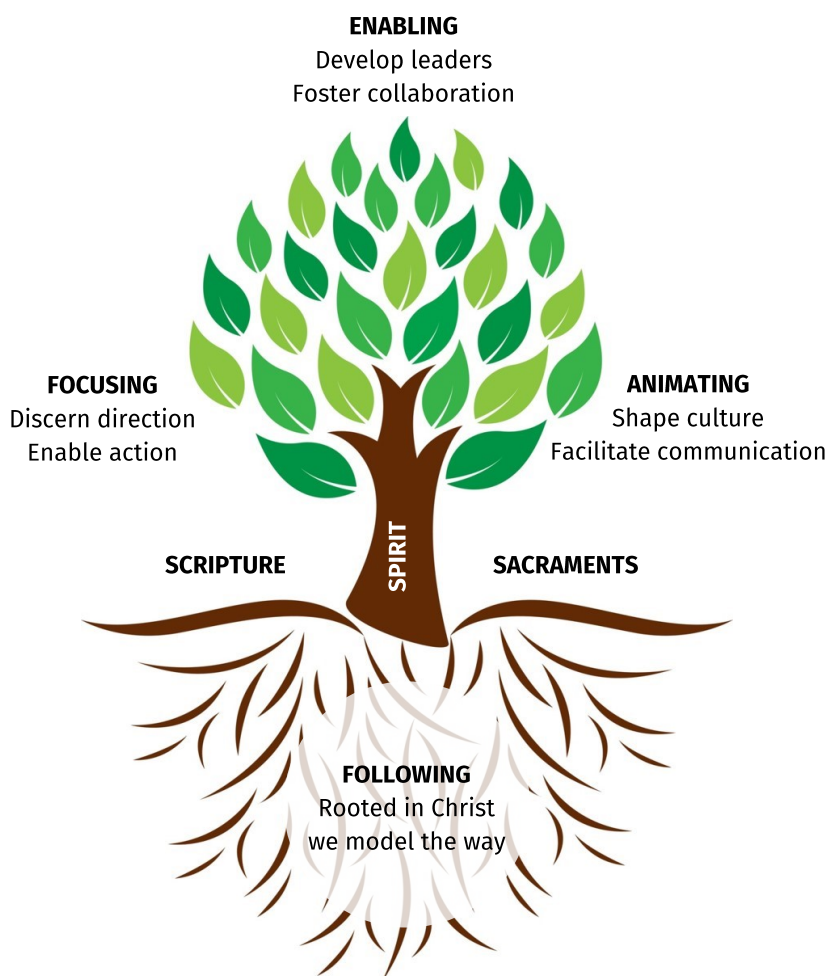
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Welcome to Growing Leaders Part 2

Well done for making it to Part 2 of Growing Leaders. Part 2 focuses on some of the 'key skills' of leadership. This means the feel of the sessions is a little different from Part 1, but please don't think we've left behind the foundational material we've already covered. Everything you can do to re-emphasise the vital importance of 'chosen', 'call' and 'character' will help.

The skills we have chosen are generic skills in that they apply across all leadership positions and in all leadership contexts. The New Testament highlights there are some core leadership skills that apply to certain roles, for example 'able to teach' for those who are going to be elders of churches. Other roles will require other specific leadership skills. But here we are focusing on skills that are true if you are leading a home group, a team at work, or a committee of people running a homeless shelter.



PART 2: INTRODUCTION

We've identified four core responsibilities that are at the heart of any Christian leadership. We use a picture of a tree to capture how these relate to one another. Obviously no one person can do all these things equally well, and ideally we will be leading with at least one other person (following the biblical pattern of leading with others we have already outlined on the course) who complements our own leadership strengths. However, it helps for every leader to have the big picture of these core responsibilities. The greater the leadership responsibility, the more complex these areas become.

For each of the four core responsibilities we have two phrases that capture the thrust of that area, and a metaphor that can be used to explore the work of the leader.

Following	Follow Jesus Watch yourself	Servant
Focusing	Discern direction Enable action	Guide
Enabling	Foster collaboration Develop leaders	Conductor
Animating	Shape culture Facilitate communication	Host

Following: Rooted in Christ We Model the Way

When we do these two things, follow Jesus and watch ourselves, we model Christ-like behaviours and inspire trust as we walk the walk. Murray McSheyne once said 'Your people's greatest need is your own personal holiness.' This rootedness helps us be a '**non-anxious presence**'. We know it isn't all up to us, we know it is all about him.

- **Follow Jesus** The first priority of every Christian leader is not to be leader, but a follower. We are followers first, and only when we are following Jesus are we a safe leader to follow. So this is our priority, to root ourselves in Christ, to abide in him (John 15:1-4). From this place our identity is formed. We are those who are 'in Christ'. This is what we explored in Part 1 of Growing Leaders.
- **Watch yourself** We are also those who are called to 'keep watch over yourselves' (Acts 20:28). This involves giving attention to the inner life that helps us to stay on track as leaders; everything from our spiritual disciplines, to our physical and mental well-being, to how we relate to those closest to us, to keeping ourselves intellectually stimulated.

These are often the very things that gets lost in the busyness and demands of leadership, which is why we started Growing Leaders by focusing on the inner life of the leader. It is also why Part 3 of the course looks at keeping faithful as a Christian leader, because perseverance in the light of the inevitable challenges of leadership is an important part of leading for the long haul.

A metaphor for modelling is **servant**. We are a servant of Christ first and foremost, seeking to live as his disciples, but we are also servant of the people.



PART 2: INTRODUCTION

The order here is very important, as there is much misunderstanding about servant leadership in the Church. We serve Christ first and through our service of him serve his people. If we serve people first we all too easily become a *doormat*, simply doing whatever they ask or expect. If we serve Christ and through our service of Christ serve people we become a *doorway* into the priorities of the kingdom. The symbols of the order of Christian leadership are a towel and a basin of water.

Focusing: Led by Spirit We Focus on Going God's Way

Leadership is about going somewhere. The old Anglo-Saxon word for leadership means route, way, path, direction. So leaders help a group of people discern which direction to go in, and help them make progress in that direction.

Leaders both **define reality** and are **dealers in hope**.

- **Discern direction** As Christian leaders we are concerned to find God's direction, even in contexts where others have no concern for the things of God, for example our work-place. Within a Christian context, for example a church, discerning is normally best done with others not on our own, as this leads to ownership of the outcome. There are a wide variety of ways of doing that, but it works best when the discernment process leads to *clarity* about the way ahead, a sense of *ownership* that this is the path to follow, and a degree of *urgency* that we really need to follow it.
- **Enable action** Even when the direction is discerned, research shows 60-65% of Mission Action Plans, vision statements or equivalent are not successfully implemented. It helps if a vision (a picture of a preferred future) is turned into a strategy (a series of actions that turn a vision into reality). This will involve change through a combination of bold moves and steady progress, which will require wisdom and courage on behalf of the leader. Change may well lead to conflict.

If there is something worse than no direction at all, it is taking time, energy and money to discern a clear and exciting direction and then not heading that way. People end up disillusioned and frustrated. It helps to note that most of the time good leadership is about lots of small purposeful nudges, each one an incremental change working towards an overall vision, rather than 'paradigm shift' change events. If we're not careful we inadvertently pick up the message (particularly when listening to leadership gurus – something about their charisma as well as message) that good leadership is something big/significant/decisive, whereas most of the time its small but purposeful nudges in the right direction.

A metaphor for this aspect of leadership is **guide**. This isn't a package tour, where all the parameters are set, this is an adventure guide, where the guides role is to work with the group to discern where they are going, and then to help every person contribute their best to achieve the desired destination. Often there will be changes in the actual path as circumstances dictate, and a great deal of flexibility is required of the guide as well as the ability to keep the group focused on where they are going. The guide brings certain skills and experience, benefitting from training and often having travelled similar paths before, but knows that every trip is unique.



PART 2: INTRODUCTION

Enabling: Equipped by the Spirit We Enable Collaborative Leadership

Leadership is about nurturing people to give of their best. But it is also specifically about enabling collaborative leadership. Leadership is best developed and best exercised in community. Jesus modelled this in his choosing of the 12, and beyond them a wider group of women and men. Theologically leadership is communal, reflecting the nature of the Church and the nature of God. Pragmatically leadership is communal because no one person has all that is necessary for leadership. So leaders are **investors in people**.

- **Foster collaboration** At every level we want to encourage people to work well with one another, and in particular in leadership we want people to lead well with others. This is always a challenge because of the different preferences people have, the baggage people bring, and their inbuilt sinful tendencies. Yet good and creative collaboration, be it on a PCC, a team at work, or a committee, is a dynamic and releasing thing.
- **Develop leaders** The true fruit of an apple tree is not an apple, but another apple tree. True fruit of a leader is not a follower, but another leader. Therefore as leaders we have responsibility for encouraging today's leaders and developing tomorrows. As one person put it, 'without a successor, there is no success.' We enable others to grow as leaders by identifying them as such, investing in their development and entrusting them with leadership responsibility.

A metaphor for this aspect of leadership is **conductor**. The conductor of an orchestra has to encourage every member of the orchestra to individually play their best, spot those who can act as leaders of the different sections and coach them in exercising their leadership well, and enable every member of the orchestra to play together. When it all comes together something beautiful is created that couldn't possibly be achieved by an individual on their own.

Animating: Empowered by the Spirit We Animate a Kingdom Culture

Leadership is about animating a group of people, creating an environment where people can flourish. Culture and communication are two core components of a healthy environment. In this sense, leaders are **cultural architects**.

- **Shape culture** Every group of people, organisation, church has a culture, a way of doing things. Part of the responsibility of those in Christian leadership is to help shape the culture to be a little bit more kingdom like. 'In a sense, culture-creation encapsulates what leaders need to do: it is by far the most important responsibility of leaders' (Steve Timmis). Culture shaping involves working with values and behaviours, encouraging experimentation where we permit mistakes and learn from them, identifying stories that steer the culture for good or ill.
- **Facilitate communication** Communication is like the oil in an engine, without it things quickly grind to a halt. With it, things run smoothly and all the parts of the engine can contribute to the maximum output. Communication isn't simply about the one-to-many passing on of information, or the preaching ministry of a gathered church, it is about listening and networking, it is verbal and visual, logical and creative, minutes and notices, small and big, one-to-one and one-to-many. In our work we have identified this is one of the most neglected aspects of leadership.



PART 2: INTRODUCTION

Animating can be done in a dictatorial way using hard power, but is better done through soft power and loving concern. A metaphor for this aspect of leadership is the leader as **host**. A good host spends time thinking about the environment they are going to create. They exhibit generosity in their hospitality, combine attention to detail with a relaxed approach, and occasionally will have to challenge someone who is behaving unacceptably. They also aid the gathering with a variety of good communication; before the event in ensuring everyone knows what they are coming to and what is expected of them; during the event in welcoming people and introducing people to one another, energising the conversation when things are flagging; after the event in following up on any commitments made and expressing gratitude.

Resources

Christian leadership has particular resources to draw on that shape how we exercise our leadership

- Faithful engagement with the Scriptures.
- Prayerful dependence on Spirit.

In this sense leaders are **theologians and reflective practitioners**, students of what God says and what God is doing.

Fruit

A healthy leadership tree produces foliage and fruit that is in line with the identity of the tree. The Church is the body of Christ, it exists to continue the mission and ministry of Christ on earth today. So a church will look for fruit in a number of areas:

1. The fruit of the Spirit in the lives of the leaders.
2. The fruit of people being formed as whole life disciples, both on the journey to and the journey of faith.
3. The fruit of a community of believers living by the 'one anothers' of the New Testament.
4. The fruit of transformed homes, organisations, communities and countries to be a little more kingdom like as we seek to bless those around us.

How this Fits with Growing Leaders

The Part 2 contains the materials for sessions 5, 6 and 7 of the course. The leaders' guide includes:

- **Introduction** A two-page summary identifying the session aims, the biblical material behind the session, the background to the session's construction, a list of required materials, and a section for you to use in your own preparation.
- **Session outline** These are the notes that guide you through how to run the session, including timings, and columns identifying which PowerPoint slides and handouts to use.

You'll also find:

- **Handouts** These can be printed off for the participants.
- **PowerPoint presentations** There is at least one for each session.
- **Videos** Some short introductory videos explaining the thinking behind each session. Do watch these ahead of running a session.
- **Activity masters**



PART 2: INTRODUCTION

Session 5 begins with our second 24 hours away. It really does make a difference if you can get away overnight. Churches who've already run Growing Leaders and didn't go away later wished they had done so. The session explores Focusing: discern direction and enable action. There is further material in the additional session 12 on enabling action (strategic planning).

Sessions 6 and 7 are the normal two-hour sessions and focus on Enabling: develop leaders and foster collaboration (called leading together here).

Animating: shape culture and facilitate communication are two areas not covered here, but there is material for both of these topics in the additional sessions 15 (shape culture) and 16 (facilitate communication). Alternatively you could decide to replace one of the topics outlined in sessions 6 and 7 with material from additional sessions 15 or 16.

If we can be of any help, please don't hesitate to contact us.



SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

‘Articulating the vision may be the single most important responsibility that a leader has.’

WALTER WRIGHT

24-hour Session Overview

- Arrival and meal.
- Evening welcome and introduction.
- Breakfast.
- Worship (9.00-9.25).
- Section 1: Preparing the way (9.30-11.00).
- Refreshments (11.00-11.25).
- Section 2: Discerning the direction (11.25-12.55).
- Lunch (13.00-13.45).
- Afternoon break for a walk, snooze, time alone. (13.45-14.15).
- Part 3: Making the journey (14.15-15.15).
- Refreshments (15.15-15.35).
- Part 3: continued (15.35-16.35).
- Concluding reflection and worship (16.35-16.55).
- Depart (17.00).

Session Aims

- To define ‘vision’.
- To inspire everyone with the importance of vision as part of leadership.
- To offer some tools for discerning and implementing God’s vision.
- To provide space for personal reflection.
- To root corporate vision in the wider context of a growing vision of God.

Bible Base

Some of the key passages used through the day are Genesis 12, Exodus 3, Isaiah 6, and Acts 2.

Background

By definition, leadership is about direction. To lead you have to be going somewhere and take others with you. But who decides the direction – and how you travel towards it? This day is an opportunity to explore issues of vision in three parts. After an initial welcome and worship...

SECTION 1: PREPARING THE WAY – WHAT IS VISION AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

There are many ideas surrounding this concept, and almost as many definitions as there are books on the subject. We want to explore the Bible’s teaching on vision and to help leaders appreciate its crucial importance.

SECTION 2: DISCERNING THE DIRECTION – WHO DISCERNS THE WAY AHEAD?

Knowing where we’re going is a big help, whether we are leading a church or a small group. The ‘stereotypical’ leader goes up a mountain, hears from God, comes down the mountain, and tells the people, ‘This is the way. Follow!’ We shall suggest that this is only one way of discerning God’s direction – and that it isn’t normally the best.

SECTION 3: MAKING THE JOURNEY – HOW DOES VISION BECOME A REALITY?

Once we know where God is leading, the hard work begins. There are many ‘vision statements’ around that have made little or no difference, simply because they’ve never been implemented. And as soon as people try to implement them, they encounter issues linked to change and conflict.

Be aware that some participants may know this material well. It may be a routine feature of their working life. They may shape the vision of their organisations, or help others to do so. These people have much to offer, and you may want to ask for their advice. A word of warning: it’s worth checking first that such people have thought theologically about the importance of vision. Don’t assume that their business background will have attuned them to the needs of a local church. But then again – a bit of business common-sense might be precisely what God wants to bring to your attention.


For other people, the language of mission, vision and values may be a complete turn-off, smacking of professional, business terminology. So try to avoid ‘jargony’ business-world terminology. As a wise person remarked: ‘Sometimes, it ain’t what you say, it’s the way that you say it.’



SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

In this session we've decided to focus on discerning direction in a church setting. This is primarily because the multiple contexts people may be exercising leadership in other spheres of their lives make it hard to focus on each of them. However, the principles are almost the same, with one or two significant differences. Do be sure to make connections with other spheres, and give space to talking about issues people may raise.

Whatever format you choose, the 'logic' of the session is the same:

- 
1. The main training starts with worship which roots everything in a vision of God.
 2. We then seek to define vision, to ask why it is important, and to examine the role of the leader in discerning vision.
 3. Having established the importance of vision, we consider how it may be discerned – and how we can align our ideas for our church/group with God's purposes.
 4. The final phase is to establish ways of realising the vision, once it has been discerned. We also consider resources to help with problems related to vision.
 5. The day ends in worship, to help us refocus on the 'big picture' of God's plans and purposes.

However you tweak and shape your day to apply it to your group, try to remember the basic structure outlined in this list.

We've planned this session as an overnight residential. We strongly advise you take on the extra effort and cost to run it in this way. It will make a huge difference to the relationships within the group and to what you achieve in the sessions. If this isn't possible, continue to work hard at building trust and community throughout the day. The shorter the time, the harder this may be.

Your Own Reflection

Read Exodus 3:1-12 and consider Moses' vision of God, his vision for God's people and how that shaped his personal vision. How do you respond to issues of vision? Where will you need God's help during this training?

Are you the kind of person who is given to visions and plans? That's fine. But be aware that many others are not wired up in the same way. Pray for grace and humility to see where individuals are with God. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you lead this session wisely.

'Dissatisfaction and discouragement are not caused by the absence of things but the absence of vision.'

ANON

Materials

- Refreshments.
- Lining paper.
- Marker pens.
- Blu-Tack.
- Post-it notes.
- Pens and paper.
- Magazines/papers.
- Bookstall.
- Room gifts and welcome cards.
- DVDs.
- Compass (each person will need to bring a compass with them).

HANDOUTS

- Handout 1 Worship.
- Handout 2 Preparing the way.
- Handout 3 Spot the difference.
- Handout 4 Making the journey – three obstacles.
- Handout 5 Making the journey – six priorities.
- Handout 6 Discerning direction.
- Handout 7 Feedback form.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

- Introductory video.
- Session 5 PowerPoint.



SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

Section 1 – Preparing the Way



Aim
0-5 MINS

Slide 1

ARRIVAL

We've written this section for a Friday evening. Please make adjustments if you are running it at the start of Saturday. You'll need to select highlights. Give everyone a good welcome. Details will make a difference: good directions to the venue; a personal welcome; an offer to carry bags to rooms; a welcome card and a small gift in the room; relaxing music and papers/magazines to read in the common areas; a good meal.

Slides 2-3

INTRODUCTION

Friday and Saturdays are precious, so let everyone know how much you appreciate their attendance. Make sure everyone has everything they need to be comfortable. Introduce Growing Leaders Part 2, explaining that it focuses on key skills of Christian leadership, moving on to competence in our model. Be clear that we are not leaving behind any of the previous sessions, rather that they are foundational to the entire course. Review session 4, allowing space for any questions or stories that people want to share.

Slide 4

Slides 5-7

Introduce session 5. Explain the format, in particular that the focus is on discerning God's direction for the contexts where they lead. Be clear that we aren't covering the same material as session 3 ('Clarifying call'). That was about our personal vision. This is about a corporate (group or church) vision. Then pray for your time together.



Way In
5-50 MINS

Here is a choice of 'icebreaker' exercises. If none appeals, please use one of your own. Alternatively you may prefer to leave the activity until later and simply start with worship.

OPTION 1: CATCH UP

Invite everyone to reflect for five minutes on the main insights that they have gained so far through Growing Leaders: about themselves, about leadership and about fellow participants.

Next ask them to share their thoughts with one other person. Then invite volunteers to share ideas with the whole group. Be ready to rejoice with those who have had good experiences and to be sympathetic to those who may have had problems.

OPTION 2: 'ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER'

You'll need as many sheets of paper as there are participants. Each sheet should have the name of a participant printed at the top. Distribute the sheets at random and ask everyone to write a short positive comment beneath the printed name. Ask them to fold the sheet so that the name remains visible but the comment is covered – and then to pass it on. Continue passing on until everyone has commented – and then return the 'pages of encouragement' to their owners.

Alternatively, invite each person to take a turn sitting in the centre of a circle of participants. Each person in the circle writes a brief positive comment about him or her on a Post-it.

While this is happening, the central person should be thinking about an aspect of his or her life that other participants don't know about: an influential



SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

Section 1 – Preparing the Way

experience, a fear they may have struggled with, a passion that enthuses them. Invite him or her to share this with the rest of the group. The others should then take it in turns to read aloud what's written on their Post-its – and to give them to the central person. Time-consuming, but it can be powerful and may help take the group to a new level.

OPTION 3: CRANIUM

You will need the board game Cranium. Either play it 'straight' for fun or create a series of your own questions around the content of Growing Leaders as a way of exploring leadership issues in a light-hearted way.

OPTION 4: HOT SEAT

Invite someone to sit in the 'hot seat'. The other participants then question him/her about anything and everything. Then they pray for the person in the hot seat before the next one has a go. Although a little risky, this activity builds relationship and trust. Perhaps you could volunteer to go first.

A session on discerning direction could easily become a way of brainstorming our thoughts and ideas. Of course, it's more important that we focus on God and his plans. So take time to worship him. It might be helpful to focus on the big context for vision, which is the character of God, his person and purposes.

Use one of the following passages to focus your time together:

Psalm 19 The trusty rock and faithful redeemer.

Psalm 33 The God worthy of worship.

Isaiah 65:17-25 The scope of salvation.

Mark 9:2-13 The transfiguration of Christ.

Philippians 2:5-11 The glory of the person of Christ.

Revelation 1:12-18 The vision of the eternal Christ.



Worship
50-70 MINS

Slides 8-12

Sing together in the style that is most helpful to your group. Perhaps introduce a new item. The images on the PowerPoint may help.

Remind participants that God has been guiding and 'envisioning' his people for a very long time. The two formal prayers that follow may prove helpful. The first has a whole-church focus and comes from the Church of England's Common Worship. The second is a Puritan prayer from the 17th century inviting people to set their direction clearly following Jesus. (It is, of course, written with the language and assumptions of its age. However, it still has much good for us today.)

Handout 1

Common Worship collect for the sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers
of your people who call upon you;
And grant that they may both perceive and know
what things they ought to do,
and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,



SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

Section 1 – Preparing the Way

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Puritan prayer for divine support:

Thou art the blessed God, happy in Thyself, source of happiness in Thy creatures, my maker, benefactor, proprietor, upholder. Thou hast produced and sustained me, supported and indulged me, saved and kept me; Thou art in every situation able to meet my needs and miseries.

May I live by Thee, live for Thee, never be satisfied with my Christian progress but as I resemble Christ; and may conformity to His principles, temper and conduct grow hourly in my life. Let Thy unexampled love constrain me into holy obedience, and render my duty my delight. If others deem my faith folly, my meekness infirmity, my zeal madness, my hope delusion, my actions hypocrisy, may I rejoice to suffer for Thy name.

Keep me walking steadfastly towards the country of everlasting delights, that paradise-land which is my true inheritance. Support me by the strength of heaven that I may never turn back, or desire false pleasures that will disappear into nothing. As I pursue my heavenly journey by Thy grace let me be known as a man with no aim but that of a burning desire for Thee, and the good and salvation of my fellow men.

The Valley of Vision – a Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions, edited by Arthur Bennett.

You may like to end the worship with a simple symbolic act. Invite participants to use the compass that you asked them to bring with them. Point out that the collection includes a variety of shapes, sizes and styles – but they all have one thing in common: they all agree about the direction of north.

The focus of the time away is on how we discern where God is leading us corporately, to discern God's 'north' for us. Crucial to this is a willingness to submit our preferences to God's leading. Invite participants to place their compasses in the centre of the group as a symbolic act of submission of their wills to God's greater purpose. Pray.



Background

The preparation material notes that the word 'vision' can cause problems for some. In churches there's much talk these days of 'mission action plans', 'pastoral plans', 'mission statements', 'vision statements' – and so on. Sometimes it's hard to discover the meaning behind the jargon. Words can be slippery. So it's worth taking time to define terms and reach a common understanding of what we mean by vision. Don't spend ages discussing terminology. The important thing is that you and your group should all understand what you're talking about. We offer some definitions to help get you started. Feel free to adapt them.

SECTION 1 COVERS THREE AREAS.

- **What is vision?** Most people have a mental picture of how they would like church to be. That means that most people are aware of the importance of vision, even though they may not be familiar with 'vision language'. This



SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

Section 1 – Preparing the Way

section helps us to define our terms – it's brain-focused.

- **Why is it important?** This section encourages enthusiasm about the value of 'vision' – it's heart-focused.
- **Who is responsible for 'discerning' vision?** We look at the link between leadership and vision.



Aim
0-10 MINS

Slide 13

INTRODUCTION

If you didn't do this last night, or if new people have arrived this morning, remind participants of what you covered in Growing Leaders Part 1. Explain that in Part 2 we are moving on to consider some of the 'key skills' of leadership (discerning direction, developing leaders, and leading together). Give an overview of the content and process of the day. Then introduce this section with some of the ideas below:

Slide 14

- Review what leaders do. They lead. Therefore leadership is about going in a direction. But which direction? Leadership also involves taking people with us. Use the images on the slide as an illustration of leading people into trouble – something we don't want to do.
- Going God's way is important. It inspires people to growth and change. It prevents people from settling into mediocrity or the status quo.
- Use a quotation or tell a story about the difference vision makes (see pages 212-213 of Growing Leaders). You could use one of the well-known stories of church growth: St Michael-le-Belfrey, York; St Thomas, Crookes, Sheffield; St Barnabas, Finchley. But it would be better to use an example from your own experience if possible.

Slides 15-17

Slides 18-30

- Tell a few stories of people who've been inspired by God's vision of a changed world or church (on the PowerPoint there are images for Wilberforce, Billy Graham, Jackie Pullinger and Cicely Saunders), or use a classic 'vision speech' such as Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream...'

Slide 31

Emphasise that discerning God's direction is important for leadership at every level and in every place, whether leading in church or another sphere. Outline the focus of this first section of the day. Pray.



Way In
10-20 MINS

Slide 32

AREA 1. WHAT IS VISION?

EXERCISE

Divide the group into threes and explain you're going to introduce the concept of vision by using a common experience – church. Show the slide with the following questions:

- What would you most like to see happen in your church over the next three years?
- What are the most frustrating aspects of churches you have belonged to?

Allow about five minutes for discussion. Come back into one group and tell participants that instead of inviting feedback from their discussion, you are going to ask the following question: Did anyone find it difficult to come up with answers to the two questions? Invite comments. Our experience indicates that most will say that they didn't. Why? Because most people have an 'internal' picture of what they think church should be like.



SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

Section 1 – Preparing the Way

Slide 33

Reassure everybody that though the terminology sometimes used when discussing vision may seem unusual, the underlying reality is something we are already thinking about much of the time. Go on to say that the issue is NOT whether people have a vision for the church or their group (because the vast majority do), but:

- Is our vision the same as God's vision?
- Is the vision known by all, understood by all, and 'owned' by all?
- Is everyone working towards making it a reality?

So, the subject of vision isn't an exotic species – it's an everyday concern. Let's move on to explore its meaning.



Bible
20-55 MINS

Handout 2

Here we shall explore a biblical understanding of vision. You may like to teach it directly. Alternatively, given many people's workplace experience of vision and planning, you may like to use a conversational approach, asking for participants' experiences as you go along. Focus on the distinctives of Christian vision.

Slide 34

BACKGROUND – A RECENT HISTORY OF THE WORD

It may be helpful to give a brisk review of the recent history of the concept of vision.

Vision (noun) **1** the faculty or state of being able to see. **2** the ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom – a mental image of what the future will or could be like. **3** an experience of seeing something in a dream or trance, or as a supernatural apparition (Concise Oxford English Dictionary).

Although 'vision' is a thoroughly biblical word, it's also easy to see why it has become such an important concept in today's business world. Yet in many churches today the understanding of 'vision' is more likely to be shaped by business paradigms than biblical insights. The popularity of 'vision language' is linked to:

- **The pace of change in Western society** Having a clear sense of direction is essential, particularly at a time of rapid change. That's as true in business as it is in the Church. 'During times of uncertainty and change people are concerned about the future and want some assurance about what lies ahead' (Leith Anderson).
- **The 'audit and inspection' culture** Many people will have workplace experience of performance indicators, work reviews, audits and assessments – and so on.
- **Commercial values linked to the charity and Church sectors** Sometimes it's good to take an objective look at our vision and values – as long as we don't apply business ideas inappropriately to God's work for his Church.
- **Fashion and fad** There is a danger of jumping on the latest bandwagon. 'Everyone is talking about vision these days so it must be important for us too.' Truth is rarely found in fashion or fad, but rather in hard theological reflection. That is why we must ask ourselves what the Bible says about vision.

Let's beware of borrowing too freely from the business world's take on vision. The commercial perspective is linked to the 'bottom line' of profit and loss. Ours is not.



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BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

Introduce a biblical view of vision. It will be a composite of the following:

- A vision of **who God is** (Isaiah 6:1; Genesis 15:1).
- A vision of **what God wants to do**, both personally and corporately (Genesis 12:2-3).
- An apocalyptic vision of **what is to come** (Daniel; Mark 13; Revelation).
- A vision of **how God works** in his kingdom (Jesus' parables; Mark 4:9-12).

All of these disclosures are initiated by God. In the Old Testament vision is usually preceded by God's word. He speaks – it is seen. Think of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua.

In a biblical 'worldview' vision is linked to seeing as God sees: past, present and future. In the Christian community our planning and 'envisioning' should begin from a point of reliance on God. Christian vision should draw on what we know of what God has done in the past, on our need to know and love him today, and on our reliance on him to guide us into the future.

AN EXAMPLE – EXODUS 3:1-12

Slide 35

Moses provides a good example of 'three-dimensional' vision.

Slide 36

Vision of God (3:4-6)

- God reveals himself to Moses in the burning bush. Moses realises he is on holy ground. This vision of God is what sustains Moses through some tough experiences.
- Above everything else, we need a clear 'vision' of who God is. Only then will we be resourced for all that he asks of us. Hence Growing Leaders Part 1's emphasis on our relationship with God.

Vision for God's people (3:7-9)

- God gives Moses a vision of a land flowing with milk and honey. What a sight.
- There's a big gap between where the people are (in slavery) and where God wants them to be (in the promised land). God's vision for his people is often found in the gap between where they are and where he would like them to be.
- This session's material focuses on this corporate or communal aspect of vision. Where does God wish to take us?

Vision for Moses (3:10)

- God gives Moses a particular role within this vision for his people. This involves a call ('I am sending...'), movement ('go'), and action ('to bring').
- This 'personal' aspect of vision was a focus of session 3. It links with today's material, but is not the main focus.

Although session 5 focuses on the communal aspect of vision, it is helpful to set it within the two other aspects of vision as a reminder of the link between all three.

SUMMARY

If appropriate summarise by looking at definitions of a few key words from the slides and handouts. Stress the importance of 'agreeing terms'. The remainder of the day will focus on the 'future perspective' of vision – try to maintain the



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Section 1 – Preparing the Way

link with the biblical aspects that we have explored so far.

Be sure to clarify any questions people have before moving on to the next activity.



Activity 1 55-70 MINS

Slide 37

AREA 2. WHY IS VISION IMPORTANT?

In this section we want to appeal to participants' hearts and imaginations, to give them a 'feel' for the difference that vision can make. Stories are a great way of doing this. We've included a couple. If you know of any local examples of vision making a difference, please include them.

Slide 38

EXERCISE – THE LIFEBOAT STATION

Fix a large sheet of paper to the wall. Write 'Vision helps...' prominently at the top. Distribute marker pens. (Check that they won't 'bleed' through the paper and mark the wall.) Read aloud the story of the lifeboat station (Growing Leaders, pages 193-194), or download it from www.sermonspice.com as a video. Now invite participants to respond by covering the 'graffiti wall' with words or short phrases on the theme of the difference that vision or a sense of direction can make to a group or an organisation. Look at the comments together and reflect on them. Try to draw the following points into the discussion – or use them at the end to summarise.

Slide 39

- **Vision draws us closer to God** By drawing closer to his will it encourages dependence on him.
- **Vision identifies where God is taking a group of people** We believe in a dynamic God who is interested in each church/group. Godly vision should ensure that ministry is truly 'incarnational', rooted in the place and people God has called us to serve. It frees churches from feeling they have to conform to a particular model or style.
- **Vision captures imagination** You can express vision in many ways but ideally it captures the imagination. It is important to give people something to connect with emotionally and imaginatively. This can be a source of motivation and commitment, exciting people and fostering risk taking.
- **Vision helps decision-making** Without a clear vision how will you know when to say 'yes' or 'no' as a group or as a church? Vision is essential to making wise choices. It unites people and enhances leadership.
- **Vision releases gifts** It releases people's gifts for the fulfilment of the vision.
- **Vision generates resources** The most unlikely people can be drawn into ministry. There is an example below, but if possible, use a true story from your own experience.

A vicar of a small church on a housing estate was recently asked how things were going. 'Well, it's amazing. We don't have loads of people, most of our members are single mums or women whose husbands are not interested at all. But recently we have really tried to clarify our vision for evangelism. We don't have much and it's not rocket science, we simply decided to ask some Christian comedians to come and put on a show in our church.

Suddenly the men who were not interested have been drawn in to help organise the event, even though they're not interested in church. One offered help with setting up technical stuff, another sorted the layout



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and advertising, one was very concerned to sit in the front row and got involved to book his place.

Since then many of them have stayed around and remained interested. I think it was having a clear vision, rooted to their interests, that created interest we never were able to achieve before.

Use any spare time for questions of clarification.



Activity 2 70-85 MINS

Slide 40

AREA 3. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR DISCERNING VISION?

In this final element of section 1 we examine the role of the leader in discerning God's vision. Once again you may find people have strong views on this matter, and those who have the strongest tend to be classic 'visionary leaders'. But it is important to show that there are a variety of ways of leading the vision discerning process.

OPTION 1: LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

Use a video clip to illustrate visionary 'leading from the front'. Suggestions:

- **Toy Story** Buzz Lightyear meets Woody for the first time. Buzz makes a big speech about being a space ranger. He can lead the way.
- **Gladiator** Prior to the first battle sequence, Maximus (Russell Crowe) rallies the troops.
- **Henry V** The 'St Crispin's Day' speech before Agincourt in either the Branagh or Olivier films.
- **Cold Mountain** Rough-hewn farmhand Ruby gives her wussy boss Ada a talking-to and thus stiffens her resolve to save her farm in war-torn 1860s USA. And then Ruby shows her the way.

Following the clip, ask: what is the role of the leader in setting vision or direction?

OPTION 2: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Invite participants to form pairs and talk about their experiences of vision. Ask them to discuss the part that leaders have played in the process of discerning vision. How would they feel about playing a similar role?

After either option, clarify that the role of the leader is to ensure that God's vision for this group of people is discerned, articulated and implemented. There are three main ways a leader can do that.

Slide 41

1. ON THEIR OWN (E.G. MOSES)

The leader discerns the vision alone. The caricature scenario would be: go up the mountain, hear from God, come back and tell the people. The leader communicates the vision (or destination) to others and then leads them towards it. This kind of 'discerning' may appeal to leaders with a fairly pioneering, entrepreneurial style.

We may consider some of the great historical leaders and think this is how they did it. But Warren Bennis has done some fascinating research on such leaders and discovered...



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Slide 42

‘Historians tend to write about great leaders as if they possessed a transcendent genius, as if they were capable of creating their vision out of some mysterious inner source... It usually turns out that the vision did not originate with the leader personally, but rather from others.’

On Leaders, Warren Bennis

Advantages? This kind of leadership gets things done. Not much referring to committees. It works well in a time of crisis.

Slide 43

2. WITH OTHERS (E.G. ACTS 6)

The leader acts as a ‘facilitator’, working with others to discern God’s direction. For ‘others’, please read ‘as many as possible’.

Many leaders undervalue this approach, fearing that it leads to a ‘lowest common denominator’. This doesn’t have to be the case. Consulting people doesn’t mean you have to agree with everyone.

The strengths of this approach include:

- **Ownership** People who are involved in the vision-finding process are likely to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility once the vision has been adopted.
- **Cumulative wisdom** The vision is not based on an individual’s ‘revelation’.
- **Community** We’re all in this together and ‘ours’ is preferable to ‘yours’ or ‘mine’.

3. FOR OTHERS

Occasionally individuals or groups approach a church leader to share a ‘vision’ of what they believe God wants them to do. Possibly, after prayer and reflection, the leader may not feel that this is a vision for the whole church, but that it may still be something that should be helped into life. The leader’s role is to offer affirmation, encouragement and resources.

The strengths of this approach: you don’t have to squash initiatives that don’t fit with the church’s overall direction. You foster an atmosphere that encourages people to be open to what God might be saying to them. You make it clear through your actions that that vision isn’t the sole prerogative of the overall leader.

Slide 44

On your own, with others, for others? The following may influence one’s choice:

- **Who you are as a leader** Each of us has our own leadership style (Growing Leaders session 1).
- **The people you are leading** Different people respond to leadership in different ways (Growing Leaders book, p.43).
- **The situation within which you are leading** Circumstances can affect choice of leadership style.

Slide 45

Invite further comment or discussion on these insights, perhaps using some of the questions on slide 45. Invite people in small groups to reflect on their own experience of the role of leaders in developing vision and direction.



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Finally
85-90 MINS

End this section of the day by reviewing what you've covered.

- **What is vision?** Seeing things as God sees them.
- **Why is it important?** Because without it people are directionless, or, even worse, go their own way rather than God's way. Leadership is all about helping people discern God's direction, and then following that direction.
- **Who is responsible for discerning God's vision?** The leader is responsible for ensuring this happens, but there are a variety of approaches from which to choose.

Knowing where God is leading is essential for leadership at any level. Without a clear purpose, common values and an identified vision any group will stagnate quickly. If you can, end with a brief story of a time when vision made a difference to you.



Refresh
25 MINS

As always, great refreshments will make a difference. Maybe you could think of a 'theme' for the day.



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Preparing the Way – Additional Material

Slide 47

What is Vision?

Defining terms is so important. One way of doing this is to use a 'question/answer' format. For instance, the word 'identity' is an answer to the question 'Who are we?' Similarly, 'ownership of 16 credit cards' may answer the question, 'Why does Fred have money problems?'

Having outlined the basic idea, ask participants to work in pairs.

- Write 'mission' on a flipchart. Explain that this word might be a response to the question, 'Why do we exist?' Give examples of short mission statements from other churches or organisations.
- Fix a large sheet of paper to the wall. Give it the heading: 'VISION answers the question...'
- Hand out pieces of A5 paper with the word 'vision' written at the top.
- Ask each pair to discuss and note a question for which 'vision' could be an appropriate response.
- When finished, participants should Blu-Tack their papers to the sheet on the wall.

Slide 48

The diagram on the PowerPoint may help clarify the differences between purpose, values, vision and planning. Note that these apply to every group, church or organisation.

The important thing is for everyone to appreciate the importance not only of having a vision, but also of being able to define it simply so that all can understand it.

Defining Vision – Additional Notes

Slide 49

- Vision is about the future and about destination. It should be expressed in a clear and compelling way, ideally in terms that engage the imagination.
- You should be able to express your 'purpose' in a single short sentence, but not your 'vision'. This is more likely to be a statement running to several paragraphs.
- Vision changes as the circumstances of the group, church or organisation change.
- Vision should be linked to an agreed period of time – three, five or ten years, for example. Whatever the agreed period, you should have a major review at the end of each year.
- Vision may also involve a sharp intake of breath. If it's achievable through our own human efforts, maybe it's falling short of God's awesome vision for us.

Why is Vision Important?

The 'vision process' isn't static. That's why an agreed vision should be subject to ongoing review. Leaders should be alert to God's leading, which may alter an existing vision, or sow the seeds of a new one. Sitting back and basking in the glow of how well things are going isn't an option. If we leave 'vision development' until the agreed vision goes into decline, we may end up in 'reactive mode'.

How do you know when a vision is reaching a 'plateau'? Author Aubrey Malphurs suggests that you:

- Ask yourself if things are going well. They are? You may be close to a plateau.
- Ask an outsider to comment on how he or she perceives things.
- Talk to a church member whose opinion you might not normally seek – perhaps a young person or an elderly member of the congregation.

As one leader put it, 'vision leaks', so it is vital that leaders take responsibility for vision.



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Space For Your Notes



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Section 2 – Discerning the Direction

Background

In section 2 we look at how we put things into practice. Again we are using the gathered church as the example of where we work this out because it is the common factor amongst all those on the course.

How you run section 2 will depend on your church situation and on the participants. For example...

- Some churches have already discerned God's vision, communicated it clearly to the congregation and are trying to implement it. They probably have a vision statement, a mission action plan and so on. You may like to check ownership of the vision by asking participants to (a) state the vision; (b) comment on the difference it makes to the way they lead in their area of responsibility.
- Some churches will be in the middle of the process. With this in mind, you could focus on moving the vision-discerning process to the next stage.
- Some won't have a clear sense of where God is leading the church – possibly for very good reasons. If that is the case, use the time to identify principles for starting the process.

So, as course leaders, you will need to tailor this material to your situation, concentrating on helping participants discern God's direction for their area of responsibility.

Section 2 has an underlying assumption that vision is found in the gap between where we are and where God would like us to be. Therefore we can think of 'vision' as a response to the question, 'Where are we called to go?' And the basics of discovering God's 'picture' are simple: study of his word and openness to his Holy Spirit.

Aim 0-5 MINS

Slide 50

ARRIVAL

Be sure to start back on time, perhaps with some lively music playing to keep people upbeat.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome people back after the break. Take a moment to see if anything needs clarifying. If you've still got the compasses laid out on the floor, draw people's attention to them and to our need to submit ourselves to God's leadership. Explain that this section of the day introduces a simple way of discerning God's vision for a group or church. The material begins with an exercise considering vision for the whole church, and then uses an activity to allow each participant to look at vision in their area of leadership.

Pray for the session.

Bible 5-45 MINS

Slide 51
Handout 3

ACTS 2: SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

We've already noted that vision should be rooted in God. He is both the source of vision and its end point – alpha and omega. But most of us are painfully aware of a big gap between where we are and where God wants us to be.

The exciting thing about vision is that it may be the story, picture or plan of how God leads us to 'close the gap'. The following exercise encourages participants



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Section 2 – Discerning the Direction

to look at God's 'ideal' through the example of an early Christian community, and to reflect on how it could inform our vision of what it means to be 'church'.

- Tell everyone that we're going to play 'spot the difference'.
- Read Acts 2:42-47 to the group – but using the text given below.

Occasionally they spent some time listening to the apostles' teaching and, when they could, they met together for fellowship, for the breaking of bread and for prayer.

Awe came upon some of them. But there were no signs and wonders. All who believed were separated into groups and kept themselves apart in all they did; they would hoard their possessions and goods and show indifference to those in need.

Day by day, they went about their lives as individuals, only meeting weekly or fortnightly in the temple. They broke bread at home alone and ate their food with cold and empty hearts, giving token thanks to God. They were held in contempt by all the people. And day by day their numbers dwindled and it seemed that few were being saved.

- Distribute the handouts. Ask participants to briefly chat to a partner about the differences between the phoney and the authentic texts. Note that this is only one picture of the early church, but it presents a powerful vision of what a 'God-focused' community can look like.

Then ask participants in groups of four to explore the following:

Slide 52

- What do the differences you've identified between the two passages highlight about the nature of Christian community?
- Which aspects reflect where we are now?
- Which aspects reflect where we would like to be?

After ten minutes gather some feedback from their conversations. Remind people that this passage offers one 'vision' of what the church can be like. The gap between where we are now and where God would like us to be is the place where vision is birthed. Depending on where you are with your church vision, make connections with already existing vision documents or explain how this exercise will inform future conversations.

Slide 53

Slide 53 offers a shortened version of a process for gaining vision based on Growing Leaders, pages 199-211. You may like to talk through this shortened version.

- Clarify the process: at the start of discerning vision be clear about how you are going to do it. (Stages 1-2 in Growing Leaders, pages 199-203)
- Discern the gap: what is the gap between present reality and God's ideal? (Stage 3-4, Growing Leaders, pages 203-205)
- Decide the direction: where is God leading? (Stages 5-6 Growing Leaders, pages 205-207)
- Implement the vision: (Stages 7-8, Growing Leaders, pages 208-213.)

The next activity provides space for reflection on applying these insights to individual leadership roles.



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Section 2 – Discerning the Direction



Activity
45-75 MINS

OPTION 1: PERSONAL REFLECTION

Invite participants to take 30 minutes to be quiet and alone as they reflect on God's vision for those they lead. If possible offer a variety of options:

- A quiet room with a 'visual focus' (a cross, compasses arranged beside it).
- An area to sit or to write in journals; quiet music playing.
- An art area with paper, paints, brushes and pencils.
- A map indicating some short local walks.
- You already have an overall church vision or equivalent? Display it so that people can pray through it and reflect on its impact on their area of leadership.
- Further suggestions are listed on pages 203-204 of Growing Leaders.

OPTION 2: GROUP TIME

Invite participants to form small groups representing similar types of leadership responsibility. For emerging leaders who don't have a leadership role as yet, invite them to join whichever area most interests them. Ask the groups to reflect on the 'Acts 2' vision of the church:

- What challenges does this make to your leadership responsibility at this time?
- Try to identify ways in which the group/team that you lead comes close to this vision. Think about their relationships, attitude to possessions, commitment to fellowship, openness to God, practice of celebration, etc.
- What do you think is God's vision for your group/team? What is the present reality? Where do you think he might like to take you? Feel free to be idealistic.
- How does all of this link with your church's overall vision of your church (if you have one)?

Slide 54



Worship
75-90 MINS

Draw people back together. Create a worshipful atmosphere. Perhaps arrange the chairs differently or use one of the images on the PowerPoint and have some music playing. Invite participants to turn thoughts, insights and concerns from the exercise into prayer.

Discussion of 'vision discernment' may prove burdensome for some people. All that responsibility. Take time to remind everyone that the overall responsibility is God's, not ours.

Invite everyone to listen to the reading on the video from The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (slide 55). Alternatively, you can read the excerpt yourself from chapter 7 'A Day with the Beavers'. It is close to the beginning of the chapter and starts at the paragraph "'That's right", said the beaver, "Poor fellow"'. It ends with 'And Lucy got the feeling you have when you wake up in the morning and realise that it's the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of summer.' It describes the exciting changes that take place when Aslan 'is on the move'. Encourage people to ponder the 'awesomeness' of Christ. C S Lewis's story beautifully depicts how the arrival of the Christ-figure Aslan initiates thaw and springtime after years of malignant perma-winter. Jesus' presence cannot be other than dynamic.

Slide 55



Lunch
13.00-13.45

Slide 56

By now you know what we're going to say. Push the boat out, make your people feel special... you know it's worth it.



SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

Section 3 – Making the Journey



Background

Section 3 explores how vision becomes a reality.

What if a group or team takes time to discern God's way forward – and then doesn't do anything about it? People have invested time, energy and hope in the project. They are motivated and hopeful. And all for nothing. Bad news. They risk ending worse off than if they hadn't bothered in the first place. It is essential that, as leaders, we ensure that we make progress towards God's desired future.

Section 3 has two elements. The first explores common difficulties in implementing vision. The other includes a four-step approach to help implement a vision.

Why do we begin by looking at problems? Well, such an approach links with the insights of Fullan's force-field analysis (see 'way in' below). And it means that we end the day on a positive note. However, if you want to reverse the order, please go ahead. Some of this material is quite technical, so be sure to keep people awake with plenty of illustrations and stories.

Participants are likely to be at a variety of stages of the 'vision process'. Some may not be close to the implementation stage. Encourage them to tackle the material even though they may not be applying it for some time.



Aim 0-5 MINS

ARRIVAL

This is the post-lunch 'graveyard hour'. Be sure to keep participants alert with regular breaks throughout this section of the day.

Slide 57

INTRODUCTION

Summarise the day so far and give a brief opportunity for questions of clarification. Ask, what is the worst possible thing you can do with vision once it has been discerned? Provide the answer yourself, 'Do nothing with it.' Explain the damaging effect of 'stopping halfway'. Section 3 focuses on implementing vision ('making the journey') and has two parts: problems on the journey and priorities on the journey.

Slide 58

Pray for the afternoon.



Way In 5-15 MINS

Slide 59

Preface the following section with the story we've given or a similar one from your own experience. According to Fullan's force-field analysis, any proposed change attracts opposing forces, those working for change and those working against change. Clearly, for change to happen the 'pro' forces must be stronger than the 'anti'.

Here's a story. I'm in the car with my eight-year-old son. I'm carefully backing out of the drive when my wife rushes out with an extra item for our shopping list. I press hard on the footbrake, wind down the window and receive orders. Then we're off again. Except this time the car seems strangely reluctant to move. I check we're in gear, push the accelerator down a little further, slip the clutch. Still stationary. So I give it some welly, and we slowly inch off the drive. I look to the passenger seat. Why is my son laughing and grinning? My gaze continues downwards. While I was distracted he has firmly and forcefully applied the handbrake. I've been had.



SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

Section 3 – Making the Journey

You could say that I now have a choice. I can either continue to increase the force working for change (more engine) or I can simply release the force working against change (handbrake). Didn't take me long to make up my mind.

In this session we're going to consider the 'pro' and 'anti' forces that might influence the implementation of vision. Try one of the following exercises.

OPTION 1: YOU'VE HEARD IT BEFORE

Ask participants to form groups of four. Give each group a sheet of flipchart paper and a marker pen. A common reaction to proposed 'visionary' change may be: 'But we tried that ten years ago and it didn't work then.' Ask the groups to come up with a variety of similar objections. After four minutes ask each group to write its favourite 'but..' statement on their paper. Share statements. The exercise should involve some fun and laughter. It might be wise to suggest not to include negative statements that might bring particular individuals to mind, possibly causing embarrassment or hurt.

OPTION 2: PROBLEMS, PROBLEMS, PROBLEMS

'What problems do we meet when we try to lead with vision?' Invite participants to work with a partner to brainstorm answers to this question. Invite feedback after a few minutes and jot down comments on a flipchart.

These exercises will probably raise a variety of problems connected with 'vision implementation'. As a group discuss the issue that seems of most concern to the majority. Try to include mention of the concerns touched on in the material that follows:

- History: resonances from the past
- Diversity: reactions to change
- Complexity: responses during implementation.

Slide 60
Handout 4



Activity 1 15-30 MINS

You only have 45 minutes for these three activities – so keep an eye on the clock. Remind participants that they can discuss these issues at greater length with their mentors. Please remember that these activities are to promote discussion – try hard to avoid 'stereotypes'.

OBSTACLE 1: HISTORY – RESONANCES FROM THE PAST

Our past experiences of vision and change (in ourselves, at home, at work and in church) will affect how we respond to the prospect of change in the present.

How your group or church handled its last big change of vision will influence how they respond to a new proposal. What happened? Did everyone pray about the proposal? What about 'fall-out'? Are there any outstanding relationships, social or spiritual issues that might block future developments?

Slide 61

Slide 62

Ask participants to form small groups to reflect on the following questions:

- When was our last major change of focus/direction?
- What happened?
- How did people react?
- Was anyone left out of the process?
- What can we learn to help us prepare for any future proposals?



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Section 3 – Making the Journey

Past experiences lead to present expectations. Looking back can help us to allay people's fears and clarify their misunderstandings.



Activity 2

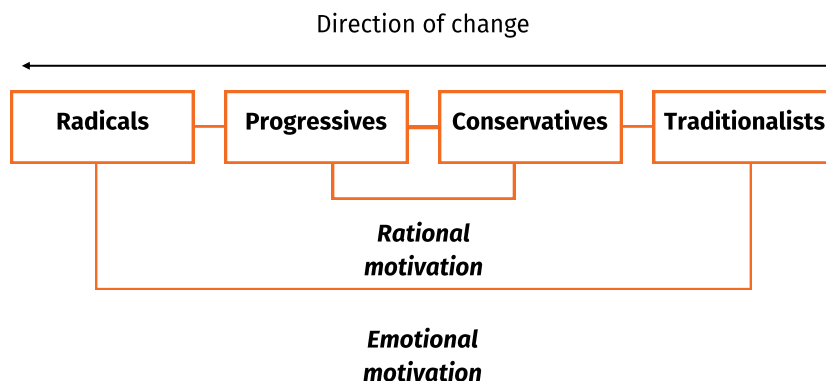
30-45 MINS

Slide 63

Slide 64

OBSTACLE 2: DIVERSITY – REACTIONS TO CHANGE

People are complex – how we respond to change is only one of many aspects of our make-up. That said, research indicates four common responses. Let's think of them in terms of a train and a railway line (see the slide):



- **Radicals (track layers)** want things to change now. They operate like a track-laying vehicle, straining towards the horizon of change, possibly unconcerned whether or not anyone is following them.
- **Progressives (engine drivers)** feel positive about change, but are aware that it needs skill, wisdom and patience to see it through. They work selectively and thoroughly. They often get their ideas from the radicals – but they worry about how the conservatives might respond.
- **Conservatives (paying passengers)** are wary of change, but can be persuaded (most likely by progressives) to a more positive outlook, especially if they feel their concerns are taken seriously.
- **Traditionalists (brake van)** believe that all change is for the worse – a threat to a rich heritage.

Radicals and traditionalists are energised by their emotions. They respond to passion, enthusiasm and vision. Progressives and conservatives prefer a more rational approach; they look for clear arguments as to why something should be started – or stopped.

Trying to understand how people react to change pays dividends. Doing so helps us to work with people – drawing, rather than driving. We make it possible for everyone to contribute to the process of change.

In all of this, communication is so important. Clear, consistent, courteous communication oils the wheels of change. If you have time, ask participants to identify the part of the train in which they would feel most comfortable. How might this affect their approach to vision?

Where might Jesus be on the train? It's easy to see him as both a radical ('You have heard it said of old, but I say to you') and a traditionalist ('not a jot or tittle of the law will pass away'). There's a sense in which Jesus was a 'radical



SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

Section 3 – Making the Journey

traditionalist', opening the Jewish heritage of faith so that all could have access to God – starting with poor people. That is our calling too.



Activity 3 Slide 65 45-58 MINS

OBSTACLE 3: COMPLEXITY – RESPONSES DURING IMPLEMENTATION

Life can become complicated when we begin to implement change – maybe bewilderingly so, particularly when we have to deal with many varied reactions to change from the people we are called to lead.

Trying to simplify things can help. We can encourage people to concentrate on the 'big picture' benefits of what life will be like when the period of change is behind them. Desert versus promised land.

That said, we may simply need to acknowledge that change involves discomfort. The only way to avoid turbulence is to keep the plane on the ground. A period of 'chaos' is an unavoidable aspect of discerning vision, particularly in the early stages, and if you have some strong characters in your church.

Research suggests that churches and organisations may be wise to put up with, or deliberately embrace, such turbulence. These stresses and strains force us out of our normal parameters, and may inspire us to a variety of creative solutions.

Questions to ponder:

Slide 66

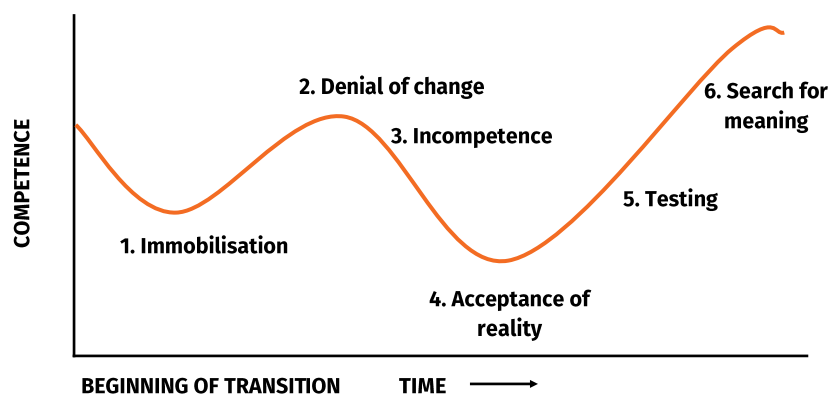
- To what extent are we prepared to live with the turbulence that comes with change?
- To what extent are we prepared to think beyond our normal patterns and activities to find new ways forward?

Responses to change can be pictured as a 'tale of two curves'. Many leaders wrongly assume that change is simply a matter of making a decision and then implementing it. Would that reality was so simple. Events and the 'human factor' complicate matters.

The curve illustrations in the PowerPoint offer two perspectives. Use them if you feel they will help the group.

Slide 67

The transition curve shows how people commonly respond to change as it is implemented. It reminds us that change takes time, and that some apparently negative reactions are necessary parts of the process. Vision can become clouded when we are unprepared for a variety of unfolding reactions to our plans. It makes sense to think ahead.

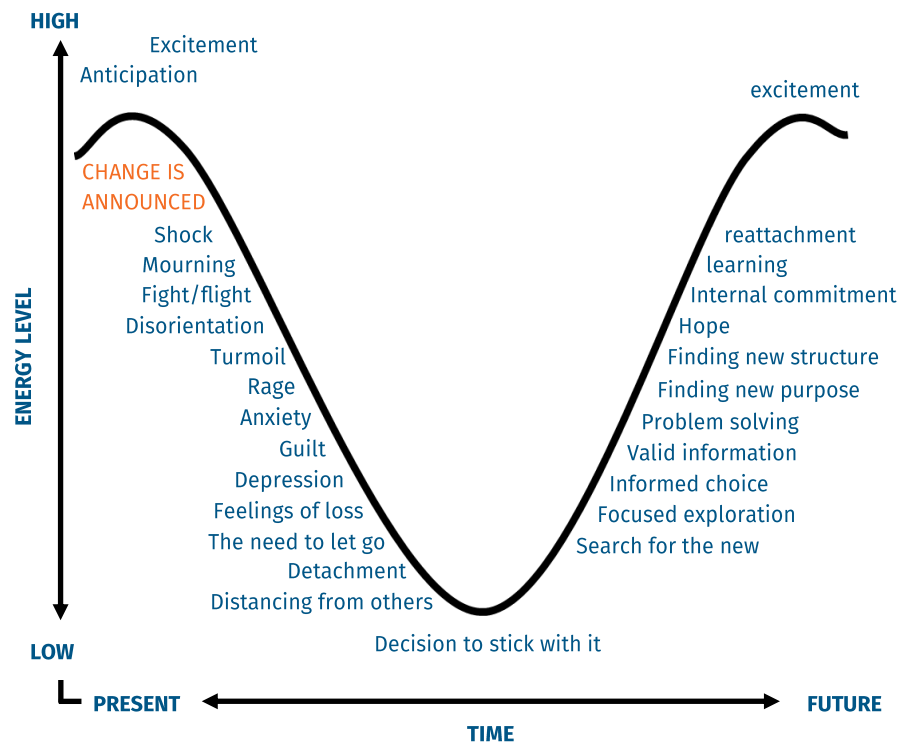


SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

Section 3 – Making the Journey

Slide 68

The rollercoaster curve shows some of the emotions associated with the process of change. It's important to acknowledge the fact that change affects our emotions. And we need to respect people's feelings. Being part of a church is a voluntary activity.



 **Finally**
58-60 MINS

If possible, end this section on 'problems on the journey' with a positive example about a difficulty that has been resolved leading to the fulfilment of vision.

 **Refresh**
20 MINS

Home-made cakes? You shouldn't have.

SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

Section 3 – Making the Journey



Aim
0-5 MINS

If you've got any more fun surprises to pull out of the bag, now is the time for them. It's been a long day and this is the last part, so keep everyone upbeat.

Slide 70

Remind participants that we're thinking about 'making the journey'. We have looked at things that might impede change. Now we are going to consider six priorities for the journey of implementing vision:

Handout 5

- Consider it.
- Capture it.
- Connect it.
- Communicate it.
- Do it.
- Celebrate it.

Slide 71

Take a few moments to introduce each point using the image of building a house. Then explore them further using the following activities, trying to be relevant to participants' real-life leadership responsibilities.



Activity 1
5-20 MINS

Slide 72

CONSIDER IT / CAPTURE IT

Two things form the foundation to the house. First, a leader needs to consider the vision. Explore this with the group, identifying that if this is a vision from God it is likely to be costly. But if we aren't committed to it, we can't ask anyone else to be.

Many people may be involved in the process of finding a vision. They may all know about it. But how can you be sure that when they refer to 'our vision', they are all talking about the same thing? Having agreed on a vision, it is essential to 'capture' it. Most people will want to summarise the vision in words – a 'vision statement'. But there's no reason why you shouldn't also capture it in other ways.

Display or distribute a variety of vision statements. You can find examples on church or company websites. You could ask participants to contribute examples from clubs, schools and the workplace. Ask participants to grade the statements on a scale of one to five: 1 indicates unclear and uninspiring; 5 indicates clear and inspiring.

Summary: a good vision statement should be:

- Straightforward enough to be understood.
- Startling enough to be exciting.
- Specific enough to give direction.



Activity 2
20-35 MINS

Slide 73

CONNECT IT

The superstructure of the house is made of connection and communication. Without these nothing takes shape.

What's the use of an unused vision? It must be about more than vague aspirations. It should be connected to every aspect of the church's life. Vision needs outworking in the plans of the church or group. Plans are not about personal preferences but about implementing God's vision. They will never be perfect, but they do need to be detailed enough to clearly establish priorities.



SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

Section 3 – Making the Journey

‘Connecting’ is a two-way process. People need to see the leaders living out the vision. Leaders should help everyone see where they ‘fit in’ and to know that they are important parts of the whole (1 Corinthians 12). Ideally each person will know the answer to these three questions:

- **What is my role?** If a person can see that what they do helps fulfil God’s vision it will inspire them.
- **How do I fulfil it?** It is not enough to know what to do, for we also need to know how to do it. This is the place of training and equipping in the church.
- **What will help me keep going?** Fulfilling God’s vision is often demanding, so it helps to think through how we will help people keep going when it is tough. Evaluation, review, affirmation and encouragement all help.

Give an example of how an individual’s contribution can be part of a wider vision (see *Growing Leaders*, page 212).



Activity 3 35-45 MINS

Slides 74-75

COMMUNICATE IT

Communication is more than a one-off event.

- It’s an ongoing process – think ‘continuing story’ rather than ‘newsflash’.
- It is a complex process – different styles of communication appeal to different people.
- It is a costly process – it demands time and creativity.

Ask people for examples. Every employee of CPAS used to have on his or her desk a small plaque carrying the CPAS vision statement. Sainsbury’s staff see their company’s statement as a computer screensaver. Other organisations have used printed balloons, t-shirts and even cuddly toys to carry their message. Some of these approaches may seem childish. But all of them recognise the fact that, having discerned your vision, you need to put a lot of effort into communicating it.

Here are three stages in communicating vision:

- **Embody it** The best communication of all happens when leaders ‘live the vision’. That’s a big responsibility for us as leaders – but if we don’t practise what we preach, we’ll undermine everything we say. It’s not particularly inspiring when people who promote ‘servant leadership’ treat those who work with them like serfs.
- **One-to-one** Engage individuals with the vision. Talk it through with them. Ask them questions that help them to see how it might apply to their lives.
- **One-to-many** One leader believes in communicating the church’s vision at every service on at least two Sundays per month, focusing on various aspects of it and using a variety of creative presentation styles. This ‘vision sharing’ is an ongoing part of church life as the vision is stated, lived, reviewed, refined, restated, lived again. Leaders of small groups need to keep communicating the vision as well, reminding people of why they meet and where God is leading them. Why? Because ‘vision leaks’.

Do you already have a clear, ‘captured’ vision for your church? Display it for all to see and invite participants to brainstorm ideas on how to communicate this vision and to jot suggestions on Post-it notes that can be attached to the main statement. If you don’t have a vision statement, borrow one and do the same exercise.



SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

Section 3 – Making the Journey

Remind people to take every opportunity to communicate the vision of their group to help prevent 'vision leak'.

- Place it in notice sheets and other 'welcome' materials.
- Promote different aspects of it week by week.
- Refer to it regularly in talks, prayers and meetings.
- Keep asking for comments on the statement.



Activity 4 45-55 MINS

Slide 76

DO IT / CELEBRATE IT

You've got a vision. Hurrah! It is clear, connected and communicated. Great! Now you need to keep implementing it, and celebrate it when all goes well. It keeps it alive and relevant. Take every opportunity to celebrate, in whatever style comes most naturally. The gospel encourages joyful diversity within unity, not dull uniformity.

Why not include a 'surprise' celebration at this point? Without letting the participants know, invite a guest to join you at this stage of the day. Choose someone who has made a positive contribution to the life and vision of your church – perhaps an 'unsung' hero or heroine. The aim is to ask the participants to join you in honouring this person. Choose carefully – and make sure that your guest knows what's planned, so they know how to best make their contribution.

Inject a bit of humour – you don't want your guest to feel they've turned up at their own memorial service. Here are some ideas:

- Interview your guest to draw out aspects of his or her contribution. Invite participants to gather round and join you in prayers of thanks to God.
- Invite others to comment on this person's contribution.
- Prepare a video of your guest in his or her role – try to show the positive impact on others.
- Talk about how much you appreciate this person and all that he or she has done.
- Contact people who have been influenced by your guest. Ask them to write short thank-you notes. Read these aloud as part of your celebration.

Slides 77-78

Seems like a lot of effort for one short part of the day? Yes, it is. But we think it's worth it. Before you finish, remind participants that vision will also need to change. Two things influence change: evaluation of how things are going, and unexpected events (both positive and negative) that will require contingency planning.



Finally 55-60 MINS

Briefly summarise section 3 and ask for any questions.



Reflection 60-70 MINS

Slide 79
Handout 6

PERSONAL REFLECTION (10 MINUTES)

You have covered a lot of ground since the start of the day. Now give the participants some space to reflect on what God might be saying to them. Leave time to end in worship together. Distribute the handouts and encourage everyone to offer one another the gift of silence. Provide writing and sketching materials for those who want to use them.



SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

Section 3 – Making the Journey

Slide 80

- How do you feel about the priority of vision in your leadership roles?
- What are the next steps for discerning God's vision for your group or ministry?
- What will help/hinder you as you seek to implement God's vision in your area of responsibility?

Worship 70-80 MINS

Let's end the day as we began with the 'big picture'. Here are some suggestions.

- Use the same Bible reading as you did at the start of the day. Pause for reflection between each paragraph.
- Select some upbeat Christ-centred hymns and songs.
- The following liturgy comes from the Anglican province of the Indian Ocean:

Leader For a clearer vision of the work you have set before us and for a better understanding of your gospel,
All Lord, direct us.
Leader For a deeper commitment in your service and a greater love for all your children,
All Lord, direct us.
Leader For a fresh understanding of the task before us and for a sense of urgency in our proclamation,
All Lord, direct us.
Leader For a greater respect and acceptance among Christians of different traditions and for a common goal in evangelism,
All Lord, direct us.

- Use St Augustine's prayer:

Almighty God,
You have made us for yourself,
And our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you:
Pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself,
And bring us at last to your heavenly city
Where we shall see you face to face;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

- Read the poem 'Playground' by Adrian Plass. It can be found in the anthology *City of Gold* (Solway, 1997).
- Use some Bible verses focusing on God's vision for the Church.

Finally 80-90 MINS

Thank everyone for giving up their free time to take part. Ask participants to pass on your thanks to any who have helped make their attendance possible: spouses, childminders, dog-sitters and so on. Such people might appreciate a thank-you card from you...

Slide 81
Handout 7

Remind everyone about the next meeting. Give out the feedback forms.



SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

Before Next Time

Preparation

There are several things you will need to do before session 6.

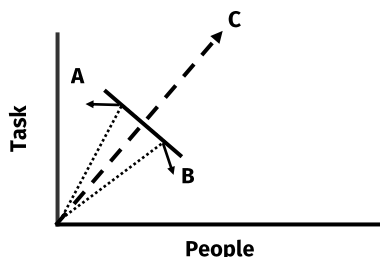
- As part of session 6 we ask participants prayerfully to identify someone within their area of responsibility whom they would like to see grow and develop as a leader. Alert people to this, and distribute the Project 4 handout before the session to help them come prepared.
- Encourage the church to keep praying for the course and its participants.
- Remind the mentors that their first session in Part 2 is a good time to review how the participant's personal life statement is going, and how they are getting on with spiritual disciplines.
- Don't forget to distribute the mentor bulletins for sessions 5-7 after each session to the mentors.
- Pray and prepare for session 6. Don't forget to watch the video introducing the session.



SESSION 5: DISCERNING DIRECTION

Additional Material – Making the Journey

Blake's Grid



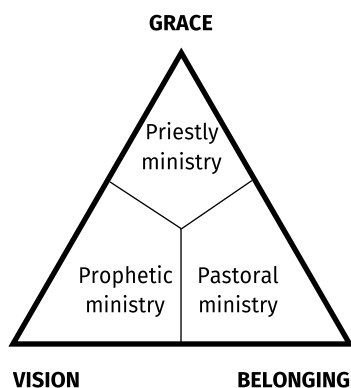
This page is for diagram fans. Organisations are made up of people. Organisations exist in order to achieve a purpose. And to achieve their purpose, they do things (tasks). Most organisations experience a tension between the demands of the task and the needs of the people involved. 'Blake's grid' illustrates this tension. The vertical axis represents 'task', the horizontal represents the 'human factor'. The bold diagonal bar in the middle represents the 'barrier' or 'sticking point' that organisations experience when they have to decide whether 'task' or 'people' should take priority. So...

- **Route A** indicates a task-focused approach: 'Never mind the people. We have a job to do – let's get on with it.'
- **Route B** shows a 'people first' way of doing things: 'The task will have to wait.'

We could label Route A as a 'business path'. Route B is more typical of churches or the 'voluntary sector'. All of which prompts the question, 'Does our concern for the wishes of "insiders" sometimes prevent us from fulfilling our call to reach and serve those on the outside?'

It's worth encouraging leaders to ask themselves which axis they lean towards. Neither 'task-orientation' nor 'people-orientation' is better. Both have strengths and dangers. The challenge is to find the 'happy medium'. Easier said than done. There's a Nobel Prize waiting for anyone who can devise an infallible way of balancing 'task' and 'people'.

Motivation



Three main factors motivate people to participate in the life of a church:

- **Grace** An experience of the reality of God's presence, mercy and love. This is linked to the priestly ministry of all believers, not just those who are ordained.
- **Vision** With vision, people know where they are and where they are going. Vision is the fruit of the prophetic ministry of the people whom God has called to this task. Again, God can call anyone to prophetic ministry.
- **Belonging** This pastoral aspect has two elements: relationship with others, and having a role to play in the life of the church.

We should pray that all three aspects will be represented on our leadership teams.

