

F AR SIGHTED

REACHING PEOPLE
WHO ARE FAR FROM GOD

FOSTERING A CULTURE OF OUTREACH
IN OUR CHURCHES AND BIBLE STUDY GROUPS

One Hour Overview Conference Plan

Purpose: Provide an overview of the concepts and ideas found in *Farsighted*.

This conference is a one-hour overview of the book *Farsighted: Fostering a Culture of Outreach in Our Churches and Bible Study Groups*. The plan is designed to expose Bible study leaders and church leaders to the basic concepts and ideas presented in the book. Additional follow-up and deeper conversations are encouraged to be planned afterwards using the discussion questions provided with the support files (available as a free download from Lifeway.com/TrainingResources).

Plans created by Dwayne McCrary, author of *Farsighted*.

Prepare:

- Secure copies of *Farsighted: Fostering a Culture of Outreach in Our Churches and Bible Study Groups* by Dwayne McCrary, one for each participant (the book can be ordered at LifeWay.com/TrainingResources or you can download for free the PDF version.)
- Pray for yourself and for participants.
- Read *Farsighted*, using the book outline provided in the support files to take notes.
- Arrange room so participants are seated in semi-circle(s) facing a focal wall.
- Secure name tags for participants along with makers.
- Make copies of handouts and assignments for distribution
 - Farsighted Book Outline (see support files)
 - Group Assignments (see step 5)
 - Discussion Questions (see support files)
- Secure objects to be used during the conference including a Snellen eye chart, glasses, magnifying glass, binoculars, other items associated with seeing in the distance; protective glasses (see step 6).

Plan:

Arrival/Engage

1. Welcome participants, inviting everyone to make a name tag. Then allow them to test their eyesight using a Snellen chart and to examine objects that help us see (various glasses, binoculars, telescope, etc.) that you have placed on a display.
2. After most have arrived, distribute copies of *Farsighted* and copies of the book outline, one for each participant. Explain that the purpose of this conference is for participants to gain a general understanding of the contents found in *Farsighted* and to begin them on a journey of fostering a reaching culture. Emphasize that this conference is a starting point with more thought and discussion required afterwards.
3. Lead in prayer, asking that God will use this time to help participants better understand how we can build and foster a reaching culture, one that is farsighted.

Study

4. Call for volunteers to propose a percentage of people in their group who they believe have shared Jesus with someone in the past six months. Record responses on a large sheet of paper or on a board. Call attention to the research findings included in the last paragraph on page 4 of *Farsighted*. Lead the group to discuss if they believe those numbers changed post COVID and to explain their reasoning.

Summarize the section “A Context from History” (pp. 5-6, *Farsighted*), highlighting the two approaches that emerged in the 1920s. On a board, write “circle the wagons” and “an opportunity.” Explain that in these groups that saw the challenges as an opportunity, a culture of reaching was fostered. Emphasize that the culture may have been more important than what was done, pointing to the last paragraph on page 6 in *Farsighted*.

Direct the group to scan “Who Creates Culture,” “The Encouragement,” and “The Caution” (pages 7-9, *Farsighted*). As they do so, write “3 > 12 > 120” on a board. Challenge participants to consider the role they play in creating a reaching culture in their group and church. Emphasize that we are either fostering a reaching culture or working against it. Ask: *How do the things we have examined so far point to the need for us to give attention to fostering a culture of outreach to those who are far from God?*

5. Create three teams (for more intimate groups, a team can be an individual; if needed, more than one team can be created for each assignment, but it is best to create teams in multiples of three). Explain that each team will be assigned a chapter of *Farsighted* to review with an activity and report. Distribute the assignments, one per group.

Team 1. Scan Chapter 1, paying attention to the role prayer plays in setting a standard for others to follow. Develop a prayer that accounts for the five suggestions (see section headings) found in Chapter 1 and be prepared to share the prayer with the other teams.

Team 2: Scan Chapter 2, paying attention to ways each characteristic (see section headings) is related. Create a role play of a hallway conversation that reflects the characteristics identified in Chapter 2. Be prepared to present the role play to the other teams.

Team 3: Scan Chapter 3, paying attention to how each action suggested fosters a reaching culture. Propose an action to track (see “Track Actions that Move the Reaching Needle,” pp. 36-37 of *Farsighted*) that helps to foster a reaching culture. Be prepared to explain to the other teams how the proposed action to track relates to the other suggested actions found in Chapter 3.

After allowing time for the teams to work, call for a representative from each team to share with all participants. Clarify as needed, using content from *Farsighted* and your personal experience. Call for each team to share one key insight they gained from their assigned chapter. When Team 2 shares, highlight the section “People Far From God are Welcomed and Pursued” (pp. 22-24, *Farsighted*) to help the group understand why the author used the term “people far from God.”

6. Call attention to a set of protective glasses. Explain that we wear protective eyewear types of glasses when we anticipate some type of eye irritant when doing an activity. Note that we should anticipate obstructions when fostering a culture of reaching people far from God.

On a board, write the four potential obstructions included in *Farsighted* (section titles in Chapter 4: we tried that and it did not work here, settling for growth in attendance rather than conversions, functionally closed groups, and accepting the come and see narrative). Use content from each section to give a brief summary of each potential objection. Direct participants to select one of the objections and to work with a partner to develop a strategy for responding to the potential objection. Instruct them to review the appropriate section in Chapter 4 of *Farsighted* for insight and assistance. After allowing time for partners to work, call for a few volunteers to briefly share their responses.

Comment that other objections may arise, reminding us of the need to stay diligent in fostering a culture of reaching to those far from God.

Conclusion

7. Read Haggai 2:1-9, commenting that the writer of *Farsighted* saw four critical points in this passage: perspective, productive, presence, and prospectus. Direct the group to scan pages 50 through 52 in *Farsighted* to gain a deeper understanding of these four points.

Call attention to the last paragraph on page 52, emphasizing the choice identified. Challenge the participants to choose to foster a reaching culture in their groups and churches. Direct participants to write on the bottom of page 52 one action they need to take in the next week to foster to a greater degree a reaching culture. Also encourage them to write the name of at least one person they know who is far from God. Invite them to pray silently, asking God to help them and their church reach those who are far from God in their community beginning with the person they listed.

8. As participants adjourn, provide them with the discussion questions. Encourage them to read the book slowly and engage with each other in dialogue about what they are reading using the discussion questions as a guide. Suggest that they read a chapter a week and meet with two other people to discuss the content read that week.

(Note: If pastors or other church leaders are in the conference, point them to Lifeway.com/TrainingResources where they can secure copies of *Farsighted* to share with others as well as conference plans, the discussion questions, and a set of additional ideas for leading their church to become more farsighted).