

The Prophetic Futures Triangle: Understanding the Forces Shaping Tomorrow

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Introduction

Opening Scripture

Isaiah 43:18-19 (ESV)

"Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

Key Thought

God is eternal and sees the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). While we cannot predict the future with certainty, we can discern trends, opportunities, and challenges through the prophetic gift and prophetic ministry that help us steward our ministries wisely to realize our prophetic future.

Definition

The **Futures Triangle**, is used by secular futurists to create a framework that helps cultural leaders understand the three major forces shaping the future:

1. Pulls of the Future
2. Pushes of the Present
3. Weights of the Past

The future emerges where these three forces interact.

Part I: The Pulls of the Future

Definition

The "pulls" are compelling visions, hopes, dreams, and preferred futures that draw people forward.

Biblical Example

Abraham

- God gave Abraham a vision of a future nation.
- The promise pulled Abraham out of Ur.
- The vision shaped his present decisions.

Hebrews 11:10

"For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God."

Ministry Application

Christian leaders often lead through vision.

Examples:

- Church planting movements
- Community transformation initiatives
- Evangelistic campaigns
- Educational institutions
- Revival and awakening movements
- Marketplace – BAM (Business as Mission) projects

Discussion Questions

- What future is God calling our ministry to create?
- What vision is pulling us forward?
- What would success look like in ten years?

Leadership Principle

People are often more motivated by a compelling future than by present problems.

Part II: The Pushes of the Present**Definition**

Pushes are current trends and forces already moving society and culture toward a particular future.

Examples of Current Pushes**Cultural**

- Digital communication
- Artificial intelligence
- Social fragmentation (Covid19, inflation, political divides, etc.)
- Increased mobility

Religious

- Growing spiritual hunger in Gen Z and modern Christians in general

- Declining institutional trust
- Rise of online ministry
- Growth of global Christianity as movement

Economic

- Inflation
- Workforce shifts
- Generational transitions
- Economic uncertainty

Biblical Example

The Sons of Issachar

1 Chronicles 12:32 (ESV)

"Men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do."

The sons of Issachar understood the pushes of their day and knew how God's people should respond.

Ministry Reflection

Questions:

- What trends are shaping our community?
- What is changing around us?
- What opportunities are emerging?

Leadership Principle

Wise leaders do not ignore trends; they discern them through a Biblical worldview and respond accordingly.

Part III: The Weights of the Past

Definition

Weights are traditions, assumptions, structures, habits, and beliefs that resist change.

Positive Weights

- Biblical truth
- Christian doctrine
- Spiritual disciplines
- Healthy organizational culture

Negative Weights

- Fear of change
- Organizational bureaucracy
- Outdated ministry models
- Unhealthy traditions

Biblical Example

Israel in the Wilderness

The Israelites continually looked back to Egypt rather than embracing God's promised future.

Numbers 14:3-4

They desired to return to Egypt because the past felt safer than the future.

Leadership Reflection

Questions:

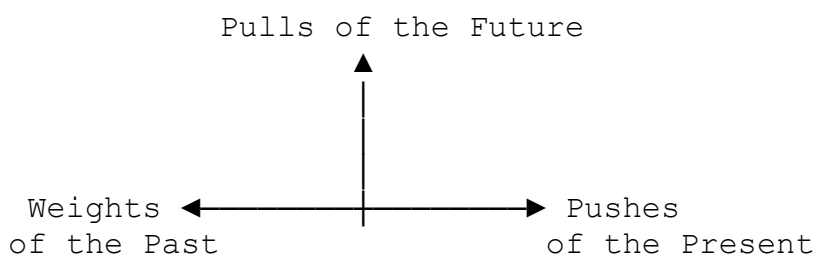
- What traditions should we preserve?
- What assumptions may be limiting us?
- What sacred cows need examination?

Leadership Principle

Not everything old is bad, but not everything old should remain unchanged. To unchain ones self from the past, one must reframe the founding narrative.

Integrating the Triangle

Visual Illustration



Key Insight

Every ministry future emerges from the interaction of:

- The vision that draws us forward

- The trends that push us forward
- The traditions that hold us back

Effective leaders understand all three forces.

Ministry/Marketplace Activation

Create Your Ministry Futures Triangle

Ask participants to identify:

Pulls of the Future

- What future has God called us toward?

Pushes of the Present

- What trends are helping or hindering us?

Weights of the Past

- What traditions, structures, or assumptions are resisting change?

Discussion

What would happen if:

- We strengthened the pull?
- Leveraged the pushes?
- Reduced unnecessary weights?

Conclusion

Ephesians 5:15-17 (ESV)

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time... therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Final Leadership Challenge

Christian leaders are not called merely to preserve the past or react to the present. We are called to discern God's preferred future and steward our ministries toward it.

The Futures Triangle helps us ask:

- What future is God calling us toward?

- What forces are shaping that future?
- What obstacles must be overcome?

When leaders answer those questions prayerfully, they become more effective stewards of God's mission in a rapidly changing world.