

THE ROLE THAT MULTIMEDIA CAN PLAY
IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my wonderful wife, Barb. You fill my love tank just by being you!

ABSTRACT

As our world changes from a modern mindset, dominated by verbal and written communication, to a postmodern mindset, dominated by visual and multi-sensory communication, preaching is struggling to keep pace. Traditional preaching must be done at a high level to compete with television, the internet, movies and whatever electronic forms of communication might be just beyond the horizons of discovery and invention.

This project is an attempt to show that biblically-faithful, expository preaching can benefit from the technological revolution as we try to connect with postmodern people. The result of the project is a one-day workshop for experienced preachers. The content of the workshop included three parts. The first part was an overview of what the Bible says about the use of multimedia as we communicate the Gospel. The second part of the workshop was an overview of how multimedia can benefit the multiple generations that make up the majority of Christian churches. The final part of the workshop covered strategies for preparing expository sermons using both technological and non-technological multimedia.

In order to prepare the workshop, two primary areas were studied. The first was a survey of the Bible. The question was, "What does the Bible say about using multimedia to communicate the Gospel message?" A study was done of symbols, visual communication and imagery in both the Old and New Testaments. How biblical communicators like Paul, John and Mark communicated using new forms of media was also studied. Finally, a study was done of how good stewardship leads us to communicate using all legitimate forms of media.

The literature review included a study of how different generations learn. It also included the question of how multimedia can be used to communicate with recent generations. Can we communicate effectively to postmodern thinkers using traditional sermon forms? Research into the definition of postmodernism was done with a focus on communications. Tools like Data Video Projectors, computers, *PowerPoint* and other presentation software were studied. How can technology be used by preachers to exposit the Scriptures to modern and postmodern people?

This project showed that using multimedia in preaching reaches multiple generations. Using multimedia effectively helps all age groups retain concepts for a longer time. An experiment was done in which two sermons were preached. In one message extensive multimedia was used. In the other sermon no multimedia was used. The feedback gained from a group of listeners and from workshop attendees supported the idea that multimedia aids in preaching. However, personal experience also showed that relying on multimedia too much can be counterproductive.

CHAPTER ONE: IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

I sat in my office stunned. On the other side of the desk sat a church leader who had been instrumental in bringing me to the church three years earlier. I considered him a trusted friend and brother in Christ, and his opinion mattered. Hearing his dissatisfaction with my preaching was difficult. My ego was bruised, and I was worried that I might be failing to effectively preach the Word.

“It has become a distraction,” he said. This man had promised the congregation that I was an effective communicator when they voted to call me as their pastor. How could he now feel this way? What was so distracting that led him to threaten leaving the church? The answer was the use of multimedia in my sermons; he felt that I focused on the technology too much. This detracted from the content and he could not worship so long as it was used.

After hearing this respected church member’s concerns, which I knew represented more than just him and his family, I decided that I needed to do some reflection. I stopped using multimedia for a short period of time in an attempt to discover if he was right. I began asking questions of trusted church members. What I found was that some had not really thought about the issue. Others missed the multimedia presentations. One man told me that due to his hearing loss, the use of “pictures” helped him understand more of what was being said. An elderly lady simply said, “I like your show-and-tell.” Yet I knew that a handful of people did not like it at all.

When I heard diverging views on the use of multimedia in my preaching, I had questions that I wanted answered. What effect does using multimedia have on expository preaching? Does it enhance it, hinder it or is it neutral? Did some not like it in general, or was the way I was using it the problem? Could I learn to use it more skillfully and overcome their resistance? These questions inspired this research project.

The first part of this project is a “theological reflection” focused on the question, “What, if anything, does the Bible say about using multimedia in communicating the Word of God?” The Bible does not directly address the use of multimedia in preaching. But does it speak to the issue of using various media for communicating God’s message to His people? How were different kinds of media used to communicate God’s message in the Bible?

The written or spoken word was the predominant method for communicating in Scripture, but not the only one. The early stories of creation, the flood and Abraham’s life were oral until the time when Moses recorded them. The public preaching ministry of the prophets, Jesus and the disciples were later penned and are read more than heard today. But there are other media recorded in Scripture. As Keil and Delitzsch suggested, Job and Song of Solomon are examples of dramas.¹ James Blevins says that The Revelation of John is drama as well.² David is famous for writing songs, which are collected in the book of Psalms along with the songs of Asaph and others. Moses and Miriam sang after the miraculous redemption of Israel from Egypt, and in Mary’s Magnificat she sang praises to God after the birth of Jesus was announced. One of the most artistic and

¹ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: Ezra-Job*, vol. 4 (Omaha, Nebraska: Parsons Church Group, 2000). Electronic STEP files, The Book of Job Introduction, Section 5.

² James L. Blevins, *Revelation As Drama* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984). The author divides the book up into seven Acts and even has his New Testament Survey classes perform it each semester before an audience of Senior Adult guests.

moving forms of literature was poetry, and this is reflected in the way Isaiah's prophecies of the coming Messiah are transformed into music at Christmas and Easter every year all across Christendom.

Not only are there many creative forms of media in Scripture, but even the written and spoken messages were communicated in unique ways. Hosea was asked to communicate God's message about the apostasy of the Jews by marrying a harlot. Ezekiel, Daniel and John communicated by recounting their visions. Jesus spoke in parables. Paul wrote letters. Others wrote poems, narratives and wisdom proverbs, to name a few genres. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John adapted the Greek biography narrative to communicate in a new genre called Gospels.

The first part of this project focuses on what the Bible says about communicating the unchanging story of the Gospel using new and different media. First Corinthians 9 mentions the lengths Paul went to in order to share the Gospel with "all men."

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. (1 Corinthians 9:19-22 NASB)

Does this apply to using various forms of communication today? Does it give a theological justification for using every medium available today to communicate the unchanging message of grace to a multimedia-influenced culture? It seems that the communicators of God's message recorded in the Bible used every available medium in that day. Compared to modern technology, that might seem limited. But in the days of Moses, Mark and Paul, some of the media they used might have been just as unique and

unusual to their recipients as animated graphics generated by a Pentium 4 notebook computer running *Microsoft PowerPoint 2003* or *MediaShout 2.5* and projected onto a twelve-foot screen via an Epson Digital Video Projector.

The second part of the study is the “literature review.” Six issues are covered. The first relates to how postmodernism affects the way we communicate. Our world today is drastically different from that of the past. Research covered the issue of how postmodern people think and learn differently than moderns did. It starts with a definition of postmodernism. Then we look at how postmodern people think and learn differently than previous generations.

The second issue deals with visuals. Image has been the dominant form of learning and communication since the inception of TV in the 1950s. How does this affect the way we communicate most effectively today?

The third deals with the multiple generations that populate today’s church audiences. People in different generations learn differently. Resources that describe the different generations were studied. The generations include Builders, Baby Boomers, Baby Busters and Bridgers. Who are these people, and what are the best ways to communicate with them?

Multimedia can help us to communicate with people who have been influenced by both postmodernism and modernism. Strategies for using multimedia to communicate with these diverse groups are discussed. This makes up the fourth segment of chapter two.

The fifth section deals with technique. Multimedia has to be done right in order for it to be effective, regardless of who is in the audience.

Those who use multimedia in worship and preaching sometimes fail, not because they use it, but because of how they use it. Therefore, the literature review also focuses on the effective use of multimedia. The question is, “How does one effectively use these new forms of technology to communicate the message?”

Another issue is technology. The equipment used is as important as the technique. This section of the chapter deals with what technology is needed.

Finally, non-technical multimedia is addressed. One can present multiple media signals without using computers, projectors or video playing equipment. Simple object lessons are often the most powerful communication signals.

A third part of the project tests the effectiveness of multimedia in preaching. Two sermons were preached. One sermon included multimedia and another did not. Members of my congregation were interviewed to find out which format was the most effective.

The congregation where the tests were done is Long Creek Memorial Baptist Church in Dallas, North Carolina. Since September 2000 I have served as pastor of this church. This historic and traditional church was officially founded in 1772 by German immigrants. They were meeting with a group of Lutherans and worshiping together for many years in a brush arbor. But they longed for their own Baptist congregation and amicably split from the group to found Long Creek Baptist Church.

In the early twentieth century the name Memorial was added to show their connection with the Town of Dallas’s very large cemetery that makes up the church’s front and side yards. In the thirties, forties and early fifties the church grew to almost a thousand members with nearly four hundred in attendance under the leadership of Dr. Judson L. Vipperman, or “Doc Vip” as he is called. He was a charismatic leader who was

pastor for nearly thirty years. During his tenure the church added a large educational building, a fellowship building and a parsonage. After his retirement in the early fifties, the church maintained its membership until it split in the early seventies over the firing of a controversial pastor who allegedly was making sexual advances toward some of the ladies. The church grew older and the young people of the church moved away. It was predominantly a senior adult church in September 2000. Now the fastest growing segment of the church is young couples with small children, due in large part to one particular Sunday school teacher and a new outreach visitation program. During that same time the church called a Minister of Music who introduced some contemporary music to achieve a blended style of worship.

The end product of this study is a workshop that covers the issues discussed in chapters two and three. It is intended for pastors with preaching training and experience.

Note that any Scripture reference labeled “HCSB” is from the Holman Christian Standard Bible, a new translation from Holman Bible Publishers.

DEFINITIONS

Some important terms need to be defined. The first is **technology**. For the purpose of this paper, technology is any electronic tool used to communicate. Examples include computers, video projectors, large television displays, DVD or Video Tape players, and digital still cameras or video cameras.

Another term used is **multimedia**. A medium is “a means of effecting or conveying something.”³ Therefore multimedia uses many different means. The spoken

³ *Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary*, July 2003, Merriam Webster Incorporated, <<http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary>> accessed 30 July 2003.

word is one medium, and computer-generated graphics or video are others. When these or any other means are used together to present a message, we call this multimedia.

A **presentation** refers to a collection of images, animations, video or text shown to an audience in order to assist in communicating ideas. These graphics include words, pictures and animated images. The most popular tool for this is a computer running either *Microsoft PowerPoint* or *Corel Presentations* software. But it might also include a collection of transparencies placed on an overhead projector or even a film strip. One presentation is used to help communicate one message or sermon.

Video is a medium that will include portions of a movie, television programs or images captured with a video camera. These are played either on a Video Cassette Player or a DVD player. There are also computer video files that can be played within a presentation or by themselves using special software.

Audio can include a song played from any audio player, including a cassette, compact disc or a computer file. One might also use live performance. When used with some other medium it becomes multimedia.

Graphics are images that help convey the idea presented.

CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two deals with the question, “How does Scripture inform the use of multimedia in worship?” Or, “Does the Bible directly speak to the issue of using multimedia in worship and preaching?” Stated this way, the answer is obviously no. One cannot find the word *multimedia* in the Bible. In Scripture Media is a place east of Palestine rather than a form of communication. Nowhere in the Bible is this topic addressed directly. Therefore, one must search for the principles in Scripture that apply.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF COMMUNICATING BIBLICALLY

Worship leaders must not take lightly God’s will for how we approach Him.

David learned this lesson the hard way in 2 Samuel 6. Verses 6-7 say,

When they came to Nacon's threshing floor, Uzzah reached out to the ark of God and took hold of it, because the oxen had stumbled. Then the LORD’s anger burned against Uzzah, and God struck him dead on the spot for his irreverence, and he died there next to the ark of God. (2 Samuel 6:6-7 HCSB)

Uzzah’s death illustrates that one should take God’s commands seriously, especially as they relate to the ark. The ark represented God’s presence among His people.

Worship is God’s people coming before the presence of God. It is unlikely God will use the same extreme means of educating His people today that He used with David, Uzzah and the people of Israel. Nevertheless, churches should take care to preserve the sanctity of worship. We have a responsibility to lead people to God’s presence in ways that do not violate God’s wishes.

Innovations worship leaders use must pass a test. Are they in accordance with God's will and His Word? Discussing David's failure to adhere to the law of God, Jack Hayford wrote, "Barren, childless, fruitless, and unproductive are all adjectives that describe ... worship that's neither pleasing to God nor obedient to His word."⁴ If possible, we must discern God's will regarding the use of multimedia in worship and preaching.

Communicating God's Word is a tremendous responsibility. James expressed this when he wrote, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment" (James 3:1 NASB). Knowing that we are accountable for what we teach, we must be careful with anything that could potentially impair the teaching and preaching of God's Word. Jesus said, "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes" (Matthew 18:6 NASB). Innovations in communications must not become stumbling blocks to clear communication. Good communication of the message of God's Word should always be a top priority.

The Bible does not speak directly to the issue of using multimedia. But there is a higher principle. It is this: What does the Bible say about the use of new forms of communication? Is it acceptable to introduce new forms of communication into worship and preaching?

OLD TESTAMENT SYMBOLS THAT PREACH

The Bible is filled with images that communicate the truths of Scripture. From the beginning, in Genesis 2, God used a tree to communicate the restrictions of obedience.

⁴ Michael D. Warden, ed., *Experience God in Worship* (Loveland, Colo.: Group Publishing, 2000), 141.

The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” (Genesis 2:16-17 NASB)

Eating fruit was not the sin. God set a clear boundary. Adam and Eve decided to disobey God, and they were punished. From the very beginning God communicated that we are to submit to His rules even if they seem arbitrary to our limited understanding. He communicated using not only words but the symbol of a forbidden tree. Eating the fruit represented disobedience to God’s word. God used a visual symbol to teach Adam a lesson in obedience.

When God returned to the garden they were afraid, because they had given in to Satan’s temptations to violate the rules God set forth. Genesis 3:8 says they “hid themselves” due to their shame. Knowing they would violate this boundary, God planned to offer grace. The redemption story of Scripture began with that event. God’s story of grace started with Him delaying His promise of death if they violated His commandment. Instead He threw them out of the garden. This first lesson of grace was taught using symbols and words. God used multimedia to communicate with Adam and Eve.

In Genesis 15, God communicated the concept of His covenant with Abraham using symbols. God told Abraham he would have numerous offspring despite his being childless at that time. Verses 5-6 say, “And He took him outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be’” (NASB). God used the image of the stars in the sky to show Abraham what He was going to do for him in the covenant. Abraham believed and was called “righteous.” God could have said, “I will make the number of your offspring vast.” But showing Abraham the stars as He told him solidified God’s message

in Abraham's mind in a way that words alone would not have done. This was a faith-building experience for Abraham.

God told Abraham that He would give him the land of Palestine as well. In verse 8, Abraham questioned God. "O Lord God, how may I know that I will possess it?" God used another symbol to show him. He told Abraham to get a year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtle dove and a young pigeon. He then instructed Abraham to cut the animals in two and place them on either side of a path. Vultures tried to eat the flesh, but Abraham chased them away. That night Abraham was gripped with "terror." And then it happened.

It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Gergashite and the Jebusite." (Genesis 15:17-21 NASB)

This was a Middle Eastern custom performed when a covenant was made between two parties. The origin of the Hebrew word for covenant is "cutting." This cutting was done to symbolize what would happen if one of the two parties violated the agreement. They both would walk through the pathway as if to say, "May what happened to these animals happen to us if this agreement is broken." The torch represented God going through the pathway between the carcasses. God was committing to take the punishment if the covenant was broken.⁵ Jesus took that punishment by dying on the cross. So, yet again, God used a symbol to communicate His truth about the covenant. It was also a prophetic lesson of what would happen to Jesus.

⁵ *That the World May Know*, directed by Ray Vanderlaan, Focus on the Family Video, 1999, videocassette.

In Exodus we are given the exacting description of the tabernacle and its furniture. This is another image that teaches a lesson; it is God communicating the Gospel in pictures rather than words. J. Vernon McGree wrote, “These articles of furniture pictured the person and work of Christ in redemption, but no article was a picture or image of Him.”⁶ God was using a picture to communicate His redemption through Christ. McGee said that God was so exacting in His instruction of how to make these symbols because He wanted man to recognize that only God could fulfill the need for redemption. These elaborate plans and how they represent the work of Christ could not have been created by man. They had to be from the mind of God.⁷

Much of the book of Hebrews argues the point that the Old Testament sacrificial system and worship are symbols of Christ and His redemption.

Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron’s rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail. Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship, but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing, *which is a symbol for the present time.* (italics mine) Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation. But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and

⁶ J. Vernon McGree, *The Tabernacle: God’s Portrait of Christ* (Pasadena, Calif.: Thru the Bible Books, 1980), 31.

⁷ Ibid, 20.

calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. (Hebrews 9:1-12 NASB)

Hebrews 10:1 says that the Old Testament law was a “shadow of the good things to come,” meaning it was a glimpse of what finally took place in Jesus’ death and resurrection. Therefore, God’s tabernacle instructions are an elaborate prophecy of the redemption that Christ brought, communicated in a non-technological form of multimedia.

C. W. Slemming argues that the five sacrifices and the eight festivals in the Torah are a symbolic representation of the message of Jesus.

The offerings, with one exception, were sacrificial and required the shedding of blood. This was because they were figurative of the one sacrifice which was to be made once in the end of the age in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The feasts were not sacrificial but ceremonial. They revealed the present and future conduct of the people because they were, or would be, the people of God. ... the offerings reveal man’s walk *to* God through sacrifice, and the feasts declare man’s walk *with* God through separation.⁸

One of the symbolic acts in the burnt offering was the way the priest would lay his hands on the head of the animal to be offered. Leviticus 1:4 says, “He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering so it can be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.” This was done in many of the offerings.⁹ According to Mark Rooker in his commentary on Leviticus, “The act symbolized the transfer of sins from the worshiper to the animal. The sense would be that the animal is dying in the worshiper’s stead, or that it is subject to the death penalty because of the sins it has now received.”¹⁰

⁸ C. W. Slemming, *Thus Shalt Thou Serve* (Fort Washington, Pa.: Christian Literature Crusade, 1983), 9.

⁹ See Lev. 3:2, 8 13; 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33.

¹⁰ Mark Rooker, *The New American Commentary: Leviticus* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000), 87. Rooker also said that the laying on of hands was symbolic of confession of sins. This was the worshiper, by faith, trusting God to forgive and cleanse him because of his act of offering.

Martha Zimmeran, in her book *Celebrate the Feasts*, discussed how the feasts help us fulfill the commandment of Deuteronomy 6:1-9:

“This is the command—the statutes and ordinances—the Lord your God has instructed [me]to teach you, so that you may follow [them] in the land you are about to enter and possess. [Do this] so that you may fear the Lord your God all the days of your life by keeping all His statutes and commands I am giving you, your son, and your grandson, and so that you may have a long life. Listen, Israel, and be careful to follow [them], so that you may prosper and multiply greatly, because the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you a land flowing with milk and honey.

“Listen, Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:1-9 HCSB)

In order to teach their children the love of God, the families of Israel used the feasts that God commanded them to celebrate. Zimmerman’s plea was for modern Jewish families to celebrate these feasts in order to create a sense of “familiarity” with the teachings of the Old Testament as they relate to Jesus. She wrote, “The word ‘teach’ in the Deuteronomy passage means to repeat and re-repeat the instructions.” This gives children fluency with these teachings. Familiarity leads to a feeling of delight, like seeing a “picture of a place you have visited” in a slide show of a friend’s vacation.¹¹

The most powerful Old Testament symbol of God’s redemption of Israel and later of Jesus’ redemption of His church is the Passover. More will be discussed regarding the symbolism of the Passover Seder beginning on page 22.

Other feasts teach powerful lessons via symbols. The Israelite feast most often celebrated was the weekly Sabbath. It is a time to reflect on God as creator. It is taken from the creation account where God created the world in six days but on the seventh day

¹¹ Martha Zimmeran, *Celebrate the Feasts* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1981), 17.

He rested. Leviticus 23 gives us instruction for celebrating the feasts, and Sabbath is number one on the list.

In chapter 24 God gave Moses the specific instruction regarding the perpetual burning of oil and placing bread on the table of showbread. Verse 7 says, “Place pure frankincense near each row, so that it may serve as a memorial portion for the bread and a fire offering to the Lord” (HCSB). The connection is not explicit, but it’s hard to miss for a Christian believer. Jesus said, “I am the bread” when he gave the Lord’s Supper. And one of the gifts of the Magi was frankincense. These symbols were part of the weekly celebration of the Sabbath. When Christ was resurrected, the connection between this gift of the Magi to this event may well have been obvious to Jesus’ disciples.

Another significant celebration was the first fruits of harvest brought to God. Here are the commands for its celebration.

The Lord spoke to Moses: “Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When you enter the land I am giving you and reap its harvest, you are to bring the first sheaf of your harvest to the priest. He will wave the sheaf before the Lord so that you may be accepted; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath. On the day you wave the sheaf, you are to offer a year-old male lamb without blemish as a burnt offering to the Lord. Its grain offering is to be four quarts of fine flour mixed with oil as a fire offering to the Lord, a pleasing aroma, and its drink offering will be one quart of wine. You must not eat bread, roasted grain, or [any] new grain until this very day, and you have brought the offering of your God. This is to be a permanent statute throughout your generations wherever you live.” (Leviticus 23:9-14 HCSB)

The act of bringing first fruits symbolized a few things. First it was the people of Israel saying they trusted God by giving Him the first part of their harvest. If a natural disaster had occurred that destroyed the rest of the crops, they would be without. To bring this offering was to show trust in God’s providence.

The timing of the first fruits celebration and offering teaches us something of Christ. This took place on the first day after the Sabbath after Passover. That is the day Jesus arose from the dead. Paul made the connection when he wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:20, “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20 HCSB). Along with the Sabbath bread and the Passover meal, the first fruit was an archetype of Christ.¹² It also instilled in Israel a trust in their God. By giving their first fruits to God, they were saying, “We trust You, Lord. We know that we could give You this first portion of our harvest and weather or some other disaster could destroy everything we have. But we will still give it to You as a symbol of our trust in You.”

The feast of booths or the feast of tabernacles is another festival that used symbolism to teach the nation of Israel. It was instituted when the people of Israel left Egypt and made a stop at a place called Succoth. While living in the wilderness, the Israelites had to build temporary houses or booths to live in. That is the reason God gave for celebrating this feast. He said, “You are to live in booths for seven days. All the native-born of Israel must live in booths, so that your generations may know that I made the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 23:42-43 HCSB).

In the New Testament Jesus connected this celebration to Himself.

In the midst of the feast “Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach” (John 7:14). ... The theme of his teaching related directly to the festival. “Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, “From His innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.”’” A special feature of this particular worship service was the sending of a priest to the Pool of Siloam with a golden pitcher to draw water which was poured into a bowl at the

¹² Ibid, 96-98.

altar. With the approach of the rainy season, Israel depended on God to send rain for the next season's crops. This was a time of serious praying, asking God to open the gates of heaven and send the necessary rain. As the priest poured out the water, he visually demonstrated God's continuing and faithful love in sending rain. Like so many other traditions, it carried another deeper spiritual meaning. This was a demonstration or sign of Israel's hope for the coming of Messiah as they looked forward to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which God had promised.¹³

These are a few of the examples of symbolism used to teach Israel. The sacrifices and feasts taught Israel about their God in that time and served as a prophetic foreshadowing of Jesus. They taught Israel that God was their redeemer, sustainer and King. They also prepared them for the coming of a Christ who would fulfill those same truths spiritually.

Like the symbols described above, the writers of Psalms and Proverbs also used symbols in communicating truths.

Psalm 23 is a well-known example of a picturesque song.

The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil:
for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever (Psalm 23, KJV).

The primary image is that of a shepherd with his sheep. Our shepherd God protects and cares for our every need, and this is communicated through this image. One

¹³ Ibid, 158.

can see a shepherd with his flock as he leads them out into a meadow, with tall grass flowing in the wind. The sheep rest in serenity, knowing their shepherd is nearby. He then guides them to a pond that is calm and looks like glass; they stand at the edge drinking. They have no fear because their shepherd is near bearing his staff. They are the picture of trust. This continues even as they leave the peace and quiet of the meadow and enter the danger of a narrow gorge where they could easily become food for some carnivore seeking a meal of lamb chops.

In verse 5 the image shifts from that of a shepherd with his sheep to a feast. The author may have imagined himself sitting at a table, with his enemies all around. He was confident in the Lord and knew he could just sit and enjoy the feast without fear of the enemy attacking. If they did, the Lord would protect him so that he can simply enjoy the meal. And not only was he enjoying the meal, but he was being treated with special care as his cup was running over with abundance and he was being anointed like a king. The enemy saw it and envied the large, sumptuous feast the Lord bestowed upon the guest.

The picture communicates quiet trust and reward. This “goodness and mercy” will be with him forever. And he will “dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” The final image then is of a home where God prepared a room for His guest of honor.

In almost every Psalm there is some kind of image. Poetry usually speaks with images rather than general principles. The poets who wrote the Psalms communicated in beautiful or sometimes disturbing images. Look at Psalm 58.

Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth:
break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.
Let them melt away as waters which run continually:
when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces.
As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away:
like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun.

Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath.
The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance:
he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.
So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous:
verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth. (Psalm 58:6-11 KJV)

This is an example of what is called an “imprecatory Psalm,” the purpose of which is to call for God’s judgment. Walter Kaiser says that it is “an invocation of judgment, calamity, or curse uttered against one’s enemies who in... special cases are also simultaneously the enemies of God.”¹⁴ So these symbols are used as a catharsis for the author and reader as they call for God’s judgment on a common enemy.

One might assume that the author is calling for God to club the enemies in the mouth. However, this symbol is of the young lions as they are eating away at their prey and their teeth are broken on the bones, causing them to give up their attempt to devour their prey.¹⁵ Using this image the author helps his audience identify with the animal’s prey, which is something a nation like Israel could certainly appreciate. This is but one of the multiple images in this Psalm.

The images of Psalm 23 have the opposite effect of the images of Psalm 58. The first Psalm has a calming effect meant to help us trust the Lord. The second uses images to bring about a catharsis. Both powerfully communicate their messages—one of trust in the Lord and the other a plea for the justice of the Lord.

In Proverbs the authors use images to describe wisdom. One example is in Proverbs 3 where the value of wisdom is compared to expensive jewels and personified as a woman.

¹⁴ Richard J. Vincent (November 27, 1997) *The Imprecatory Psalms* Retrieved December 12, 2003 from <http://www.theocentric.com/originalarticles/imprecatory.html>

¹⁵ Ibid.

For her profit is better than the profit of silver
And her gain better than fine gold.
She is more precious than jewels;
And nothing you desire compares with her.
Long life is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honor.
Her ways are pleasant ways
And all her paths are peace.
She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
And happy are all who hold her fast. (Proverbs 3:14-18 NASB)

The image of jewels, gold and silver, shows the value of wisdom. It is also compared to a woman who is holding long life, riches and honor. Finally she is called a tree of life. These are all descriptive, concrete images used to explain an intangible quality like wisdom.

The prophets communicate using symbols and images too. An example of this is the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2. When the king had a disturbing dream and no one could interpret it, he planned to kill the wise men of Babylon. But Daniel prayed for God to spare them by giving him the interpretation of the dream. God gave Daniel the dream described in Daniel 2:31-35.

“You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing-floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. (Daniel 2:31-35 NIV)

Then Daniel explained the dream. He told Nebuchadnezzar that the head represented the king because God gave Nebuchadnezzar dominion (Daniel 2:38).

Another kingdom will rise up but will not be as mighty as Babylon. A third kingdom,

represented by the bronze, will rule the entire earth. A fourth kingdom, which is represented by the iron, will rise up, destroying everything before it. He further explained that this fourth kingdom will be both iron and clay, meaning it is both strong and vulnerable.

The most important point of the dream comes in verse 44. It says, “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure for ever.” This is referring to the Kingdom of God, which was established through Jesus the Messiah.

The image in the king’s dream communicated so powerfully that Nebuchadnezzar was dramatically inspired. Evidence of this change came at the end of chapter 2.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honour and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. The king said to Daniel, “Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.” Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. Moreover, at Daniel’s request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court. (Daniel 2:46-49 NIV)

Nebuchadnezzar reacted, not only to the vision, but to the miraculous way in which it was interpreted.

The use of images can be a powerful tool of communication. Nebuchadnezzar’s vision is one example in the prophetic literature. Every book from Isaiah to Malachi uses symbols and images to communicate God’s message. Many of them are similes or metaphors used to describe God or His relationship with Israel. Ezekiel is an example of God using the prophet himself as a symbol.

In Ezekiel 12 God wanted to warn the “rebellious” people of Israel of their impending exile.

Therefore, son of man, pack your belongings for exile and in the daytime, as they watch, set out and go from where you are to another place. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious house. During the daytime, while they watch, bring out your belongings packed for exile. Then in the evening, while they are watching, go out like those who go into exile. While they watch, dig through the wall and take your belongings out through it. Put them on your shoulder as they are watching and carry them out at dusk. Cover your face so that you cannot see the land, for *I have made you a sign* (italics mine) to the house of Israel. (Ezekiel 12:3-6 NIV)

God made him a sign. He was a living object lesson to Israel that they would be punished for their rebellion.

In Amos 8 God used a basket of fruit to illustrate his feelings for Israel.

This is what the Sovereign LORD showed me: a basket of ripe fruit. “What do you see, Amos?” he asked.

“A basket of ripe fruit,” I answered.

Then the LORD said to me, “The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. In that day,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “the songs in the temple will turn to wailing. Many, many bodies—flung everywhere! Silence!” (Amos 8:1-3 NIV)

God used many more symbols and images as He communicated to the nation of Israel through the prophets.

THE WITNESS OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD’S SUPPER

In the New Testament we can see how God used symbols to communicate with his people. Christ communicated the Gospel through the Lord’s Supper and baptism.

In John’s account of the Last Supper, Jesus followed the typical Passover meal or Seder. There is a point, during the meal, when those at the table wash their hands as a symbol of becoming pure before the Lord. At this point, Jesus got up from the table and washed the disciples’ feet in a symbolic act teaching the disciples a lesson.

So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.” (John 13:12-15 NASB)

He did not finish with that. He continued to teach using the Passover Seder. There is another point in the Seder when three loaves of unleavened bread are used. According to Zimmerman they have a new meaning today.

The three loaves of unleavened bread united by the one napkin represent the Trinity. Rabbis give three names to the loaves, starting with the top: Kohanites, Levites, and Israelites. Either explanation makes the middle loaf the type of Christ, who is our High Priest, since the priests come from the family of Levi.¹⁶

It was possibly this middle loaf that Jesus broke and said, “This is my body.”¹⁷

After this bread, no more food is eaten. Another cup is blessed. This is called “grace” and is the cup Jesus called His blood.¹⁸ As Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 11:24, this represented a transition from the Old Testament covenant, instituted with Abraham and confirmed in the Exodus, to the New Testament covenant, instituted with Jesus’ death and resurrection. And in verse 26 Paul said, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you *proclaim the Lord's death* (italics mine) until He comes” (NASB). The Lord’s Supper itself is preaching the Gospel to the church and is another example of multiple forms of media (both words and symbols) to communicate the message of God.

Baptism is another way of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is “the immersion or dipping of a believer in water symbolizing the complete renewal and change in a believer’s life and testifying to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus

¹⁶ Zimmerman, 64.

¹⁷ Richard Freeman, *Jesus in the Passover*, Presentation of Passover Seder presented at Long Creek Memorial Baptist Church, 25 August 2002.

¹⁸ Zimmerman, 67.

Christ as the way of salvation.”¹⁹ John the Baptist saw it as a bath to cleanse our sins. But when Jesus was baptized that changed. He had no sin. John wanted Jesus to baptize him, but that was not part of Jesus’ plan. Baptism became a symbolic proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Like the Lord’s Supper, baptism is a proclamation of the Gospel in nonverbal form. The ordinances or sacraments preach Jesus’ death, resurrection and grace to those who participate in them and witness them. The church has been using multimedia since Jesus commanded it.

JESUS’ PARABLES

As little children we were taught the parables of Jesus. They stood out from the other teachings of Jesus and the rest of the New Testament because they vividly communicated profound truths that even children could comprehend. These object lessons still teach us. We learn not only what the kingdom of God is like, but also how to communicate.

One definition of a parable is “a word-picture which uses an image or story to illustrate a truth or lesson.”²⁰

One parable that many children learn early on due to the song that teaches it is the Parable of the Two Foundations from Matthew 7. Many will remember singing, “The wise man built his house upon a rock ...”

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the

¹⁹ Johnnie Goodwin, “Baptism,” *The Holman Bible Dictionary* Trent C. Butler, ed. (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 149.

²⁰ Don Schwager (July 2001) [what is this date?] *The Parables of Jesus* retrieved December 16, 2003 from <http://www.rc.net/wcc/parable1.htm>.

streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law. (Matthew 7:24-29 NIV)

Jesus contrasted the two foundations of life. If we will hear His words and obey, we are like a man with a strong foundation. If we fail to obey, we have no real foundation at all. Stability comes from living according to Jesus' teachings, and disaster comes from neglecting them. Because the image is vivid, the results are clear; one can picture it. Anyone who has seen a house being swept away by a river, which broke its banks during a terrible flood, can picture Jesus' image.

The Parable of the Two Foundations is one of more than 40 parables that Jesus used to compare common things to spiritual truths. Jesus spoke using these parables because "The familiar lights up the profound; the profound is remembered through the familiar."²¹

MARK: CREATOR OF A NEW MEDIUM

The author of the Gospel of Mark was perhaps one of the first innovators of the church. He created a new medium to communicate the message of Jesus Christ. Most New Testament scholars agree that he was the earliest Gospel writer. Matthew and Luke borrowed from him to write their Gospels. John wrote as a "maverick" using some other sources.²² In Mark's time there were many forms of literature used to relate the events of a person's life. What we call a biography was in Mark's day called "βίοι ('lives'),

²¹ Robert L. Thomas, "The Parables Jesus Told," *The Open Bible* (Nashville: Nelson, 1979), 1246. This article is part of the New Testament study aids for Thomas Nelson's edition of the New American Standard Bible.

²² Robert Kysar, *John the Maverick Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976).

πραξεις (‘acts’), or απομνημονευματα (‘memoirs’).”²³ But these forms of biography were different from what Mark called a “Gospel.” Mark does not give an historical account of Jesus’ life, background and family origins. He is making a theological and spiritual statement about the message of Jesus.²⁴

Mark and the other Gospels represent a unique combination of the deeds and teachings of a great person, a combination that is not even paralleled in the later apocryphal gospels. It is probably correct, therefore, to claim that Mark created a new type of literature.²⁵

In writing his Gospel, Mark was taking the message of Jesus and communicating it in a new way. His day was dominated by spoken tradition; common people shared their stories not in print but in conversation. We have the ancient Greek writings of Mark’s day to prove the fact they had written literature, but those writings were written for an elite and literate audience. None of those genres have the same form as the Gospels. Gospels are similar to first-century biography; they are written by an author with a personal relationship with Christ, or in Luke’s case based on eyewitness testimony of those who knew Christ.²⁶ They were written not just to inform, but to influence people to enter into the same relationship. The Gospel writers were preachers putting their message in written form. This made Mark’s Gospel a unique medium.

Does this creation of a new genre by Mark justify using new technology to proclaim the same message? Nancy S. Taylor, in a sermon preached at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, made the connection between Mark’s innovation and the

²³ Walter W. Wessel, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Mark*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992) <electronic version “Mark: Introduction” section 6, “Literary Form.”>

²⁴ Daniel Harrington, S. J., *How to Read the Gospels* (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 1996), 9.

²⁵ James A. Brooks, *The New American Commentary: Mark*, vol. 23 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 25.

²⁶ Nancy S. Taylor (March 2, 2001) “Communicating the Gospel in the 21st Century” *The United Church of Christ Massachusetts Conference Web Site* Retrieved from <http://www.macucc.org/communications/nstsermon.pdf> on August 4, 2003.

innovations of technology used by preachers today.²⁷ She argues that preachers, like Mark, must communicate in a form that speaks to the audience. A common, Greek-speaking culture needed a Greek message; they would not understand the elite forms of the literature of the day. A new form was necessary, which is true of our multimedia culture.

Taylor said,

In the last twenty years, preachers have been experimenting with a wide variety of ways to tell the story. This is in part because the ways of communication have changed—people are now conditioned by sound bites on radio and television; they are used to films with brief visual segments, newspapers with catchy headlines and punchy stories. Electronic messages too have changed the way we receive and digest information. But preachers have also recognized that new and varied ways of communication are needed because we know now that people hear and learn in different ways—not just through reasoned argument, but also by the engagement of their imagination, by hearing stories, by seeing pictures, by the touching of their emotions.²⁸

Because we digest information using many methods, it is natural for the church to use multimedia to communicate the most important truth as Mark did.

PAUL’S MODEL OF EVANGELISM USING ALL MEANS

William Barclay called Paul “the master missionary who won more men for Christ than any other man.”²⁹ It is understandable that preachers would look to Paul as an example for communicating the Gospel. What was it that made him so successful? How was he able to reach so many people in so many different locations around the

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Brooks, 25. Brooks discusses the connection between Mark and first century “lives, acts, memoirs, and tragedies...” These are just a few of the kinds of biographical writings that were present in that day. None of them, Brooks says, are the same as the Gospels.

²⁹ Quoted by Delos Miles, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1983), 89.

Mediterranean region? The answer lies in his attitude toward accommodating people in order to gain a hearing. He said,

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may *by all means* (italics mine) save some. (1 Corinthians 9:19-22 NASB)

The key phrase there is “by all means.” Does this support using any method to communicate God’s Word? Would it be acceptable for us to hire a group of blonde models dressed in bikinis wearing clapboard signs proclaiming, “Jesus is the only way”? Not too many ministers would agree with this methodology because it violates common decency and would lead men to lust, which is a clear violation of Scripture. For that reason we must decide what Paul meant by “all means.”

In Paul’s missionary efforts we see him using multiple means to preach. One example of this is seen early in his ministry. Paul and Barnabas were commissioned by the church in Antioch, and they set sail for Cyprus. Acts 13:5 says, “They proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues” (NIV). It then says they traveled the whole island, probably preaching the Gospel. When they arrived in Paphos, Acts says they were summoned by the proconsul, who was curious about the faith. However, a sorcerer named Elymas opposed them (Acts 13:8), and we find Paul proclaiming the truth in a confrontation, possibly with the proconsul as the audience. Paul told the sorcerer he would be blinded and he was. Verse 12 says, “When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.” So Paul used this miraculous event and teaching to proclaim the Gospel. The result was the proconsul’s

salvation. Paul proclaimed the Gospel by preaching in synagogues, in one-to-one situations, and here in a confrontation with the sorcerer.

After the account of the Cyprian proconsul's confession of faith in Acts 13, Paul proclaimed the Gospel in a synagogue in Pisidian Antioch. This was a traditional worship setting, but we still see the accommodating nature of Paul as he speaks to both the Jews and the Gentile converts. Paul was invited by the synagogue leaders to speak after they read the Scriptures. He began his sermon in verse 16 by addressing the "men of Israel and you Gentiles who worship God." He was sensitive to both groups. His message was a recitation of the history of Israel focusing on David. He then told them Jesus was the Messiah and more important than David. The response was favorable, and the missionaries were invited to remain for another week. However, on the next Sabbath, they were greeted with hostility as the Jewish leaders incited the crowd to reject Paul's preaching. Paul informed them he would then go to the Gentiles and speak. The Gentiles "were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48 NIV). Paul's selfless attitude toward the Gentiles who were present in a Jewish synagogue worship assisted in leading them to accept his teaching about Jesus as Messiah. This is further evidence of his accommodating nature; Paul knew his audience and communicated to them in a way that they could understand. Today, our culture is a media saturated, digitally savvy culture. Paul's accommodating nature would inspire him to use what speaks to our digital age most effectively.

Paul also used a small group prayer meeting to proclaim the Gospel. It was in Philippi that he met Lydia near a river just beyond the city gate. Acts 16:13b says, "We

sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.” The result was the conversion of Lydia, who became an important supporter of Paul and Silas in their work.

Not everyone in Philippi was happy about their presence. When Paul healed a demon-possessed slave girl, her owners became angry; they had been using her “fortune telling” powers as a source of income. Paul and Silas were arrested for inciting a riot. While in prison they began to sing and pray as the others who were in jail with them listened (Acts 16:25). So Paul also used music and worship as a means of proclaiming the Gospel.

Paul used apologetics as he spoke to the philosophers in Athens. He spoke in the synagogue and in the marketplace. After debating with the Athenians in the marketplace, they invited him to Mars’ Hill where a group called the Areopagus met. In his speech he used the images of their gods as object lessons and referred specifically to their altar to the unknown god.

Finally, Paul used his trials as an opportunity to preach the Gospel. In each of his appearances before the Sanhedrin in Acts 23, Felix in Acts 24, Festus in Acts 25 and Agrippa in Acts 25-26, Paul used his defense as an opportunity to preach the Gospel.

Paul believed that he had to use whatever means necessary to proclaim the Gospel. He lived by his words in 1 Corinthians 9:22 where he said, “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (NIV).

Like Mark, Paul took a contemporary literary form and adapted it to his own purpose. As one reads Paul’s letters, one is reading an adapted form of the epistle. First century letters were usually written with the same format. There was “the opening, body

and close.”³⁰ The purpose of the opening was to identify the writer, send greeting and establish the relationship between the author and recipient. “In Paul’s letters . . . , the conventional greeting was transformed into a confession of faith: ‘Grace to you and peace from God our father, and the Lord Jesus Christ’ (Rom. 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:3, 2 Cor. 1:2).” Also, common letters included a beatitude for the recipient’s physical well-being. Paul replaced this with a prayer of thanksgiving.³¹

The bodies of Paul’s letters were a mixture of applied theology and often praise, condemnation or, as in the case of Philemon, recommendation.

The close of Paul’s letters also shows evidence of his transformation of this common form for his purpose. Most letters of Paul’s day would end with an “oath formula.”³² Instead Paul used the opportunity to give praise to God as in Romans 16:27, which says, “To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen” (NASB).

The fact that Paul used letters to preach the message of Christ adds evidence to the notion that he used “all means” to offer salvation and teaching to his audience. However, he also adapted a common form to a specific task—communicating God’s message. Today, tools like *Microsoft PowerPoint* or movies are common communication tools. Since Paul used common communication tools of his day and adapted them for his purpose, shouldn’t we follow his example in the use of digital tools adapted for a biblical purpose?

³⁰ Chris Church, “Letter Form and Function” *The Holman Bible Dictionary*, Trent C. Butler, ed. (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 874.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

Paul lived his statement in 1 Corinthians 9:22. We would have difficulty arguing with his success. However, there is a big difference between the various forms of spoken and written communication that Paul and Mark used and preachers today using multimedia with computer graphics, *PowerPoint* slides and video clips from television shows and movies. These are image-dominated forms of communication, whereas Paul and Mark were using communication dominated by words. We have already shown that God used visual forms of communication when he set up the trees in the garden of Eden for Adam and Eve and used sacrifice to show Abraham the importance of their covenant relationship. He also used visuals for Israel in the sacrifices and rituals of their religion. When you combine these principles, it is then safe to say that using new forms of visual communication to communicate the “old, old story” is appropriate.

ARTISTIC FORMS OF COMMUNICATION IN THE BIBLE

Trees and sacrifices are not the same kinds of visuals as graphics and film. One might conclude that graphics and film are more artistic forms of visual media. They are possibly very different from what God was using in the Old Testament or what Jesus used in the Lord’s Supper and baptism. So, we must search to find artistic forms of media in Scripture.

Throughout church history art has been used to communicate God’s Word. The message of God’s Word has long been transmitted through drama, music, dance and visual art. These are rooted in the Bible.

The use of music is well documented. The Psalter was the hymnbook of the temple worship. After Israel’s escape from Egypt, Moses, Miriam and the people of Israel

sang, “I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted...” (Exodus, 15:1b NASB). After the announcement of Jesus’ birth Mary sang, “My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46-47 NASB). In Paul’s letter to the Philippians he recorded a hymn of praise to Jesus that included the following:

Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth. (Philippians 2:8-10 NASB)³³

God has been exalted in music by nearly every generation.

In modern Christian worship, drama is not as pervasive as music. The use of drama is becoming increasingly popular. And Scripture has many examples of drama.

One interpretation of the Song of Solomon is that it was “a drama telling the story of the love of Solomon for the Shulamite girl.”³⁴ One author described the view as follows:

The dramatic view attempts to discern a narrative or story line in the book centering around two or three characters. Some believe the book recounts the story of Solomon and his Shulamite. Others argue that the book portrays a love-triangle, i.e., Solomon, the Shulamite and the Shulamite’s unnamed shepherd lover. This latter view, very popular in the 19th century—the era of romanticism—suggests the following scenario: Solomon takes the Shulamite into his harem, depriving her of her shepherd lover. The Canticle is the record of her pining and longing for her rustic paramour.³⁵

³³ Richard R. Melick, Jr., *The New American Commentary: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 96-97. He cites many authors who make a case for this being a hymn, but who disagree on the format of the hymn (makeup of stanzas and verses).

³⁴ Duane A. Garret, *The New American Commentary: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 358. Garret quotes Ibn Ezra, J.F. Jacobi, F. Delitzsch, John Milton, M. Goulder, S. R. Driver, C.H. Bullock and two Jewish scholars named Lowisohn and Ewald as proponents of this view.

³⁵ James T. Dennison, Jr., “What Should I Read on the Song of Solomon?” *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary*. Retrieved from <http://www.kerux.com/documents/KeruxV8N2A3.asp> on January 14, 2004.

In fact, the book has been presented in modern theater as a musical drama. In Toronto, the musical *The Shulamite's Wedding Dance* was performed on three occasions with actors from the Jewish, Arab and Christian faiths.³⁶

However, not all agree with this interpretation. Duane A. Garret rejects it stating, “This approach spoils the aesthetic beauty of the piece in that much of the love poetry is treated as Solomon’s attempted seduction.” He also writes, “Dramatic interpretations must read a great deal of detail into the text.” But proponents say that if one assumes that stage direction would not be included, then it is easier to see it as a drama stripped of the details of who spoke what lines. Garret’s third objection is that there is “no clear conflict or resolution” in this play. But this criticism comes from a modern understanding of theater. Much of this is poetry and seems very possibly to be a primitive form of musical theater.

The book of Job has been called a “dramatic poem” by Cynthia Ozick.³⁷ Theodore of Mopsuestia called Job a drama and claimed it followed the same pattern as the Greek tragedy.³⁸ Later Dr. Horace Kallen made the same claim in his book, *The Book of Job as Greek Tragedy*. In 1926 his presentation was staged by professional actors.³⁹ Eaton is certain it was a drama based on the structure being primarily dialogue. If Job was patterned after Greek tragedy, then what is Greek tragedy? One definition comes from the Classics Technology Center, which says it is

³⁶ Barbara Silverstein, “Multifaith Production Debuts” *Canadian Jewish News*, 24 June 1999, 38. Retrieved from www.nclive.org online periodicals database on January 14, 2004.

³⁷ Cynthia Ozick, *The Book of Job* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).

³⁸ Roger Eaton, *The Trial of Job*. Retrieved from <http://cspar181.uah.edu/RbS/JOB/re.html#Personae> on January 14, 2004.

³⁹ *Ibid.* Eaton further goes on to give a date for the book of Job based on the possibility of this being patterned after the Greek tragedy. He says the author may have traveled to Greece between 550 and 445 B.C. based on internal evidence. [Isn’t this WAY late as dating for the book? Generally I hear that Job was probably one of the patriarchs and Job maybe the earliest book.]

a literary composition written to be performed by actors in which a central character called a tragic protagonist or hero suffers some serious misfortune which is not accidental and therefore meaningless, but is significant in that the misfortune is logically connected with the hero's actions.⁴⁰

Using these criteria, Job could qualify. The central character, Job, "suffers serious misfortune," and it is definitely "not accidental" or "meaningless."

Even if Job was not originally written as a drama, it is filled with drama. The plot begins with the narrator telling us about Job, the main character. We are immediately introduced to the conflict as the character Satan confronts God in His heavenly court. He said to God,

"Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."

Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD. (Job 1:9-12 NASB).

The first act advanced as Job lost all he owned. Beginning in chapter 3 Job cursed the day he was born and his three friends came to console him. They made things worse, however, by telling him it must be his sin that caused his suffering. Finally, when Job seemed almost ready to give up, in chapter 38, God spoke to him. The third part of the drama is the dialogue between Job and God, with the climax coming in God's stirring speech to Job in chapters 40-41.

Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm and said,
 Now gird up your loins like a man;
 I will ask you, and you instruct Me.
 Will you really annul My judgment?
 Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?
 Or do you have an arm like God,
 And can you thunder with a voice like His?

⁴⁰ "Introduction to Greek Tragedy," Classics Technology Center. Retrieved from <http://ablemedia.com/ctcweb/netshots/tragedy.htm> on January 14, 2004.

Adorn yourself with eminence and dignity,
And clothe yourself with honor and majesty.
Pour out the overflowings of your anger,
And look on everyone who is proud, and make him low.
Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him,
And tread down the wicked where they stand.
Hide them in the dust together;
Bind them in the hidden place.
Then I will also confess to you,
That your own right hand can save you.
Behold now, Behemoth, which I made as well as you;
He eats grass like an ox.
Behold now, his strength in his loins
And his power in the muscles of his belly.
He bends his tail like a cedar;
The sinews of his thighs are knit together.
His bones are tubes of bronze;
His limbs are like bars of iron.
He is the first of the ways of God;
Let his maker bring near his sword.
Surely the mountains bring him food,
And all the beasts of the field play there.
Under the lotus plants he lies down,
In the covert of the reeds and the marsh.
The lotus plants cover him with shade;
The willows of the brook surround him.
If a river rages, he is not alarmed;
He is confident, though the Jordan rushes to his mouth.
Can anyone capture him when he is on watch,
With barbs can anyone pierce his nose? (Job 40:6-24 NASB)

Chapter 41 continues God's powerful monologue. In chapter 42 Job responded to God, and the message of the book was given by Job in response to God's challenge.

Then Job answered the LORD and said,
I know that You can do all things,
And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.
Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?
Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
Hear, now, and I will speak;
I will ask You, and You instruct me.
I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear;
But now my eye sees You;
Therefore I retract,

And I repent in dust and ashes. (Job 42:1-6 NASB)

The rest of the book is the dénouement of the play.

According to James Blevins, Revelation is another example of drama.⁴¹ Blevins divides the book into seven acts, each with seven scenes. As a student in his New Testament survey course at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, I helped perform it before an audience of Senior Adult guests from a nearby convalescent facility. The breakdown of the seven acts is as follows:

Introduction and Prologue	– 1:1-8
Act I	The Seven Golden Lampstands – 1:9-3:22
Act II	The Seven Seals – 4:1-8:4
Act III	The Seven Trumpets – 8:5-11:18
Act IV	The Seven Tablets – 11:19-15:4
Act V	The Seven Bowls – 15:5-16:21
Act VI	The Seven Judgments – 17:1-20:3
Act VII	The Seven Great Promises – 20:4-22:5
Epilogue	22:6-21

This notion might be debatable, but certainly one cannot debate the symbolism in the book of Revelation. There are many explanations of what the symbols might mean. Debate rages over what the symbols point to in today's time. I had a Sunday school teacher who thought the locusts with the power of the scorpion described in Revelation 9 might be referring to Apache attack helicopters. What the symbols mean is debatable, but their visual, powerful nature is not. They are so well described that modern artists have attempted to recreate these visions.⁴²

While Job, Song of Solomon, and possibly Revelation may very well be dramas, there were many dramas that were acted in real life. One example includes the life of Hosea the prophet. The book of Hosea is not a drama in its written form, but the life of

⁴¹ James L. Blevins, *Revelation As Drama* (Nashville: Broadman, 1984).

⁴² Pat Marvenko Smith, *Revelation Illustrated*. Her depictions can be seen at www.revelationillustrated.com.

Hosea was a drama set to communicate the truth of Israel's apostasy. To do this God instructed Hosea to marry a prostitute (1:2). This is controversial as some scholars believe this was merely a vision and others use other arguments to deny that God's man would marry such a woman. Duane A. Garrett lists eight possible explanations for this action and concludes that the best one is that Hosea did marry a prostitute under God's direction as a "speech act" much like Isaiah's going naked for three years to warn of the impending exile in Egypt (Isaiah 20:3-5) or Ezekiel's having to "lay on his side for over a year near a small model of Jerusalem under siege (Ezek. 4-5)."⁴³

And as one would expect, Gomer, his prostitute wife, was unfaithful despite their exclusive covenant relationship; she returned to her lifestyle of harlotry.

Then God demonstrates grace through Hosea in chapter 3.

Then the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes."

So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley. Then I said to her, "You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you." For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols. Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days. (Hosea 3:1-5 NASB)

The rest of the book is God's message to Israel. But the message first came in the life of Hosea in the form of a drama played out not on a stage but in Hosea's life. Hosea's experiences set the stage for God's message.

⁴³ Duane A. Garrett, *The New American Commentary: Hosea, Joel* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 43-50.

STEWARDSHIP LEADS US TO USE ALL APPROPRIATE METHODS

The Parable of the Talents from Matthew 25 is a passage about stewardship. It is the story of a man who went on a long journey. Before leaving he decided to call his servants and give them each a portion of his wealth. They were to be stewards of it while he was gone. To each servant he gave a different amount. One received five talents of silver, another two and a third one. The amounts given were “each according to his own ability” (Matthew 25:15 NIV). The first two servants invested their silver and doubled it, while the third buried it because he was afraid of losing it.

After the master returned he “settled accounts” with the three servants. When he discovered that the first two doubled what they were given, each of them was rewarded. The master said to each, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matthew 25:21 NIV).

However, when he learned that the third servant only buried his one talent of silver he said to him,

“You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents.” (Matthew 25:26-28 NIV)

The message of the parable is simple. Each of us was given varying levels of talent and resources, and God requires us to use them for His glory. If we do, we will be rewarded with greater responsibility and reward. If not, we will suffer the displeasure of our Master.

Our resources are not talents of silver. We have multiple resources that are new to our era of electronic media. With the advent of computers, digital video projectors, DVDs and VCRs we have more ways of communicating than ever. We have a responsibility to use all the resources we have available that help us effectively communicate so long as they do not compromise the message or the messenger. As a body of believers we are made up of people who also have talents and abilities uniquely suited to using these technologies. We have a responsibility to use them for benefit of the Kingdom of God and not only for our own benefit.

Advertisers and television producers use images to help communicate spoken or written words. They do this to make a profit. With billions of dollars at stake, would they not seek to use the most effective methods of communication? And since we have these resources available to us via computers, technology and talented media specialists, we have a responsibility to use our “talents of silver” for God’s glory and kingdom so long as they make communication clearer and do not adversely affect the integrity of the message.

With a growing number of technology experts, it is likely that many of these talented people will be members of our churches. If we use these technologies in worship and preaching, it gives business graphic-design professionals the chance to create beautiful graphics that can help communicate the Gospel in an appealing way. Video editing technicians can create “commercials” for church events that will be more appealing than a few lines typed in a church bulletin. They can also create mini-movies that introduce a controversial topic or raise a thought-provoking question before a sermon. Computer animators can create flash animations that draw attention to an idea in

a sermon or focus people on the words of a beautifully sung chorus. Audiophiles can work with sound to create special sound effects such as thunder while the preacher is talking about the wrath of God. Media specialists will have an opportunity to use their gifts for God's kingdom. It might not be good stewardship of a pastor's time to work on multimedia presentations, but other talented people can be good stewards of their gifts as they use them for God's glory and for the benefit of the church.

Tim Eason, in his book *Media Ministry Made Easy*,⁴⁴ suggests organizing a team of talented people who will be involved in the media ministry of the church. For example, one might have the leadership skills to direct the team's efforts. Another might work primarily with the technology, overseeing the care and upkeep of all the audio-visual equipment and software. Still another might be a talented computer graphics artist. The pastor could be a member of the team, or he might merely coordinate with the team leader. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Organizing a Media Ministry Team gives the pastor and music minister time to concentrate on what they do best. If a church has people with special gifts in the areas of graphic design, technology and sound, they should be given the chance to use their gifts in those areas.

When the pastor, music minister and media specialist are each focused on a specialty, each person is being a good steward of his or her talents. Each member of the team is using God-given abilities to support the worship and preaching ministry of the church. The result is that fewer people are "burying their talents," and more are being rewarded with God's proclamation, "Well done, My good and faithful servant."

⁴⁴ Tim Eason, *Media Ministry Made Easy*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), p. 43-58.

THE OBJECTION OF CREATING AN IMAGE OF GOD

The movie, *The Passion of the Christ* was wildly popular in Christian circles but not all believers supported Mel Gibson's film. Discussing the validity of making this film, Ron Gleason wrote,

I contend ... that there is a much greater fear ... which few are willing to entertain: The fear of dishonoring the Lord God Almighty and disobeying a direct commandment that he has given to us with regard to the making of images of the triune God.⁴⁵

The second of the Ten Commandments says,

Do not make an idol for yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. You must not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the fathers' sin, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing faithful love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commands. (Exodus 20:4-6, HCSB)

But Gleason improperly applies the Second Commandment. Walter Kaiser wrote, "The second commandment discusses the *mode* rather than the *object* of worship (which the first dealt with)."⁴⁶ The second deals with the temptation to limit God to an inanimate object or a part of His creation, much like other religions do when they say that the sun is their god or represent their god with a bird or sea animal.

Films like *The Passion of the Christ* or sermon presentations that depict Jesus using visual art do not violate the Second Commandment because the preacher or film maker is not limiting God to an object. They are seeking to grab the emotion of human beings to point them to our limitless God. We are never saying, "This is Jesus." We

⁴⁵ Ron Gleason, "The 2nd Commandment and 'The Passion of the Christ,'" *PCANews.com: The Web Magazine of the Presbyterian Church in America*. Retrieved from <http://www.christianity.com/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID23682%7CCHID125043%7CCHI1716514,00.html> on July 1, 2004.

⁴⁶ Walter Kaiser, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Exodus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992) <electronic version, notes on Exodus 20:4>.

understand that an actor is portraying Christ. We do not want you to worship the picture of Jesus. Instead the picture points the audience to the true Christ in an aesthetic way.

CONCLUSION

For twenty centuries the church has had the responsibility of communicating the same message. One constant in doing that has been preaching. However, styles and forms have changed. If the twenty-first century church does not change with our multimedia culture, we may become an anachronism. We might miss the opportunity to proclaim the message clearly to people in the twenty-first century. The Bible is not clearly for or against the use of multimedia technology in worship. But principles support the use of new forms of communication to share the old, old story as good stewards of the Gospel.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In chapter two, we looked at the biblical issues surrounding the use of multimedia in worship and preaching. Because the Bible does not deny the use of multimedia and in fact leads us to use all appropriate means possible, we now turn to recent literature. What do present-day theorists say about the use of technology and multimedia in worship? This involves answering three questions. First, how do we best communicate with our postmodern culture? How can we best communicate the Gospel with this generation?

Second, how does one effectively use presentation media such as *PowerPoint*? Using presentation software ineffectively can get in the way of good communication.

The third area of study is the technical. What are the issues related to using hardware?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE POSTMODERN?

John Stott wrote in his book *Between Two Worlds* that preaching is “bridge-building.” Our job is to span the philosophical and cultural expanse that exists between the biblical world and our present, postmodern age. Most preachers are well prepared to understand the world of Scripture through their theological training. What is more daunting is understanding our present postmodern world.

Defining postmodernism is a difficult proposal. By its very nature it is more an anti-philosophy than a philosophy. Many writers have attempted to describe it rather than define it.

Vincent Gaffa, in his Doctor of Ministry Dissertation entitled *Worship In a Symbological World*, defined postmodernity over against the modern era out of which it came. He wrote:

Modernity is first characterized by a humanistic belief that “human beings are the ultimate standard by which to judge all things.” It is also characterized by a secular, scientific worldview that seeks to understand life through the rational, mechanistic disciplines of logic, order, a priori experimentation, empirical evidence, and factual premise.⁴⁷

Gaffa then says postmodernity is “that which flows out of the modern. It is the antithesis to modernity. . . . The Post-modern rejects the tools of modernity in order to experience the mysterious, the supernatural, and the spiritual.”⁴⁸

Scott Black Johnston asserted that “to be Post-modern is to be post-certain.”⁴⁹ He described our time as one without convictions about truth and authority. There is little consensus about what is right or wrong. As David Henderson stated, most believe that some things are really bad, like killing children for sport or raping nuns.⁵⁰ There are also some things our culture approves of, like Mother Teresa’s service to the orphans of India. The problem is there is no clear line between right and wrong. There is a spectrum with right on one end and wrong on the other. The delineation between them is blurred. No one has the right to define where the separation is; it is entirely subjective.

⁴⁷ Vincent Gaffa, *Worship in a Symbological World*, Doctor of Ministry Dissertation, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, 15 October 2001, 19.

⁴⁸ Gaffa, 20.

⁴⁹ Ronald J. Allen, Barbara Shires Blaisdell and Scott Black Johnston, *Theology for Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 28.

⁵⁰ David Henderson, *Culture Shift* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998), 157.

According to Henderson three criteria determine where the shift from right to wrong is. They are “what feels good, what looks good, and what benefits me.”⁵¹ He continued, “Our culture keeps using words like *right* and *wrong*. But for the most part, the words no longer mean what we think they mean. A new morality guides us today. Americans determine what is right and wrong for themselves.”⁵² Graham Johnston explained it this way: “Today Post-modernity says: All you can believe is what’s in your own heart, count on intuition and faith, give up on the idea of truth, have an experience instead.”⁵³

Unlike a system of ethics or a worldview, postmodernism is an anti-system of ethics or an anti-worldview. In other words, it is easier to describe it by what it denies than what it advocates. George Hunter says the failure of the “modern” age taught us that we cannot reason our way into a “consensus morality” that all people will support. It also taught us that science and instruction are not capable of freeing us from the problems of society and that science is limited in its ability to describe the most basic nature of reality.⁵⁴ Hunter’s assertion is that these developments afford Christian communicators a special opportunity to fill the void left by the Enlightenment.

Unfortunately, some claim that the void has been filled already. Henderson argued that we have become a nation of consumers. “America is a land of compulsive shoppers. Malls have replaced churches as the central architecture in the community, and shopping has squeezed aside all manner of other activities to become one of our favorite

⁵¹ Henderson, 158.

⁵² Henderson, 162.

⁵³ Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2001), 9.

⁵⁴ George Hunter, *How to Reach Secular People* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 37-38.

leisure pursuits.”⁵⁵ This affects the amount of time or money people have as they spend much of it in WalMart and Best Buy. It also affects the way they treat faith. We are less likely to have a “brand loyalty” to one faith. We pick and choose from the smorgasbord of religious expression to suit our own tastes. We also seek out the best deal, not wanting to give up too much. “Church-lite” tastes great and is less filling, and costs less too. And since the customer is always right, then faith is not about submission but satisfaction. The focus is “what works for me?” rather than “how can I work for the Lord?” And if I don’t like it, I can always take it back and get my refund.

The consumer mentality makes postmodernism sound like narcissism, which is accurate to an extent. It is not all about putting self at the center of the moral universe. Nor is it only about satisfying one’s cravings and desires. Many postmoderns do have a longing for fulfillment through relationships and finding a purpose for existing.

Ronald Allen wrote, “Communality is a part of the vision of many Post-modern people. They regard communal relationships as constitutive of human identity.”⁵⁶ He also stated that they value conversation and dialogue over lecture. They value the experience of the people they are communicating with more than the information they are gaining.⁵⁷

As a part of the postmodern desire for experiential communications, the postmodern generation is longing for connections. They want to experience one another and the Higher Power that controls the universe. For that reason Sweet says, “The worst thing the Postmodern Reformation church can do is get more techie and less humie.”⁵⁸ A poet and farmer from Kentucky named Wendell Berry was described as a “neo-Luddite.”

⁵⁵ Henderson, 49.

⁵⁶ Allen, 140.

⁵⁷ Allen, 41.

⁵⁸ Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, 194. Sweet uses the term “humie” to mean human.

He is quoted as saying, “I am not against technology so much as I am for community.”⁵⁹

If we wish to reach this generation we will have to be what Christ called us to be when he said, “As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (John 13:34 NASB).

In addition to connection, postmodern people seek purpose. They are seeking answers from sources bigger than themselves. The church has those answers. Since postmodernists are seeking both connection and purpose, “The Church finds itself in a position to make a strong contribution as the world is moving in a Post-modern direction.”⁶⁰

In the area of communications, Gaffa said that the “three basic characteristics of Post-modernism are a shift from literacy to symbology, a new medium of communication, and a new understanding of self.” Members of the “Builder Generation,” who came of age during World War II and built post-war America, were primarily literary, communicating through the written word. During the time of the Baby Boom a shift began. Communication became more symbological with people using more images, pictures and symbols than the printed word. Their children, Generation X or the Baby Busters, are now tech savvy, and communication is primarily through the new, visual media of television, film and computers.⁶¹ Today’s coming-of-age generation sees itself through the prism of technological communication rather than the verbal.

The shift from literary to symbological has paralleled a shift from a non-technological culture that was mostly industrial and agrarian to a culture dominated by technology. Leonard Sweet calls this “technoculture.” “Technology is no longer a separate category. It does not exist on its own, but is intrinsic and implicit in all of life.

⁵⁹ Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, 339.

⁶⁰ Allen, 142.

⁶¹ Gaffa, 104-112. He cites Marshal McLuhan’s book *Understanding Media*.

Technology is now a part of everything—from sneakers to toothpaste, from genetics to religion, from you to me.”⁶²

Postmodern people have a connection with technology as no other generation in our culture’s history. Gaffa stated it this way:

In terms of technology, Post-modernism was and is similar to modernity. Both value technology as a source of advancement, efficiency, and productivity. However, technology was one face of modernity, where it was and is everything to Post-modernism. Technology birthed and nurtured Post-modernism as a child. . . . The emergence of this new culture is defined more by its technology than by its morality, politics, or religion. It is this reason that a study of the Post-modern culture must be seen through the lens of technology in order to understand it.⁶³

Our world is changing; it is becoming dominated by technology. David Lohead wrote, “Like it or not, our culture, our world, will be transformed by this information technology that has come upon us.”⁶⁴ He also said, “On the personal level we may be able to resist the incursion of the computer into our lives, but on the cultural level we are living through a shift that will have as powerful a transformative effect as the introduction of printing in the 15th and 16th centuries.”⁶⁵ We may wish to resist this change, but Lohead says that if we do, we will risk becoming irrelevant. Further he argues that “this is not a matter of syncretism or of being ‘user-friendly.’ It is an aspect of being human.”⁶⁶

One of the best summaries of what it means to be postmodern comes from Graham Johnston. He lists “ten distinctives” that are “hallmarks of Post-modern people.”

1. They’re reacting to modernity and all its tenets.
2. They reject objective truth.
3. They’re skeptical and suspicious of authority.

⁶² Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1999), 29.

⁶³ Gaffa, 100.

⁶⁴ David Lohead, *Shifting Realities* (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1997), 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 60.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 63.

4. They're like missing persons in search of self and identity.
5. They've blurred morality and are into whatever's expedient.
6. They continue to search for the transcendent.
7. They're living in a media world unlike any other.
8. They'll engage in the knowing smirk.
9. They're on a quest for community.
10. They live in a very material world.⁶⁷

HOW DO POSTMODERN PEOPLE LEARN?

Today we live in an electronic culture, which is overloaded with multisensory experiences. One turns on the television and is bombarded with quick images often accompanied by a driving beat. Computer technologists are working hard to add other senses to the audiovisual nature of the computer. One company, called DigiScents, tried to incorporate smell into computers. The iSmell device connects to computers and allows cooperating web sites to send a scent to the end user.⁶⁸ If you are shopping for flowers you can smell them via the internet. The company no longer exists, but others have attempted the same thing. Postmodern people want to learn via multiple senses.

For generations preachers spoke and congregations listened. Literacy has also been a dominant form of communication as writers wrote or typed and people read. This is part of the experience of reading or hearing the message of the Bible as it has been communicated since its inception.

Postmodernity is birthing a new reality as we are becoming a people of symbols. All written language is symbolic. The very letters on this page represent sounds which, when joined together, create syllables and words; when those are put together, we form sentences. All of these bits of data represent a portion of the ideas that exist in our minds.

⁶⁷ Graham Johnston, 26.

⁶⁸ YourCT.com, "DigiScents wins best new technology" Retrieved from <http://www.yourct.com/technews/1853/> on January 15, 2004.

“Human beings have always been a symbol using species. The visual symbol has always shaped elements of human experience.”⁶⁹ From the Egyptian hieroglyphics to the secret fish symbol used by the early church, humans have communicated with icons. We saw this in chapter two in the discussion of how God used the symbols of the trees in the Garden of Eden to communicate the boundaries He set for Adam and Eve. The difference is that today, people are drawn to symbols and visuals more than previous generations were.⁷⁰

Evidence of the emphasis on symbolic communication is seen on the internet. Go to any web page, and if all you see is words, you feel lost. The page is boring and will not likely draw anyone’s attention for long, unless the surfer is truly motivated to view the content of the page. Web developers use images to draw people to their sites and to orient them to where information is found.

Taken to an extreme, some web sites are actually experiences like *There.com*. It is part chat room, part video game, and part electronic world. *There.com* entices participants with its slogan, “Get in on the good times! Explore, play, and hang out in a world full of parties, races, fashion shows, conversations and more ... it’s all in there.”⁷¹ *There.com* is a 3D rendering of an imaginary world made up of cartoon-like characters called avatars. An avatar is your cyber persona; it represents you in the imaginary, online world. Similar to this are the video games like *The Sims*, *Black and White*, and *SimCity*.⁷² These games ask you to create a home or world for little imaginary people and creatures. You play

⁶⁹ Gaffa, 40.

⁷⁰ Tex Sample, *The Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998).

⁷¹ *There.com*. Retrieved on February 5, 2004.

⁷² All three of these games are part of the Electronic Arts stable of “Sim” games. Sim games simulate the experience. This can be simulated football, baseball or war as in the case of *Medal of Honor* where you are simulating WWII. Please see Electronic Arts web site at <http://www.ea.com>.

god. In Microsoft's *Age of Empires* you simulate a medieval empire.⁷³ These experiences are all driven by images and all allow people at the keyboard and mouse either to act as though they are interacting with others or actually to become involved with others through the internet. Symbols are the key to making it work. Experience, participation and connection with other people make it addictive. In the postmodern era, we are seeing a shift to a more complicated system of images combined with sound to create an experience of learning. With the invention of "force feedback,"⁷⁴ computers can add a tactile experience as well.

Postmodern people are products of the television culture of the last fifty years and the younger generations of the personal computer revolution of the last twenty-five years. "The modern world made us text-trained, with the book our chief icon. The Post-modern world needs us to be light-trained, with the screen our chief icon."⁷⁵

In this image-driven culture, communication must at the very least include sensory language. "Fred Craddock long ago noticed that stories and images have unusual power to penetrate the deepest recess of human knowledge."⁷⁶ He was addressing the use of sensory language in our preaching. Today, sensory language is the bare minimum a preacher can do to communicate to postmodern people who want to use all of their senses in communication. While listening to the words and creating the images in the imagination is a powerful tool of communication, postmodern people long for multiple tracks of communication. It is not enough to just hear it; they also want to see, touch,

⁷³ For information on *Age of Empires* visit Microsoft's web site at <http://www.microsoft.com/games/empires>.

⁷⁴ Force feedback is a technology that allows game controllers or computer mice to move. While playing a sports simulation, every time the bat hits the ball the game controller literally shakes in the player's hand.

⁷⁵ Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, 32.

⁷⁶ Allen, 97.

taste or even smell it. A multisensory experience is the most powerful means of communicating with them.

Vincent Gaffa described “multi-sensory worship” as “worship that invokes sensory experience that enables the participation of all senses in the adoration of God.”⁷⁷

Tex Sample, in his book *The Spectacle of Worship In a Wired World*, takes this a step further and says that worship should become a spectacle. Imagine a worship experience that would begin with a modern country music rendition of the song *May the Circle Be Unbroken*. It will be played with a rock and roll beat while lights flash and pulsate along with the rhythm like a Garth Brooks concert. He then described the use of other styles of music including popular, secular songs to introduce the problem the message will address. The sermon would be primarily story and song followed by a Eucharist service using musical drama to enhance it.⁷⁸

Sample’s eclectic worship outline would be a spectacle. He claims that is what postmodern people expect in the day of rock concerts and a story-based, electronic culture.

Spectacle is a basic and indigenous practice in electronic culture whenever we find a full-blown use of image, sound as beat, and visualization. Indeed it is the augmented power of these electronic factors that enhances spectacle’s capacity and makes it even more captivating.⁷⁹

Illustrating the power of image as a communications medium, Sample described a Michael Jackson video that intertwined the images of Jackson with a musical piece that was based on

“poems from the thirteenth century found at the Abby of Nenediktbeuren in 1803. These poems dealt a frontal attack on the church, medieval manners and morals,

⁷⁷ Gaffa, 38.

⁷⁸ Tex Sample, *The Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 27.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 57.

and money, while casting lilted, driving, rhythmic praise on the sensuality of food, wine, and erotic love. . . . It is difficult to watch a video like Jackson's and not see how much sound as beat influences visualization."⁸⁰

Sample also described a music video for the Louis Armstrong song *What a Wonderful World* in which the song's words include beautiful references to "trees of green" and other delightful mental pictures. However, the pictures shown are of devastation, hunger, disaster, and war. What is the message of the song? The pictures overpower the song, and what we have is an indictment of our society. This further demonstrates the power of image.

Studies have shown that when parents view some of the offensive media available today along with their children and they dialogue with them about how and why the material is offensive, then children are more prone to adhere to their parents' views than those of the popular culture.⁸¹ If we will combine positive, biblical ideas with supporting images, we can have a similar impact.

The church must learn to use images, or we will become an anachronism. In the movie *Crocodile Dundee*, the hero, Mick Dundee, goes to a New York City hotel and finds something he hadn't seen since the fifties—a television. He turns it on and an *I Love Lucy* rerun is playing. Mick says, "Yep, pretty much what I remember." Referring to this scene Graham Johnston asked, "How many times have people returned to our churches after twenty years only to discover nothing's changed?"⁸² In some churches it might be even thirty, forty or fifty years with little or no change in communication style.

The Grateful Dead was a popular music group for many years. Their followers did more than listen to the Dead's music on their record players or eight track tape players.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 50.

⁸¹ Wilson and Moore, 449-50.

⁸² Johnston, 19.

Many of them followed the band as they traveled around the country. Tex Sample was speaking at a conference about multisensory worship when a pastor advised him to study this phenomenon. He agreed when he learned that the pastor had attended 150 concerts—the equivalent of “three years of regular church attendance.” So Sample studied the “Dead.” What he found was that their concerts were more than just the average concert. Each concert was “a total experience” for the concert goers. He said, “I am struck by the range of senses brought into play in these concerts.”⁸³ These multisensory experiences satisfied the longing “Dead Heads” for more than an event, but an experience. Sample’s point is that the church can be just as effective if we will use multisensory communication or spectacle.

Leonard Sweet offers more evidence for the postmodern desire for a total experience. The television game show *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire* was a huge hit in the United Kingdom in 1998. On August 17, 1999 it aired for the first time in the United States on ABC. It became a phenomenon immediately. Sweet argued that this happened because of four things. First, it was more than a quiz show; it was a total experience. The staging with dramatic effects, lighting, music, and the setup of the studio, with the audience surrounding the guest and the host, made it a spectacle. Second, it was participatory. The contestant would get the audience and a friend from home involved via telephone. Third, it had a great, emotional symbol—a million dollars. Contestants and viewers alike pictured themselves with the oversized check each winner received. Finally, the way everyone was focused on the contestant, rooting for him or her to succeed, brought an emotional element that few game shows have anymore. “In other words ... it has successfully transitioned from rational to experiential, from representative

⁸³ Sample, 76-77.

to participatory, from word-based to image-driven, and from individual to connecting the individual with the communal.”

Sample further says that spectacle can be an experience that uses multiple senses to communicate and bind the participants together with the message being communicated. If the church will stop resisting this shift, we can be positively transformed the way we were when Martin Luther posted his 95 theses.

The story of church history can be read as a move from one cultural context to another, with each context requiring a renewed mobilization of the church’s life and thought to engage new social forms. . . . At the same time, the church is not to be in conformity to the world. If we are to be all things to all people, it is for the sake of the gospel. Our task is one of being transformed by the ongoing work of the Spirit.⁸⁴

Sample says both are possible. The Gospel is eternal but it was communicated in an oral tradition in the first century.⁸⁵ Today, spectacle is the means that fits the postmodern world and will bind this generation with the eternal truth.

Spectacle must include the audience in the experience or it is irrelevant glitz. Sweet called this the “21st-century container” for the ancient message of Jesus as the living water.⁸⁶ The French sociologist, Emile Durkheim, observed that if people are grouped together and are led to center their minds on a single image or thing while their emotions are engaged, they will connect with one another.⁸⁷ This connection could powerfully assist in communicating the Gospel.

“Worship is one of the most, if not *the* most crucial practices of bonding and community in the church.”⁸⁸ If churches are not using the contemporary methods of

⁸⁴ Sample, 93.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 93.

⁸⁶ Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, 72.

⁸⁷ Sample, 57.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 104. Italics are Sample’s.

communicating with the postmodern world, “then the problem is not that they are irrelevant, but that they are not incarnational.”⁸⁹ Sample said we must do as Jesus did and “pitch a tent” in the culture by using cultural practices to communicate the love of God.⁹⁰

Sweet’s formula for postmodern worship to succeed is what he calls EPIC, an acrostic representing the four concepts of Experiential, Participatory, Image-driven, and Connecting. If we can find a way to make the church, including worship and preaching, all of these things, then we will be far more successful in reaching the secular, postmodern people of this age.⁹¹

Len Wilson and Jason Moore categorize the experience of postmodern worship into five things.⁹² They are:

- Sense – This is the five basic human senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. To use senses to grab attention is hard in this sensory overloaded culture; it might be silence that does, but that is still using a sense. Multi-sensory worship is using many of these to communicate ideas and emotions.
- Feel – as in feelings or emotions. “How does a digital age worship planner deal with feelings? The answer comes through openness to affective response in our simple telling of the Gospel through story form.”⁹³
- Think – appealing to intellect; not through reason but simple thought or evaluation.

⁸⁹ Sample, 105.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 105-6. One example given was to use the song *From a Distance*, which says God is watching from a distance. Then present the notion of Christ’s Incarnation and present how God is not only transcendent but immanent as well.

⁹¹ Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, xx-xxi.

⁹² Len Wilson and Jason Moore, *Digital Story Tellers: The Art of Communicating the Gospel In Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 210-29. Note that this book was read in electronic format on a handheld device so page numbers will not correspond with the paper edition.

⁹³ Wilson and Moore, 223.

Think tactics may work best in two aspects of a traditional worship structure: the call to worship and the sermon. A call to worship or sermon opener may act as an attention-getter, engaging the congregation to evaluate their lives or the world. By creating a state of openness, they are able to freely brainstorm how a relationship with Jesus and a community of believers might change their lives.⁹⁴

- Act – This is appealing to people to actually do something; this is the desire of most sermons and the easiest for us to implement.
- Relate – Christianity is a relational religion. In our modern mindset of lecture and three-points-and-a-poem sermons, it is often very difficult to make preaching relational.

These five things overlap with Sweet's four. The point they are trying to make is that we cannot allow people to be passive observers; we must draw them in as participants. This is good theology and methodology. It is good theology because God has always been the audience of true Christian worship. It is good methodology because EPIC worship is the most effective strategy for bringing postmoderns into an experience of God.

As this generation experiences the many forms of media, they do so on “three levels of engagement” according to Myra Stark. They are “fascination, exploration, [and] integration.” They see something and are interested in it. That leads them to a “hands-on exploration” of the media. Finally, it is integrated into their thinking.⁹⁵ This is a very participatory, experiential process. And because of this, lecture alone is not a very effective means of communication.⁹⁶ Postmodern people will not listen to our message by itself because truth claims in a postmodern world are connected to “evidential

⁹⁴ Ibid, 226.

⁹⁵ Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, 56.

⁹⁶ One exception to this rule is “stand-up comedy.” But stand-up comics get away with it only if they are particularly gifted people and if they are funny. In my experience, humor lowers my barriers to ideas. When a preacher is particularly funny, he is often able to communicate truths that are hard to accept.

experience.” For that reason, it is not enough to merely say, “Thus saith the Lord ...” with postmoderns.

Today’s generation wants you to dialogue with them about ideas so that they can experience them. Barbara Blaisdell argued that this desire for dialogue “trumps” the prophetic tones that were a common part of preaching. She says, “To have authority in a Post-modern ethos, a sermon must ponder the complications and competing claims of the wealth we have been given to guard as stewards. ... There are honest conflicts that deserve honest treatment.” Postmoderns will allow us to challenge their thinking in a prophetic way, but they want to be involved in the process. They do not want to passively sit back while a preacher talks about the truths of Scripture. They want to participate.

Multimedia can help the preacher challenge postmoderns while not driving them away. For example, a video clip of two people dialoging about an issue can reveal opposing views. A man-on-the-street interview video of people who were asked a controversial question can be used to introduce the various ideas. As people watch, they might relate to some of the views expressed. Then the preacher can present the opposing view from Scripture in a way that reveals truth while showing that he or she takes the opposing view seriously. If the preacher does not dismiss their opinions and feelings outright, their respect and ears can be won.

Allowing the audience a chance to participate is not always the easiest way to communicate. Yet, Philip Bigler learned that it is worth it. He was awarded the honor of “Teacher of the Year” at his school in Fairfax County, Virginia, in 1998. Speaking at the ceremony he said, “To be effective ... I don’t have to be ‘the authority.’ Rather, I need to let kids explore learning themselves. I might see a quicker way of getting from point A to

point B, but the knowledge that kids gain is fundamentally richer when they get there on their own.”⁹⁷

Michael Quicke wrote in his book *360 Degree Preaching*,

Preaching flows from God the Father, who addresses us in Scripture and in Christ, through the responses of the preacher and the people, and then back to God in the form of worship, witness and service. It involves 360 degrees of eventfulness as God ... speaks through His Word and empowers the preacher and convicts the listener and transforms the lives of the preacher and the listeners.⁹⁸

This says that all biblical preaching is participatory. Yet many of the authors cited here do not believe traditional preaching is enough to communicate with today’s audiences. They long for a multi-sensory experience to go along with the verbal communication.

Experiential, multi-sensory learning is the most effective mode of communication. Donald Smith says that an important thing to remember when communicating with a specific audience is to engage the audience using “folk media.”⁹⁹ Folk media is any communication form that is indigenous to a particular audience. In contemporary American culture this can include things like the style of music, story, drama, and conversational communications. If one goes to most stores, he or she will not hear the same Muzak that was piped into elevators in the 1970s and ’80s. Today stores usually play current pop music. Producers in Hollywood have been using drama and story to communicate their agendas to America with television shows like *The West Wing* and *M*A*S*H*. Politicians will often propose policy initiatives by telling a story about a specific American family whose experience is affected by their tax bills or farming aid

⁹⁷ Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, 68. As a school teacher, my wife leads her students to learn through discovery. In a lesson on percentages she used lecture and wrote mathematical rules and equations on the board. When she asked her student to do a baking exercise they finally grasped the concepts she was teaching. It was the experience that solidified the concept in their minds.

⁹⁸ Michael J. Quicke, *360 Degree Preaching* quoted by Michael Dudit, “Preaching book offers insights for communicating gospel today,” *Preaching*, January-February, 2004, 14.

⁹⁹ Smith, 192.

packages. Chuck Colson argued in *The Body* that talk shows like the Phil Donahue show are the church of 21st century America. Today's viewers watch Oprah Winfrey as she discusses the issues of the day in the form of panels and audience opinion. Colson claims that these media personalities are molding the moral values of more Americans than preachers.¹⁰⁰

For the church to most effectively communicate to a postmodern world, we will have to use a more experiential model. Sweet suggested “karaoke preaching”¹⁰¹ as one way of implementing an experiential, participatory method of preaching. This unique form of communicating is “where you stand out there in the midst of the congregation much like Phil Donahue started doing in the '70s, when he introduced the participatory talk show. Build a sermon together as you share your mic with them.”¹⁰² This method might not be as effective if it is used every week, but in a mix of other creative, “EPIC” forms of preaching, it could work so long as the preacher does not get lazy in preparation and study of the Bible. There would need to be some safeguards to make sure that the text itself is what was guiding the discussion rather than letting the audience drive it with their whims.

However we become more “EPIC,” it is true that this generation of Americans will not be willing to translate the folk media of past generations. They have their own “soul music.” Sample gives an example of a black man who testified that, when he first

¹⁰⁰ Charles Colson, *The Body* (Dallas: Word, 1992), 175.

¹⁰¹ John Sweetman calls it Interactive Preaching. “Is There a Place for Interactive Preaching?” *Preaching*, January-February 2004, 20-26. He proposes a model in which the preacher preaches the precepts, but involves the congregation in the illustrative material through asking pointed questions and soliciting their answers. You can ask “life experience questions, general experience questions, present experience questions, feeling questions and allegorical questions,” which are instances where you ask, “How is what God is doing here like your parenting?”

¹⁰² Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, 74.

heard rap music in 1979, he knew it was his music. Sample goes on to say that different cultures and different generations have different “soul music.”¹⁰³

One example of the effects of “soul music”, according to Sample, is a mall that was overrun by teenagers. The teens became such a nuisance that older people didn’t like shopping there. The teens were not spending money and older adults were avoiding the mall. To solve the problem, the mall began to play easy listening music. They didn’t want to kick the teens out, fearing they would not return as adults, but the music soon had its desired effect. The teens left of their own volition and older adults returned with their wallets open.

Sample wrote regarding the inventive mall management, “This story is a parable for those churches that will not bother to learn and practice the soul music of the great majority of people in this culture.” We have to learn to appeal to the soul music of postmodern people if we are to propagate the church in this postmodern culture.

The “soul music” of the dominant leaders of many traditional churches is the hymns from their era and earlier. What the church needs is an Elvis Presley to make the transition. In the 1950s, record producers began to see the appeal of blues music. But since it was “black music” they knew white America would not buy it. Then they found Elvis Presley, who could sing the music but was a more marketable face, in the opinion of fifties record producers. The result was the rock-n-roll explosion.¹⁰⁴

Some might object to the use of spectacle. Sweet calls them “print-culture imperialists.”¹⁰⁵ They say spectacle diverts attention from reality. That is a valid complaint only if spectacle diverts people’s attention away from God. So long as the

¹⁰³ Sample, 67-69.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 37-44.

¹⁰⁵ Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, 79.

attention is being diverted from self toward God, then it can be an effective and appropriate tool. Sample said it is our job to understand our electronic culture so that we can effectively divert people's attention to God.¹⁰⁶

Gaffa articulates a similar view. "Now, as the third millennium begins, Christians once again have the opportunity to engage a symbological culture with the images, symbols, and icons that express and explain a reality that is often experienced without words."

Another objection is that using technology in church lowers the church to the mundane level. Proponents of this view deride it as mere "entertainment." To bring technology into the church is to demean God and His house. That is not true; technology has enhanced worship for many years. Ever since churches began building buildings, installing climate controls, and using sound equipment, instruments and books, they have used technology. Their argument is not really against technology but rather newer forms of technology. This argument also reveals an erroneous attitude about what is the true house of God. Technology does not demean God's house; for many years it has enhanced the work being done in church buildings to speak to people who are God's true modern-day equivalent of the Old Testament temple (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

The truth is that postmodern people do not want what most of us consider entertainment. Sweet says that what many call entertainment is actually amusement. This generation is replete with opportunities to be amused or distracted from reality. Instead of distracting them from reality, we want to attract them to the reality of God's love. Entertainment in its purest definition is exactly what is needed. "Entertainment literally means 'holding the attention of.' ... You don't want to hold the attention of your

¹⁰⁶ Sample, 59.

people?” Sweet asked of critics. “We entertain people in our homes all the time. ... We had better know how to entertain Post-moderns....”¹⁰⁷ If we do not, they will not bother with us and will find their experiential connections elsewhere.

Sweet raises two more objections about image-oriented communication. He says that a good image or metaphor might be so powerful and enthralling that it could distract from the original idea it is designed to represent. “This is the forewarning of the [second] of the Ten Commandments, which tells us not to make images of God, even mental images.”¹⁰⁸ This is an objection against improper use of images and experience in worship.¹⁰⁹ However, one can avoid this by not letting the medium overpower the message. There are strategies, which will be discussed in the next section of this study, which help alleviate this problem.

Some object to the use of images in communication saying the message an image communicates is not always clear. But Sweet says this is why using images is so powerful; people must participate to complete the communication process by taking the metaphor or image and translating it to their own experience. If this translation is not guided properly by the communicator, he says they become like a “Rorschach inkblot that obscures even more than it illuminates.”¹¹⁰

Another objection to using multi-sensory, technology-driven communication in worship comes from those who cite the excessive priority placed on its use. Chuck Colson trumpets this warning in a recent *Breakpoint* commentary. According to Colson two churches longed to be culturally relevant and as a result made some poor decisions.

¹⁰⁷ Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, 213.

¹⁰⁸ Leonard Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 90.

¹⁰⁹ For more discussion on the issue of the Second Commandment see the final section of chapter two of this dissertation.

¹¹⁰ Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims*, 90.

One spent so much on the equipment that it could not pay the bills. To cut costs it chose to fire one of its two associate pastors. Colson said, “Technology, they were forced to conclude, had a higher priority than pastoral care.”¹¹¹ The other church, Colson noted, put the authority to decide what topics were used for worship and preaching in the hands of the church’s technology specialist instead of the senior pastor. The technology specialist often decided based on the availability of images to project.

Colson’s examples do not prove that technology should not be used in worship and preaching. These examples do remind us to make the message and the audience the priority rather than the means of communication being the priority. If technology drives a church, then technology has become an idol. Just as an important news story should not be left off the nightly news because producers did not have good film, neither should a needed message be ignored because the tech people cannot find good pictures.

A solution to the problem of not finding good images is to train people to create good images. Inexpensive digital cameras and video cameras are within reach of most churches. What the church cannot afford is usually available among the members; they would likely be happy to volunteer their equipment if not their time in helping to create the content.

Cost is an important issue. A church should be realistic about its means and what it can afford. But the necessary equipment can be purchased relatively inexpensively. The principle is, “Do not begin until the money is in hand.”

¹¹¹ Charles Colson, “Wise Tech: Computer Technology and Worship,” *Breakpoint Commentaries*, April 14, 2004, <
http://www.pfm.org/BPtemplate.cfm?Section=BreakPoint_Commentaries1&CONTENTID=12150&TEMP LATE=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm> (April 21, 2004).

Jim Gilmore is an economist who has tried to help pastors see how the business world has learned to market to consumers by creating experiences. He raises another important concern about creating worship experiences. Gilmore invited seventy-five pastors to Las Vegas and showed them how businesses there have enticed people to pay for a multi-sensory experience.

In an interview with *Leadership* editors Marshall Shelley, Kevin Miller and Eric Reed, Gilmore went on a tour of Chicago pointing out businesses that followed the strategy of marketing experiences. While showing the editors the sites, he surprised them by saying, “Christians . . . should never try to stage a God experience.” He went on to say that if the church treats potential worshippers as consumers it will fail to compete. He called what some do idolatry because it becomes all about the experience.¹¹²

Gilmore’s warning is important. But it does not necessarily reject multimedia or multi-sensory worship experiences. If the leaders of a worship experience are doing all in their power to point participants toward the glory and grace of God, then the experience can both entice postmoderns who long for an experience and move them beyond that emphasis to the true purpose of worship. A sermon that is presented in a multi-sensory way can powerfully offer people an experience of hearing from a holy God. They may come for the experience, but hopefully they will walk away with the message in their minds and eventually their hearts. Traditional worship that does not point people to God has the same problem. If it becomes all about having an experience of singing the same old songs just as Grandma and Grandpa did and about hearing a lecture just like Dr. Favorite Pastor preached, then it is just as idolatrous as churches that ignore God for the fun of rock music and cool video and drama.

¹¹² Jim Gilmore, “No Experience Necessary” *Leadership Journal* (Summer 2001): 28-32.

Calvin Miller, in his modern parable entitled *The Sermon Maker*, views the use of *PowerPoint* and visual media as a hindrance to passionate preaching. His character, Sam, is a preacher who has lost his passion for preaching. An angel named Sermoniel visits Sam in an attempt to transform him from his doldrums into a powerful preacher with unction. One of Sermoniel's critiques is that Sam uses *PowerPoint* with a video projector. The idea is that removing the projector will help him connect more with his audience. He implies that visual communication cannot help in narrative preaching.¹¹³

This is a valid objection if visual media is used the way most business people use it. Their presentations are usually full of graphs, statistics, outlines and quotations. But if used in an artistic way, visual media can actually further the narrative and enhance the emotional impact. Miller says, "Emotion is a life sign, a symbol that the sermon is being heard. It is even a sign that the sermon's auditors are involved and being challenged to meet God in whatever demands he may be laying on them."¹¹⁴

Miller's critique should not be aimed at the use of visual media, which he incorrectly says is only valid in preaching precept sermons.¹¹⁵ Rather, his critique should be focused on the poor use of visual media in preaching. Quotes and outlines do little to communicate with the postmodern mind. This is the AV Mentality, which is what Len Wilson calls the use of *PowerPoint* only to show an outline of a sermon with lots of different animations, colors and fonts. This is poor use of the medium. When slides are filled with too many words and few visuals they are boring and turn people off rather

¹¹³ Calvin Miller, *The Sermon Maker* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 73-84.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 150.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 84. Miller claims that "Paul would have been more likely than Jesus to use *PowerPoint*, since precept-driven preaching would more logically fit the form."

than drawing them to the message.¹¹⁶ This paper discusses the effective use of visual media in the section after the one following.

DIFFERENT GENERATIONS COMMUNICATE IN DIFFERENT WAYS

Leonard Sweet addressed the challenge of communicating to multiple generations. He said that what worked in the fifties will not work with the following generations. Why?

Each generation operates in a different linguistic, sartorial, and myth system from the preceding generations. In religious terms this means that every generation must be reached for Christ differently. If we are to pass the baton of a living faith in Jesus Christ on to the next generation, we must find ways of handing it off to them in ways whereby they can receive it. Just as Jesus “laid down” his life for us, so we are to “lay down” some things in order to pass the gospel “from generation to generation.”¹¹⁷

In order to pass on the message, we have to understand the different generations and how they communicate.

The communication process is described simply in this way: a sender encodes a message and a receiver decodes the message. The mode of communication is known as the medium—the tool used to encode the message. Other factors affect the process, like past experiences of the communicator and receiver, the environment and the signals used to communicate.¹¹⁸ Donald Smith described twelve modes or “signal systems,” which are means of communication. They are:

1. Verbal – speech
2. Written – symbols representing speech
3. Numeric – numbers and numbering systems
4. Pictorial – two-dimensional representations

¹¹⁶ Len Wilson, *The Wired Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 38. This is further discussed in the section on how to more effectively use multimedia in preaching.

¹¹⁷ Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, 175.

¹¹⁸ Duane Litfin, *Public Speaking* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 18-21.

5. Artifactual – three-dimensional representations
6. Audio – use of nonverbal sounds, and silence
7. Kinesic – body motions, facial expressions, posture
8. Optical – light and color
9. Tactile – touch, the sense of “feel”
10. Spatial – utilization of space
11. Temporal – utilization of time
12. Olfactory – taste and smell¹¹⁹

These twelve signal systems are universal. However, a specific signal might not be universal. What it communicates to one generation might differ from what it communicates to another. A picture of an electric guitar may communicate a negative feeling to a seventy-two-year-old man thinking about the neighbor kid who invites his friends over for a jam session every Tuesday. The same guitar would generate positive feelings with the kid and his friends. For my generation, asking “Where’s the beef?” instantly reminds us of the Wendy’s campaign in the 1980s. My grade-school-aged kids think I am accusing them of stealing tonight’s main course from the freezer. The smell of burning hair reminds me of a gas stove accident I had in college. It reminds an Auschwitz survivor of a terrible era of her lifetime. The signals we use to communicate speak to different generations and different people in very different ways. To use them effectively we must understand the receivers with whom we are speaking.

So what are the differences between the generations? How do they each communicate, and how can one use multimedia to effectively communicate with them? In his book *One Church Four Generations*, Gary L. McIntosh described four key generations that populate our churches. He said a generation is “a group of people who are connected by their place in time with common boundaries and common character.”¹²⁰ I would add their common experiences. He called the four generations in the church

¹¹⁹ Smith, 146.

¹²⁰ Gary L. McIntosh, *One Church Four Generations* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2002), 11.

“waves,” which implies the lack of certain delineation between them. One woman might be younger than her neighbor, but fits best in the older generation because of her experiences.

The four waves are “Builders,” “Boomers,” “Busters,” and “Bridgers.” Within each generation there are multiple subsets. However, each has a basic set of criteria that differentiates it from the others.

McIntosh calls the older generation the “Builder Wave” because of the way they built our country. Within this group he breaks them down into three subsets—the “G.I. generation,” the “silent generation,” and the “war babies” born during the Second World War. The “G.I. Generation” was born before 1925 and grew up during the First World War, many having fought in it. The “war babies” were born during the Second World War and were less influenced by the war, but rather by its aftermath. Between the two was a generation that came into its own during the fifties. They were generally satisfied and thus are called the silent generation.¹²¹

The Builder Wave, according to McIntosh, sacrificed to fight two major wars, experienced the Great Depression as children and young adults, and worked to make America what it is today. They are confident in their ability to overcome obstacles and solve problems. They are frugal, saving what other generations consider disposable. Of the four generations they are the most loyal to the church and the country. You can count on them to carry through with their plans and be ready to meet the challenges.¹²² Theirs was a different time.

¹²¹ Ibid, 28-29.

¹²² Ibid, 29-42.

Seniors of today are products not of a changed culture but an entirely different one not dominated by technology.¹²³ They grew up before television and computers were invented, so they “see no need for technology, while younger generations ... can’t live without it.”¹²⁴ This shift is something the Builder Wave struggles with.

Tex Sample, part of the Builder Wave, described the shift from a language dominated culture to an image dominated culture. He was brought up ...

... in an oral culture to think in proverbs, stories and communal relationships and then educated in a literate culture to think in theory, conceptualization, and linear discourse, then engage the world through images, through sound as beat—so very evident in [today’s] music, especially rock and roll.¹²⁵

In other words, he is a product of his more language-dominated generation, but is now trying to communicate to an image-dominated generation.

Because of their background, Builders are least likely to appreciate multimedia in worship and preaching. In fact many of them are hostile toward it. But they can benefit from it, if it is presented to them properly.

A couple of church members from this generation told me that seeing the pictures during my sermons helped them overcome their hearing-loss that kept them from understanding all that I said. Seeing the pictures helped them to fill in the blanks. They could read the short phrases that summarized the Big Idea of my messages and go away with a better understanding of the sermon.

Despite their upbringing, seniors of today have lived in the television culture of the last fifty years. Image has infiltrated their learning experience and, if they suspend

¹²³ Gaffa, 102-3.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 103, quoting Leonard Sweet.

¹²⁵ Sample, 14.

judgment long enough to get used to multimedia in worship, they will find it helps them to learn and retain the messages.

McIntosh's second generation is the Boomer Wave. Their oldest members were born during the Baby Boom that followed World War II when GI's came home and started families. Younger Boomers were born in the late fifties and early sixties. Combined, the early and later Boomers are the largest of the four generations. They were better educated than their parents and had more opportunities. Most of them were also brought up watching TV and were heavily influenced by the unsettled sixties, the Vietnam War, the Cold War and the economic prosperity that dominated most of that time. They witnessed the moon landing, Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech and the assassination of King and President Kennedy. Because of Watergate, they became very disgruntled with government and institutions. Rock music's Elvis and the Beatles were their idols.¹²⁶

The highly educated Boomer Wave is media savvy. Advertisers made them the first targeted generation due to their majority numbers and affluence. They are also extremely interested in causes, such as peace, racial harmony and freedom. They are activists either from within the social institutions or from without; they want to "make a difference."¹²⁷

When it comes to worship, they are willing to question the old mores and try new things.

Churches that perpetuate a traditional model of worship may find it difficult to keep Boomers. Those who have traditional churches are often attracted to churches that have celebrative and participative worship services with contemporary music. ... Having become used to the short, entertaining bursts of

¹²⁶ McIntosh, 71-83.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 83-88.

information provided by television, Boomers may not respond to the traditional sermon format.¹²⁸

McIntosh suggests that preachers should keep their messages within half an hour and should put the emphasis on “practical application, not just content.” He also says Boomers might respond better to sermons that use drama and video to support the main ideas. A mixture of sermon formats is also important. Excellence is the key factor since Boomers want the very best. They also want options. Give them a choice of multiple, high quality worship experiences in different styles.¹²⁹

The third generation McIntosh discussed is the “Buster Wave.” He cites a 1992 incident in which a ten-year-old saved the life of his younger brother by performing the Heimlich maneuver. His brother was choking on something and the boy helped dislodge it by mimicking what he saw on the FOX television show *The Simpsons*. When told, one member of the show’s production team said, “It’s great. Everyone at *The Simpsons* was shocked to learn that anyone learned anything from our show. We’ll try not to let that happen again.”¹³⁰

According to McIntosh, that story about *The Simpsons* illustrates what most people think of the Buster generation. Many say, “It’s a wonder that this generation has learned anything.” But that is an unfair oversimplification of the generation that has been given the pejorative title Generation X due to this misconception.

Americans born between 1965 and 1983 make up this group. One of the strongest influences of this generation is technology. Television was old when they were born. The personal computer, video games, cable, satellite and the internet have shaped this group.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 96.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 96.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 121.

Busters also have been affected by the 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision that legalized the abortion of an estimated 15 million members of their generation. They were also affected by the discovery of AIDS. During their lifetime so far there have been two major recessions and two robust, economic recoveries. What surprises many about this generation is that they are willing to work for causes greater than themselves. Due to the misperception of Busters being narcissistic, they have not been challenged enough.

The most important characteristic for this study is that they are extremely visual learners.¹³¹

Builders were more audio learners, willing to sit and listen to lectures. Boomers were visual learners, influenced by television. Busters are also visual learners, but they learn through experience as well. Technically referred to as kinesthetic learners, they want not only to “see” the lesson but to “feel” it.¹³²

Because they are such experiential learners, the “worship as spectacle” model is necessary to reach them. We must involve them in worship to reach them in worship. Hymns and lecture-style preaching are ineffective with many in this generation. “For Busters, video games, faxes, cellular phones, ATM cards, compact discs, and computers have always been around. A church that does not have computers and the latest audio-visual equipment will seem old-fashioned.”¹³³

The church’s paradigm that was so successful in America during the 1950s will not attract Busters. Sample wrote:

It concerns me greatly that my children and grandchildren find church boring and not relevant to their lives. They are not touched by its worship services, finding them an exercise in tedium, and they find no compelling reason to commit themselves to Christ and the church. ... I want desperately to bridge this gap.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Ibid, 124-34.

¹³² Ibid, 134

¹³³ Ibid, 138.

¹³⁴ Sample, 15.

Younger generations are more visual than older generations. Today's kids are entertained by television, Disney videos, computers and Sony Playstation Video Games. They read far less than older generations. From 1982 to 1992 the percentage of young adults who had read a play, novel or short story dropped 7 percent. Those in their middle ages and over fifty only dropped 2 percent. Visual activities increased in younger people by 6-8 percent.¹³⁵

Sample described the experience of showing a fast paced video with upbeat music to a young man. Sample thought it was too fast and it could not be digested by viewers, so he showed it to the young man. The young man shocked Sample saying it was too slow. The difference in perception was due to the difference in their two generations.

This generation views media very differently than the way the Builder and even Boomer Waves did. Sample argues that we must find a way to communicate with them.

Neither of us will be well served if I simply decide that he is young and will “get over it.” If I hide myself from his true otherness about these things electronic, I will be the poorer for it. My generation will miss out on a major transformation occurring in our lifetime. Even more important, the church could lose a key opportunity and mission. It could be tragic to live through one of the most significant transitions in the history of the world and relegate it to a mere stage in the life of the young.¹³⁶

Leonard Sweet described what he called the “platinum rule,” which asks, “What are you willing to ‘lay down’ that others may pick up the life of faith?”¹³⁷ He called it the “platinum rule” because it is higher than the “golden rule” just like the Platinum Card is better than a Visa Gold card. He also called it that because those most affected by it are the ones most likely to have a Platinum Card in their wallets and purses—the current Senior Adult generation. They still control the church and built it based on their post

¹³⁵ Ibid, 48-49.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 15-16.

¹³⁷ Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, 174-175.

World War II paradigm. If you ask them if they want their grandchildren to put the church in the center of their lives the same way they did, they will all quickly raise their hands. If so, then “what are you willing to lay down in order to do unto others as Christ has done for you?”¹³⁸ How much of your paradigm will you surrender to communicate to this next generation?

The debate over worship style is the most divisive issue in the church today. Some have called it the worship wars. Elmer Towns stated, “The first murder took place between brothers in a disagreement over worship.”¹³⁹ But in order to reach the Buster Wave we will have to change the way we worship and preach.

According to McIntosh, effectively communicating with Busters might include “short, pointed dramas that are part of the worship service.”¹⁴⁰ He also contends that lecture is not effective with them; they want to be involved and they prefer a preacher to stand close to the audience and use media oriented toward multiple senses.

The challenge we face with the Buster Wave or Generation X is that “recent research indicates that Generation X and Millennial youth are ‘media sophisticates’ and ‘astute observers of mass media.’” Sample says they resist weak images like stock clip art from a piece of publishing software or very generic photographs that do not have any excitement visually.¹⁴¹

Busters are now beginning to assert themselves in our nation. They are running for Congress and serving as pastors and music ministers. They are taking on leadership roles in communities. Just as the Boomers did in the seventies and eighties, Busters are

¹³⁸ Ibid, 175.

¹³⁹ Elmer Towns, *Putting an End to the Worship Wars* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997), 47.

¹⁴⁰ McIntosh, 138.

¹⁴¹ Sample, 28. This refers to two of McIntosh’s four generations. What Sample calls “Millennial Youth” McIntosh calls Bridgers.

putting their stamp on the church. McIntosh renames this generation the “Re-Generation.” They are “tired of being disenfranchised, disconnected, and overshadowed. They are beginning to step forward and take command of their lives. Alert churches need to reach out in ministry to this Re-Generation.”¹⁴² If we do not start to use experiential, visual-based, multi-sensory, multimedia communication, we will lose the Buster Wave. And it is likely that we will need to empower them to lead this kind of worship.

The fourth generation McIntosh discussed is called the “Bridger Wave.” They are also called Generation Y or Millennial Youth. Since most Bridgers are still children and teenagers, they are hard to characterize. They are growing up with computers the way Busters grew up with television; to them, these things have always existed. Few of them remember life before Bill Clinton. Despite recent years, most of their lives have been spent in a strong economy. For them, the two most important events that have shaped their experience were the shootings at high schools like Columbine in Colorado and the attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. They love technology; most of them instant message their friends after school the way early generations phoned one another. IM or Instant Messaging software allows a person to type a message on his or her computer and send it over the internet to a friend next door or around the world. The friend can read it within a second or two and respond in kind. This fast pace will affect this generation as will soon-to-be implemented technologies like video-on-demand, where one will be able to access any movie or TV show ever made in high definition, Dolby-Digital surround sound by pressing a few buttons on a box next the television. The invention of the Tivo has allowed this generation to push a few buttons on their remote controls, and every episode of *Survivor* or *Sponge Bob* can be

¹⁴² McIntosh, 141.

recorded and watched any time they choose. This has made this generation the most technologically adept generation in our history. For them entertainment is dominated by computers and video-game consoles; the computer gaming industry is now bigger than the Hollywood film industry, due in large part to the youngest generation.¹⁴³

If the traditional church struggles to reach the Buster generation, it will drown in the sea of change necessary to reach Bridgers. Almost every aspect of their life is interactive. My sons can watch Nickelodeon on TV and, through the internet, choose what music video they want to watch. Their votes are collected and the chosen video will be shown during that episode. This generation doesn't even see this as ground-breaking. As they grow up, the traditional approach to church will look like something from a boring history filmstrip that we used to watch in grade school. The difference is grade schools are barely using such filmstrips anymore. They have computers in their classrooms and video monitors anchored to the wall. They can go online and Google¹⁴⁴ for homework help and information. Looking things up is seldom done with a book on the shelf; they go to the Encyclopædia Britannica or Encarta on the internet for such information.¹⁴⁵ My nine-year-old son just did a report for school on Jessie Owens. Every bit of data culled for his report was from internet sites.

One of the strategies McIntosh suggests for reaching Bridgers is to allow them to “discover the truth” by telling them that truth exists and how the Bible defines that. But then we must allow them to decide for themselves. It is also helpful to guide them to sources of truth and let them experience the discovery rather than “spoon feeding” it to

¹⁴³ Ibid, 161-77.

¹⁴⁴ Google is an internet search engine that has become such a part of society that its title has become a verb meaning to search on the internet for something. It is found at www.google.com.

¹⁴⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica can be found at www.britannica.com. Encarta is found at www.encarta.com.

them. Challenge them to seek it and give them the tools and direction to find it, and they will.¹⁴⁶ This is confirmed in the experience of Philip Bigler, Fairfax, Virginia's Teacher of the Year, who was quoted above.¹⁴⁷

McIntosh suggests that we embrace technology rather than resist it. Bridgers assume technology is a part of life. Bridgers are just as shocked that some churches do not use technology as some traditionalists are that we might want to use it.¹⁴⁸

Since Bridgers are so adept at using technology, involve them in the process. They will get to discover truth, experience the discovery and use their gifts for the upbuilding of the kingdom and church.¹⁴⁹ The most knowledgeable sound technician in my church has six years experience. He is only twenty years old.

As we have seen, multimedia and multi-sensory experiences are the most effective means of reaching three of the four generations. Over time, the fourth generation will find that it is a valuable tool for them despite their skepticism. This is due to the benefit all people gain from learning via multiple signals. The more ways one encodes a message, the more likely the receiver is to decode it as the sender intended. When the multiple signals conflict, the verbal is the least effective and will be the first ignored. Visuals are trusted first over audio communications. Donald Smith presented a form of the following chart in his book *Creating Understanding*.¹⁵⁰

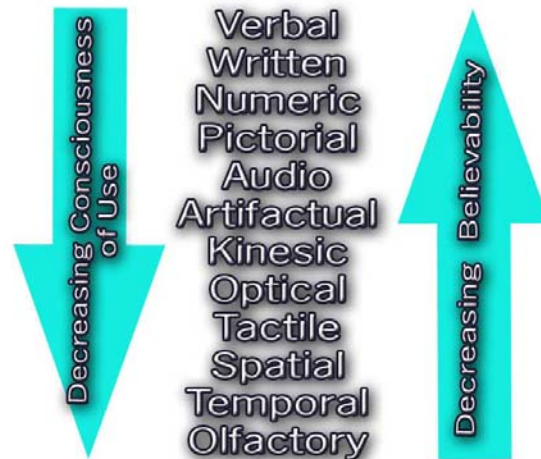
¹⁴⁶ McIntosh, 180.

¹⁴⁷ See page 59.

¹⁴⁸ McIntosh, 182.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 189-190.

¹⁵⁰ Smith, 163. This specific image is a PhotoShop image I created for the workshop outlined in chapter four.



The twelve signal systems listed in the chart above are the modes of communication that we use. The left arrow represents the consciousness with which we use these signals. The chart shows that I am more aware of my verbal and written forms of communication than I am of communication that uses the olfactory senses. On the right is an arrow that represents the diminishing believability of each signal. I may say the same thing twice, but if my body language changes, the perceived message will change. As communicators use the signals lower on the list, they are usually less conscious of using them. According to Smith's chart the most powerful signal of communication is the olfactory, which refers to our sense of smell. Is it any wonder that God used the smell of burning flesh in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament to communicate the putrid nature of judgment against our sin? Notice that the two forms of communication that the church has used most in its history are also the two least effective, verbal and written signals. However, baptism and the Lord's Supper are more powerful forms of media, which is likely the reason Jesus commanded us to do them.

If we will attempt to use multiple signal systems in our communication as preachers, we will be more effective with every generation. Since three of the four generations are predisposed to the use of visuals, multimedia can be a potent tool to

augment the communication of our verbal message. Using multimedia can include seven of the twelve signal systems (verbal, written, numeric, pictorial, audio, artifactual, and optical). It is possible to add more if we will include opportunities for appropriate forms of touch and smell.

Reaching four generations will not be easy. But we must learn to do this difficult task or else we will fail to measure up to our calling to communicate with all people (Matthew 28:19).

MULTIMEDIA HAS TO BE DONE RIGHT TO BE EFFECTIVE

Up to this point, we have seen that the use of multimedia and multi-sensory worship can bridge the divide between the church and the postmodern generations that have largely abandoned organized religion. However, some caveats must be considered.

One concern is that the power of symbols and images might overshadow the message. Sample agreed, saying that some images carry different meanings depending on the culture in which they are used. For example, a picture of an astronaut on the moon is not just a guy in a space suit. It brings with it the ideas of pioneering spirit or of technological advancement. For those alive during the moon landing a man in space might bring back memories of where they were on July 20, 1969 when Neil Armstrong took his “one small step for man, one giant step for mankind.”¹⁵¹ For younger generations it will be a less powerful image. Another example is the confederate flag. A meeting of the “Sons of Confederate Veterans” will feel pride and nostalgia upon seeing

¹⁵¹ “Apollo 30th Anniversary” retrieved from
<<http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/pao/History/ap11ann/introduction.htm>> on April 30, 2004.

the flag. African Americans might feel anger and bitterness. So we must be careful to exegete our audience before using certain images.¹⁵²

One of the pitfalls that hampered my early attempts at using multimedia was that it became a distraction rather than an instrument of communication. The weak images and boring slides took away from the emotion and drama of my illustrative material. And technical difficulties often distracted me as I preached. One church member complained that I spent too much time looking at the computer screen or turning to look at the large projection behind me.

Sample says improper use of multimedia can have a negative effect especially if the message and the visuals are not matched. An example he gave is of music videos that have a very enticing effect on young girls. But the songs themselves have words describing rape and are demeaning to women. The visuals make a song a hit on MTV with young teenage girls. But when the girls are given only the words, apart from the images, they are offended. When an image is so strong that it draws all the attention of the viewer, it can overshadow the message of the speaker or musician.¹⁵³

However, this can have an opposite effect. Sometimes an image, when it is connected to the message we are communicating, can have great power to implant it in the minds of our audience. Sample says, “So much is made of the negative consequences of images that their promise is often neglected. We fail to see how the use of images can open up new ways of engaging the world and new approaches to a host of issues and problems.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Sample, 21-27.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 30.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

One study that supports the power of image in communication was done at the University of Illinois by researcher Larry Smarr. His study showed “that our minds take in images more rapidly than they do print.” We can grasp “print at a rate of one hundred bits (characters or letters) per second” while pictures can be grasped at 10 million times that rate. A well-known proverb says “a picture paints a thousand words.” It is wrong. It is more like two to three million words.¹⁵⁵

Using this information, educators are finding that students who do not learn as well using language can excel when being taught via icons. They are putting computers in the classrooms and these students will, within six months, catch up to their fellow students and excel. Sample learned this through his own granddaughter who was struggling in school until this approach was used, and she eventually became a top student.¹⁵⁶ He argued that the church will be harmed if we do not harness the technology of multimedia. We will lose many people who are affected by the technological revolution, like his granddaughter.¹⁵⁷ They will look outside the church to satisfy their longing to be part of something bigger than themselves. We and they cannot afford the lack of interest that many have in this revolution.

The lesson we learn is that using the right images or multi-sensory experiences at the right time is important. We must match medium and message so that the message is best communicated rather than the medium either overpowering it or altering it.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 31.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

For examples of effective multimedia worship, one can consult Kim Miller's *Handbook for Multi-sensory Worship*.¹⁵⁸ She is on staff at the Ginghamburg Church, a pioneering Methodist church in Tipp City, Ohio.

Since preaching is communicating a message, the message must be the focus. But the mode of communication is nearly as important. Poorly communicated messages are often ignored messages. The Gospel is too important for us to allow our audience to ignore it. We must grab attention, maintain attention, and challenge our audience. Unless we use the proper tools, the job will not get done.

Gaffa offered two key considerations when evaluating whether to use multimedia in worship. They are

1. What is the purpose of this segment of the worship? (Motive)
2. What mediums, materials, and methods facilitate this purpose?¹⁵⁹

When applied to preaching, we must ask, what is the purpose of this part of the sermon? Is it to grab the attention of the listener in the introduction? If so, then what available means would best do that? A skit performed by actors or a video clip from a popular film or television show could be used. If the purpose of a segment of a sermon is explanation of an idea, maybe a quotation from a well-known authority projected on screen or a picture of an object that illustrates the idea would be helpful. When teaching on the link between the Old Testament tabernacle and Jesus Christ, I used pictures of a model of the tabernacle built to scale. In 2000 a full-scale model of the tabernacle was built by a group called biblical Israel Tours.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Kim Miller, *Handbook for Multi-sensory Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999). This is a book of ideas for various forms of multimedia worship designed to touch people using all the senses. Also see the Ginghamburg Church web site at <http://www.ginghamburg.org>.

¹⁵⁹ Gaffa, 125.

¹⁶⁰ "Full-scale Model of the Old Testament Tabernacle" *biblical Israel Tours*, retrieved from <http://www.biblicalisrael tours.com/full_scale_model_of_the_old_test.htm> on May 5, 2004.

Media should match the message; the purpose of an element in a sermon should be tied to an appropriate signal. If I am trying to draw the attention of the audience to a conclusion and give an appeal, a video clip of something humorous might not fit a somber message. If purpose and signal are not matched well, the multimedia will be a distraction; the audience will be less likely to receive the message as it was intended.

Gaffa presented some critiques based on improper matching between message and signal. He said that some view the use of multimedia as “a destructive force to logical reasoning, literate communication, and social stability.”¹⁶¹ This is a fair concern. But given the description of postmodern culture noted previously, it seems that the problem is not going away, whether we use multimedia or not. As was previously shown, one of the characteristics of postmodern culture is that communication has shifted from logical reasoning and literate communication to non-linear thinking and symbological communication. We might think this is new, but in reality Christians have been thinking about Scripture this way for a long time. When one considers a topic of spiritual interest like the grace of God, he or she does not recite the whole thread of grace throughout the entire Bible. Instead one will select various passages from many places in the Bible. We may read one passage on God’s grace and our trusted cross references lead us to another passage, and that one to another. The same system of thinking is what drives the internet. According to Lohead, hypertext links lead us in a non-linear train of thought just like topical Bible study does.¹⁶² In reality the world has caught up with the way we have used our Bibles for years.

¹⁶¹ Gaffa, 151. Critiques come from Marshal McLuhan, Neil Postman and Jacque Ellul.

¹⁶² Lohead, 71-74.

Since the culture at large has already made this shift, the church must have a missionary mindset to communicate in postmodern vernacular. If we do not, we will be seen by our surrounding culture as irrelevant. We might, after winning them, be able to draw them to a more rational approach.

The connection between rationality and Christianity is a product of an era that is quickly eroding. The age of reason was not always connected with the Christian faith. The shift to an emphasis on reason took place during the previous intellectual revolution called the Enlightenment. The church had to go through a major shift in its discipleship as an emphasis was placed on teaching people to read the Bible themselves instead of relying on the clergy. Another paradigm shift is taking place today as we move from communication dominated by words and ideas to symbological communication dominated by pictures and feelings. We must learn to communicate to a post-literate culture.

Does this mean preachers should forgo expository preaching to pursue a topical approach? No! We must still communicate God's message. However, our sermons should shift to appeal to non-linear thinking and symbological communication through the use of multimedia and multi-sensory experiences that allow hearers to participate and connect with their fellow hearers.

Symbols and signals are not the only things that connect the sermon with the audience. A preacher can be involved with his or her congregation in the preaching moment by allowing them to do some of the application for themselves. Haddon Robinson argues that our job is to communicate what we know from our study of the passage and their lives

...in a manner that doesn't talk down to a congregation, in a way that says, "If you were in my situation, you'd have access to the same information." If you feel you must make all the practical application for your hearers, do their thinking for them, you underestimate their intelligence. You can dishonor your congregation if you tell them in effect, "You folks couldn't have figured out for yourselves how this applies."¹⁶³

Most advocates of the use of multimedia in preaching do not believe that using pictures, presentations, video and other multi-sensory communication is the only way to connect. Some argue that "the message ... can be lost, overpowered, or even erased by the medium itself."¹⁶⁴ This is true only of those who use multimedia improperly.

Therefore, the argument is not a fair criticism of the all uses of multimedia. It is, however, a fair argument against using multimedia improperly. A dramatic video clip could be so powerful that the only thing the audience remembers is the clip and not the message. But this is not new to multimedia. We have all heard a preacher preach a lackluster sermon only to conclude it with a powerful, tear-jerker illustration that leads the congregation to pour down the aisles for repentance. Walking away from those experiences, the only thing taken away is that amazing story. The actual message of the preacher's sermon text is lost.

The above argument actually favors multimedia. It assumes the power of using visuals or sound effects or any other multi-sensory element. It is important to properly match the multimedia element to the proper element of the message so that this does not happen. If one does find the right place for such an item, it can powerfully communicate in a way that the single medium of spoken word cannot. Larry Smarr's study, cited on page 83, demonstrated that images communicate more effectively than spoken words alone.

¹⁶³ Haddon W. Robinson, *Making a Difference in Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1999), 90.

¹⁶⁴ Lothead.

A few notable examples of the power of images and words together come from some recent films. The *Visual Bible: Matthew* and *The Visual Bible: Acts* are produced by the same company that made the recent film *The Gospel of John*. These films are potent adaptations of the Scripture using, word-for-word, the New International Version of the Bible in the case of the Matthew and Acts films and the Good News Bible in *The Gospel of John*. I have had repeated experiences of using these videos in worship. Gaffa expressed the reason for their effectiveness stating, “for the first time, this congregation (his church) has seen both word and image brought together in a meaningful way within their worship environment.” Another example is the film *The Passion of the Christ* produced and directed by Mel Gibson. In a review of the film Keith A. Fournier expressed how it moved him. He said, “In addition to being a masterpiece of film making and an artistic triumph, ‘The Passion’ evoked more deep reflection, sorrow and emotional reaction within me than anything since my wedding, my ordination or the birth of my children. Frankly, I will never be the same.”¹⁶⁵ This film’s combination of the scriptural account with professional quality makes it a useful vehicle for communicating the “passion” with which Jesus acted. The reviewer confirms this when he cited a specific scene in the film.

One scene in the film has now been forever etched in my mind. A brutalized, wounded Jesus was soon to fall again under the weight of the cross. His mother had made her way along the [Via Dolorosa]. As she ran to him, she flashed back to a memory of Jesus as a child, falling in the dirt road out side of their home. Just as she reached to protect him from the fall, she was now reaching to touch his wounded adult face.

Jesus looked at her with intensely probing and passionately loving eyes (and at all of us through the screen) and said “Behold I make all things new.” These are words taken from . . . Revelation. Suddenly, the purpose of the pain was

¹⁶⁵ Keith A. Fournier, “Passionate About the Passion” *Catholic Way*, retrieved from http://www.christianity.com/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID5339|CHID14|CIID1615818,00.html on January 22, 2004.

so clear and the wounds, that earlier in the film had been so difficult to see in His face, His back, indeed all over His body, became intensely beautiful. They had been borne voluntarily for love.¹⁶⁶

One criticism of using images in preaching is similar to the previously stated problem of the images overpowering the message. Graham Johnston described the shift from print media to visual media. He said,

As a result of the deconstruction movement, the force of the written word was diminished. Words carried no true meaning. Enter the image. Images leave the viewer, not with carefully crafted ideas and precepts but with impressions. Images function to allow the viewer to construct one's own interpretation. Hence, television both suits and helped to create the Post-modern ethos.¹⁶⁷

Based on this, the argument could be made that images do not clearly communicate truth. The audience is left to create its own impressions of what is being transferred from the preacher to his or her audience. However, that assumes the image will be displayed without comment. The image alone might be vague, but accompanied by the spoken word, a song or an audio recording of Scripture, the audience is guided to an understanding of the image. The two forms of media become one message. Pedantic commentary of each image is not necessary. Postmodern people will want to bring their own ideas and experience to the situation and participate in the message. But a preacher or worship leader can guide those thoughts so that the message is communicated but not overtly. This kind of presentation does require some knowledge of the audience and a trust in their ability to perceive intended meanings of the signals used.

A final criticism of the use of multimedia in preaching is that putting an outline on the screen while the preacher addresses the issues can be distracting. "One could

¹⁶⁶ Fournier.

¹⁶⁷ Graham Johnston, 48.

assert that this distracts the listener from being able to truly listen to the preacher.”¹⁶⁸

Some argue that outlines printed in bulletins do the same thing. Listeners who take notes can get so caught up with the notes they miss the event that is the sermon. Merely displaying a sermon outline is not an effective use of multimedia whether one uses a projected image on a screen, a printed bulletin, or writes on a hanging bed sheet with a Sharpie marker. This is a complaint against bad multimedia, not all multimedia. Gaffa uses sermon outlines printed in the church bulletin and displayed on a screen using *PowerPoint*. Len Wilson and Jason Moore are two visual media experts who decry this use of multimedia. They call it the “business model” of using presentation technology in worship. In their book *Digital Story Tellers*, their premise is that multimedia used in worship should artistically glorify God. When it does, the Holy Spirit often chooses to touch the hearts of worshipers in unique ways. Therefore, worship leaders must endeavor to create art in support of the music, testimony, drama and preaching. That is the only effective use of multimedia in preaching and worship.¹⁶⁹

For centuries the best art was often created in the world of the church. The concertos of Bach and Handel are prime examples. Today artists are using digital means to create beautiful works that bring honor and glory to God. This gives them an outlet for their talent. It also gives a new group of artists a chance to lead in worship. Wilson and Moore propose that we use digital art instead of boring bullet points.¹⁷⁰

Wilson called the business model of presentations that many churches mistakenly use “the AV mentality.”¹⁷¹ The “AV Mentality” is using *PowerPoint* only to show an

¹⁶⁸ Gaffa, 158.

¹⁶⁹ Wilson and Moore.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Wilson, *The Wired Church*, 38.

outline of a sermon with animations, multiple, uncomplimentary colors and too many fonts. He said that is a poor use of the medium. Many slides are filled with too many words and very few pictures or video clips. Using presentations in this way will have a negative effect. He argues it is better to use no multimedia than bad multimedia.

Wilson and Moore argue that our job is to tell stories using art to bring our audience into the presence of God. We were all created by a God who knows aesthetics because He was the first artist. To bring Him glory, we must also be artists in our use of visual images. This requires hard work, but worthwhile work. Most churches will simply buy a projector, hook up someone's laptop to it and start throwing words on a wall or even worse a bed sheet. They are proud of their multimedia worship and expect twenty- and thirty-something people to pour through the doors. They are disappointed when it doesn't happen and blame the multimedia. It is not that the multimedia failed. It is that they failed to use it effectively.

We believe that the future of media in church will only thrive if advocates begin to use an artistic, narrative approach as they design worship. This means that the screen is used to communicate thoughts, ideas, and feelings that can touch people at a much deeper level. Projected song lyrics and sermon points alone cannot meet the need.¹⁷²

If the AV mentality is the wrong approach, what is the right approach? One of the key benefits of multimedia is that the more communications signals we use, the greater the retention of the message. We have all heard sermons and within a few hours forgotten the message. Sometimes this is because of poor homiletics. The buckshot approach to preaching is when you throw a bunch of ideas out and hope one hits the target. That is usually the problem when a message is quickly forgotten. But even when preaching one Big Idea and doing so with clarity and force, the congregation can still fail to retain it.

¹⁷² Wilson and Moore, 73-74.

Wilson asks the question, “How do pastors and worship leaders combat this retention problem?” He offers the following:

Here’s the solution . . . metaphor. Applying a metaphor to your message simply takes the potentially abstract story or idea(s) you are working with and updates it to a present-day tangible equivalent. Substituting familiar objects, stories, and situations can make archaic and hard-to-grasp texts easy to understand and retain in our long-term memory, rather than short-term. Metaphor is the glue that makes it stick!¹⁷³

A narrative, if lifted from popular culture, can quickly communicate an idea. If that idea is scriptural, then suddenly the audience has “a multifaceted point of entry”¹⁷⁴ into the biblical understanding of the world. This allows present day audiences a chance to quickly understand the concept so they can spend more time comparing it with their experience and evaluating the worth of adopting the biblical worldview presented.

The strategy is to first brainstorm possible metaphors that could communicate the message. As preachers we know that these metaphors can come directly from Scripture. Psalm 23 gives us the metaphor of a shepherd. But that is not always the best contemporary metaphor. Maybe a daycare teacher would be a metaphor that communicates the same ideas. “God is my daycare teacher. He leads me to nap time and gives me a cup of Kool-Aid to drink. He doesn’t let that big Charlie Wertz beat me up. And sometimes, when I try to run out the front door, he lovingly grabs my suspenders.” Wilson and Moore suggest that the more powerful a metaphor is, the more likely the audience and preacher are to remember the message.¹⁷⁵

After brainstorming a good metaphor, Wilson suggests gathering material from all possible sources, including video rentals, television commercials, homemade videos,

¹⁷³ Ibid, 124-25.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 136-37.

¹⁷⁵ Wilson and Moore, 131.

pictures off the internet or common objects around the house.¹⁷⁶ Creativity will help us in this stage of development. The key is to formulate the concept well in advance of the preaching event so that one may observe the culture and search for appropriate visuals.

The danger of this approach is that the images and the metaphor become dominant over the message of the Scripture. If we do not accurately match metaphor and message, we are hindering biblical communication. If the preacher is careful to exegete his or her text first and then brainstorm ideas for modern day metaphors that can appropriately communicate the passage's Big Idea, then this approach can be successful.

After collecting the various things that will be used, put them together in a presentable fashion and then practice presenting them. After rehearsal, revision might be necessary.¹⁷⁷ Again, Wilson and Moore's approach glosses over the finer points of homiletics. Their audience is not necessarily preachers, but worship leaders in general. If we are careful to organize all the supporting material in a good, homiletically sound fashion, this approach can be useful.

The elements we use for our presentations must be of high quality. Today's postmodern generation is media savvy; they are used to seeing high quality content on television, in films and even at school or work. They can spot cheap media quickly. Wilson's rule is "mediocre media is worse than none at all, because it doesn't communicate." Instead it takes away from the message and leaves an impression that the church and, by association, Jesus Christ, are second class.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Copyright issues will be discussed later in this paper. One must be very careful to use copyrighted material in a legal way.

¹⁷⁷ Wilson, 37-38.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 76.

In order to create excellent media, we will have to put together a team of media ministers. Len Wilson argues that one of the reasons the church seems less relevant today is “partly because it continues to put all of its weight on one central leader. Although ministry in the age of the printed word was largely individual, ministry in the electronic age is . . . operating with a number of specialists.”¹⁷⁹ It is important that you do not attempt to do this alone when starting out.

Where will the church find the skills to engage our culture with computers, projectors, cameras and sound equipment? Many churches are filled with people suffering from technophobia. Sweet offers one source—our kids. He argues that if schools can call on students to train teachers to use the computers in their classrooms, then why can’t the church do the same for the preacher or music minister?¹⁸⁰ Young people seem to have an almost innate understanding of technology. What they do not know, they pick up quickly because they have grown up with technology. According to Tim Eason,

“A marketing director for a company that produces video editing equipment told me that it takes two hours for an adult to teach another adult how to use their product. He went on to say that it takes thirty minutes for a young person to teach another young person the same thing.”¹⁸¹

Warren Bennis proposed that young people are not only talented and quick to develop technical skills, but they usually do not fear “failure” as much as people in older generations.¹⁸² However, they need guidance, so the team leader should be older.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 73-74.

¹⁸⁰ Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, 340.

¹⁸¹ Tim Eason, *Media Ministry Made Easy* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 56.

¹⁸² Patricia Ward Biederman and Warren Bennis, *Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration*, (New York: Perseus Books, 1997).

Another source for talent is local media professionals. Wilson relates the experience of asking one of his church's volunteers to produce a video for the church. The volunteer knew some talented people in the area, and they helped him produce the video. After learning of the church's use of video, two of the three people he solicited for volunteer help started attending the church and got involved in the media ministry.¹⁸³

Regardless of age, the following people make up a complete media ministry team. The first person is the coach of the team. This person might be a pastor, volunteer, full-time media minister, worship leader or anyone else placed in this role. But her job is to lead the team and make sure that all the parts are together for the Sunday worship experience. She is like the producer of a Broadway musical. Second, you need a person who has a "creative mind," who is the artist. This person will be focused on content. The third person is the technical person. His focus will be on the equipment and making all the electronics work together. These three people will work with the pastor and, if possible, other team volunteers to create and present the multimedia message.¹⁸⁴ In most cases, the pastor should still dictate the message while the team will support the pastor in creating and organizing the supporting material.

When possible it is best to use volunteers on the media team since it requires less money and their motivation will be ministry rather than financial recompense. This also keeps the team members from feeling that one member is more important if that person is the only one paid for their work. However, some have argued that paying people makes them more accountable. The decision to work with volunteers or paid professionals will depend on each church's unique needs.

¹⁸³ Wilson, 74-75.

¹⁸⁴ Eason, 47-55.

Whoever is put on the team will need training. Few churches have professional media specialists. Many churches will be filled with people suffering from media-technophobia, an irrational fear of media technology. For that reason, training is a necessity. The focus of such training is beyond the scope of this project. But as Tim Eason says, the best way to staff a media ministry is to find volunteers and “train them up” into the specialists you need.¹⁸⁵ A willing person is far more useful as a volunteer than one who is able but unmotivated.

In most churches the pastor is the person responsible for setting the spiritual agenda of a church’s worship experience. Should the pastor be the team leader? That is a decision the church will have to make for itself. Since most churches see the pastor as the primary leader that will probably put him or her in that role. But the focus is on a team-based approach to worship planning. Wilson and Moore suggest there is a benefit of the pastor working alongside a team to plan the entire worship experience. It allows for more creativity as the various members of the team feed off one another’s creativity and ideas. One person might suggest an idea that is totally inappropriate. But it could spark an idea in another team member. The brainstorming inspires more ideas, which are refined and reformed until finally a powerful metaphor is cultivated that communicates the Big Idea of the message succinctly and effectively. The metaphor might not have been found had the pastor tried to do this alone or if he or she merely gave a copy of the sermon to the team and asked them to come up with something on their own.¹⁸⁶

If a media ministry adopts the team approach, the pastor will have to plan the preaching agenda early. There is no room for last minute preparation. A preacher will

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 55.

¹⁸⁶ Wilson and Moore, 594.

have to do the sermon preparation work in parts. First, he will have to determine what the theme or emphasis of a worship experience is going to be. He might do this alone, but if he uses the ideas of his team, he is more likely to address issues that are a part of people's lives. Preachers often struggle with what to preach. Now the preacher has a team of people to assist in generating themes.

After selecting the theme, the harder job is finding a passage of Scripture that actually offers that as its main message. We often think a passage is about one subject, like prayer, but after careful, inductive study, find that it is actually about something else. In that case you have to change the message to be communicated or keep searching for another text.

Another approach to selecting themes that force us to “preach the whole counsel of God” and avoid the mistake of forcing an idea onto a passage is to select the passage first. This can be done by picking a random passage, following the church lectionary, or choosing a book of the Bible to work through. This way the next theme will be set by the chosen passage to be communicated, allowing the Bible to speak for itself. If this is the method of selection, then the preacher will do the inductive study to determine the “Big Idea” of the sermon.

The Big Idea of a sermon is determined after careful exegesis and after asking two hermeneutical questions of the text. They are, “(1) What is the text talking about (subject)? (2) What is the text saying about the subject (complement)?”¹⁸⁷ By asking and answering these two questions after careful study, we can accurately know what is God's message to us in the chosen passage.

¹⁸⁷ Keith Wilhite, *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998), 17.

Once the Big Idea of a text is determined, the preacher will then form an outline of the text and what it is saying. This outline will become the basis for the “script” of the message in the worship experience. In a worship experience, Wilson proposes creating two scripts. One is the list of elements that make up the whole worship experience, and the other is focused on the sermon itself.¹⁸⁸ The Big Idea will inform both scripts; the elements of the whole worship experience should be guided by the primary message to be communicated.

The role of the preacher is to guide the message and discover the general theme of the message. The team will then take the message and focus on supporting material that will help the preacher to communicate the message. The preacher may dictate exactly what he or she is looking for. She might give a “grocery list” of items to the team. Or she might give the team general themes, letting them determine what best fits each general idea. A third approach would be a mixture of the two. The preacher may want specific elements, like a skit to introduce the Big Idea or a video clip that illustrates the application of the message. The preacher then allows the team to choose the rest of the supporting multimedia signals. Whichever approach is chosen will depend on the skill level of the team members and the confidence the preacher has in them.

Whether the team chooses the content or the preacher chooses the content or a combination of the two, the key concept to remember in this process is creativity. J. Grant Howard addressed creativity in preaching. He said,

Remember, you are a person preaching to persons. One of the best ways to personalize your preaching is to project people onto the screen. . . . Give them names. Focus on their faces. Portray different facial expressions, because each expression arises out of, and gives evidence for, a particular life-setting.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Wilson, 109-10.

¹⁸⁹ J. Grant Howard, *Creativity in Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1987), 99-100.

For him “life-setting preaching” is dealing with biblical issues in a way that applies to the hearers’ real world. It is getting away from abstract and becoming more concrete. Using images will help do this, so long as you are using real people. Clipart with cartoon characters are not effective except to tell a joke. When you deal with authentic issues, you need to display photographs or, even better, video clips to bring the message to life. Don’t use cartoons or clipart.

Howard offers some tips for using images to support preaching. First, he says that this approach is especially powerful when dealing with application. Show people who have been affected by the truths being communicated. Second, he says this can be overdone. If it is used in every sermon, it will become passé or predictable. In my own experience, when I used images in this way every week, I stopped preparing sermons and started preparing presentations. The level and depth of my preaching suffered, and the congregation had to endure it. Third, Howard supports the team approach. He says we should find people who have the talent to help make our visuals professional. This involves more people in the process, which gets them involved in the sermons. They will grow stronger and pay more attention, as will those close to them. God will bless the use of their abilities, and such teamwork keeps our multimedia from being “second-rate.”¹⁹⁰

A good resource of support material for sermons that is already multimedia is movies.

Movies have become the literature of our culture. Listen in on the conversations going on around you in a restaurant or at the mall, and you will hear people discussing the latest movies they’ve seen. Movies, therefore, are one bridge we can walk in order to connect with hearers where they are. Like literature, they offer a vast array of scenes, situations, and stirring stories (exactly what preachers crave)—things that preachers and teachers cannot always get from their personal

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 107-8.

experience. Movies are a treasure-house of metaphors and phrases. Mention a movie in a sermon, and watch everyone turn a listening ear.¹⁹¹

There are a couple of things we need to be aware of when using movies. First, we have to be careful that by citing a film we are not inadvertently condoning objectionable material. Of course any scene shown should not include profanity or nudity of any kind, nor should off-color humor or innuendo be included. There is a concern that when using scenes that meet these criteria but are from films that do not, we might be giving approval to such material. Using material from films that contain objectionable material might be offensive in one church but not in another. The preacher should always err on the side of caution. A good way to overcome this concern is have a collection of people who are a good cross section of your congregation. Ask them if a certain movie would be objectionable. My own practice is to not use material from R-rated films unless it is extremely compelling or unless the film is rated for reasons other than the above. For example Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ* is rated R, and some scenes from it could be used in worship despite its rating.

Another issue to deal with is legality. Quoting a movie or telling about a scene does not violate any laws. However, showing video clips from a film would violate the copyright of almost all films, unless the producers state that it can be shown in a church or educational setting. Such films do exist but are rare, even in Christian films. If a church plans to use video from movies it should participate in the Church Video Licensing International (CVLI) program. Due to their partnership with the Motion Picture Licensing Corporation, an annual fee paid to CVLI allows its members to show video

¹⁹¹ Craig Brian Larson and Andrew Zahn, *Movie-Based Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2003), 9.

clips.¹⁹² On their web site they have the following chart, which gives a fee scale as of April 2005.¹⁹³

Category	Church Size	Family Values Producer Pkg	Total Producer Pkg
A & AH	1-99	\$50.00	\$180.00
B	100-199	\$90.00	\$180.00
C	200-499	Not Available	\$180.00
D	500-999	Not Available	\$250.00
E	1,000-1,499	Not Available	\$350.00
F	1,500-2,999	Not Available	\$475.00
G & up	3,000 & up	Not Available	\$600.00

The Family Values Producer Package focuses on family-oriented and religious films, while the Total Producer Package has a wider selection of film producers included. This only allows member churches to show videos from the approved list of producers on the list they pay for. And this does not include television shows or commercials, which are also popular. Showing video clips from sources not included in the CVLI package risks violating copyright laws and the Digital Millennium Copyright Act.¹⁹⁴

Sources for movie-based illustrations include *Videos That Teach*¹⁹⁵ by Doug Fields and Eddie James, Group Publishing's *Group's Blockbuster Movie Illustrations*¹⁹⁶, Movie Ministry, which is a web service of movie based illustrations¹⁹⁷, and Preaching Today's web site.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹² Larson, 10-11.

¹⁹³ "License Fees", *Church Video Licensing International*, retrieved from <http://www.cvli.org/cvli/LicenseFees.cfm?Country=US> on April 1, 2005.

¹⁹⁴ For more information on what is covered in the Digital Millennium Copyright Act see <http://www.copyright.gov/legislation/dmca.pdf> which was available as of January 23, 2004.

¹⁹⁵ Doug Fields and Eddie James, *Videos That Teach* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1999).

¹⁹⁶ Bryan Belknap, *Group's Blockbuster Movie Illustrations* (Loveland, Colo.: Group Publishing, 2001).

¹⁹⁷ *Movie Ministry*, retrieved from <http://www.movieministry.com/> on January 23, 2004.

¹⁹⁸ *Preaching Today*, retrieved from <http://www.preachingtoday.com/> on January 23, 2004. This web site is produced by the publishers of Christianity Today, which also published Larson's and Zahn's book along with Zondervan.

The focus of this study has largely been with technological media. However, multimedia can include non-technical media like drama, testimonies, interviews, musical presentations, dance, visual art like paintings or sculpture, question and answer sessions, or whatever fits the message and most effectively communicates the Big Idea or supporting ideas of a message. One of the primary emphases of Len Wilson and Jason Moore in *Digital Storytellers* is upon art as a means of communication. They focus on electronic art, but this could include all art forms, both pop and fine art.¹⁹⁹ Pop art comes from what is popular. Top 40 music and hit TV shows or movies are pop art. Pop art can be used to raise questions or present contemporary issues. The result is not only communication of a biblical message, but since this art is popular, it is likely that it will be experienced outside of worship. When it is, Wilson claims, worshippers will associate the art with the biblical message.²⁰⁰ For example, if a preacher uses clips from a game show to illustrate a message about greed, it is possible that whenever worshippers see that particular game show, they are likely to associate it with the biblical message about greed; the message is reinforced every time they see the game show. Len Wilson calls using popular cultural references “redeeming the culture.” His desire is not only to illustrate the message of a song or sermon, but also to tie that song or sermon’s message to that popular cultural reference.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Wilson and Moore, chapter 3. The entire chapter is about how people use visual media in worship more like businesses with simple text and informational style graphics. The authors’ emphasis is on using the medium to present art, which by nature is creative and draws people closer to worship of God. He says use fine art and pop art so long as it points to the glory of God.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 427.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 364. The authors spend a great deal of time discussing what is art. Their assumption is that art is more than just high culture art like classical music or art films. They include popular art and say that we can utilize pop art more effectively since in our culture today few people have an appreciation for high culture art and are less likely to patronize such art.

As the media team considers sources, they would do well to include popular art, such as music, movies, television shows and local events. These will all inspire the team as they seek after multimedia signals to include in a message presentation. Another resource is the internet, and specifically pictures or video found on the internet. There are three primary sources. First, Google.com is a good way to find pictures.²⁰² Clicking on the “Images” link that appears second from the left in the Google search box will allow you to enter a keyword like grace. In a recent search 14 pages, each with 20 thumbnail images of pictures, were found on web pages. Each thumbnail appears with the name of the image below it, the size of the image in both pixels and kilobits, and the web page address.

When searching with Google be careful that the “SafeSearch Filtering” feature is turned on. This can be done by clicking on the “preferences link” next to the input box on Google’s main page. This link will open a list of preferences. Look down the page for “SafeSearch Filtering” and click on either the “Use strict filtering (Filter both explicit text and explicit images)” tick box or the “Use moderate filtering (Filter explicit images only—default behavior).” The first will filter all pages with objectionable material. The second will filter only pictures with objectionable material. This is the default setting, but I recommend using the “strict filtering” option. Understand that the term “objectionable” refers to what the Google programmers deem objectionable. This might filter Christian web sites that deal with the issue of homosexuality. But it is a worthwhile trade-off. Using “strict filtering” will keep the user from seeing or reading pornographic material and other things believers have no business looking at on the internet.

²⁰² <www.google.com>. Retrieved on February 24, 2004.

One must also remember that when using content found on the internet, all copyright laws must be obeyed. Some images cannot be used without permission from the owner.

A way to add narrative to our presentations is to use a combination of the Google Image Search function and the Google News Search function. For example, I found an article about how the Pittsburgh Penguins National Hockey League team has lost so often that they have now “fallen from grace” among their fans.²⁰³ This might inspire a metaphor about losing in sports as it relates to losing in the area of temptation. What is victory? While none of the images might actually make it into the presentation, they could inspire ideas. During the Super Bowl in 2004, living near Charlotte, North Carolina, afforded many opportunities to use sports metaphors since the Carolina Panthers made the team’s first ever trip to the Super Bowl. Such events allow a media team to grab the attention of worship attendees with something they are already thinking much about—their hometown sports team.

Not only can metaphors be seized from major sporting events like the Super Bowl or World Series, but from local or national events that grab everyone’s attention. This could include wildly popular TV shows like *Survivor* or *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, or pop culture events like the arrest of major celebrities like Michael Jackson or O. J. Simpson. While these events are fresh, using images that remind people of them can awaken attention for a biblical message.

A second resource for pictures on the internet is the many free media sites.

Chapter eight of Wilson’s and Moore’s book *Digital Storytellers* is actually online. When

²⁰³ Alan Robinson, *Penguins’ Fall From Grace*, <<http://www.canada.com/montreal/montrealgazette/story.asp?id=8917D2DD-2878-487D-A0C0-0436F3871115>> Retrieved February 24, 2004.

you come to chapter eight in the book it says to go to their web site. The site lists many online sources for both graphics and tutorials on using and creating presentation graphics, including government sites, industry sites and online graphics collections.²⁰⁴ Not listed are places that have *PowerPoint* background images and graphics. One of those is SermonCentral.com.²⁰⁵ This site has thousands of sermons, outlines and illustrations. They are of limited value to expository preachers. However, their *PowerPoint* store is a valuable site for biblically based presentation graphics. Another similar site is eBibleTeacher.com.²⁰⁶ Again, the lessons and sermons are of limited value to expository preachers. But the images and backgrounds are useful.

A third source of digital media that can be found online is subscription sites or catalogues of media that can be purchased. An example of high quality video produced for use in preaching and teaching is Highway Video.²⁰⁷ You can sample some video clips or purchase them on CD or DVD. These include things like “man on the street interviews” or testimonials. Also Wilson and Moore have their own web site of resources at Midnight Oil Productions.²⁰⁸

This study will now focus on the issue of the what it means to give an effective presentation. Eason suggest “Three P’s” of using multimedia in worship.²⁰⁹ They are:

1. Planning – the team works together with the preacher and worship leader to plan what content will make up the multimedia presentation of the message or

²⁰⁴ Wilson and Moore, chapter 8 online at <<http://www.abingdonpress.com/ebooks/sampleChapter.asp?author=Len%20Wilson%20and%20Jason%20Moore&macsitemno=0687052130>>. Retrieved February 24, 2004.

²⁰⁵ SermonCentral, <<http://www.sermoncentral.com>>. Retrieved February 24, 2004.

²⁰⁶ eBibleTeacher.com, <<http://www.eBibleteacher.com/index.html>>. Retrieved February 24, 2004.

²⁰⁷ Highway Video, <<http://www.highwayvideo.com/>>. Retrieved February 24, 2004.

²⁰⁸ Midnight Oil Productions, <<http://www.midnightoilproductions.net/index.html>>. Retrieved February 24, 2004. Here you can purchase collections of images, videos, training books as well as their *Fresh Out of the Box* volumes which are complete metaphor based worship experiences.

²⁰⁹ Eason, 62-63.

theme for that worship experience. It is at this point that the team will brainstorm possible metaphors that communicate the message.

2. Patience – The ministry team must be patient with one another and their own abilities. The team members will not become media experts immediately. Start small and work toward a goal of excellence. Find a model and pursue that level of quality patiently.
3. Practice – One of the most useful practices I started in my preaching ministry early on was to actually get up in the front of the auditorium and preach my sermon to an empty room on the Friday before the Sunday service. This time of practice helped me work out my presentation and occasionally led me to reevaluate certain illustrations or the entire message structure. A media ministry team would benefit from the same kind of practice. Once the format is in place, it would be beneficial to do a “dress rehearsal” or “dry run.”

Microsoft PowerPoint is the most popular tool used for multimedia presentations.

Other good software products are designed for church multimedia purposes. However, since many churches already have *PowerPoint*, or a program like it called *Corel Presentations*, it is the one used most often.

Len Wilson summarizes the problem with *PowerPoint* succinctly. “*PowerPoint* is most frequently a medium that is neither rare nor well done.”²¹⁰ The problem with most multimedia presentations is that they are “outdated like our worship.” Traditional worship harkens back to the 1950s, while much church multimedia found its origin in the board rooms of American corporations in the early 1990s. When a church installs a projector and brings in a “techno geek” who knows how to use the basic tools of presentation

²¹⁰ Wilson and Moore, 51.

technology, church leaders think they are up-to-date. But the two things lacking in most church presentations are emotion and stories.

According to presentations expert Seth Godin, Microsoft is to blame for weak church presentations. *PowerPoint* “newbies”²¹¹ are not at fault. “*PowerPoint* was developed by engineers as a tool to help them communicate with the marketing department—and vice versa.”²¹² He goes on to say that this can be a powerful tool of “verbal communication.” But instead, “Almost every *PowerPoint* presentation (smells like) rotten eggs.”²¹³ The reason he gives is that Microsoft made the automation of *PowerPoint* easy. But this ability to automate the creation of presentation slides leads to what Wilson and Moor call the AV mentality.

We believe that the future of media in church will only thrive if advocates begin to use an artistic, narrative approach as they design worship. This means that the screen is used to communicate thoughts, ideas, and feelings that can touch people at a much deeper level. Projected song lyrics and sermon points alone cannot meet the need.²¹⁴

The cure for the AV mentality and outdated multimedia is seeing worship presentation as an art form. It is actually a means to display art. According to Wilson and Moore, art is both educational and experiential; both are goals of postmodern preaching.²¹⁵

Wilson and Moore almost put art on a sacramental level, and this is more power than we ought to give to art. However, it is a powerful means to communicating when done correctly.

²¹¹ A “newbie” is a term coined by technology people for someone who is new to a certain aspect of technology.

²¹² Seth Godin, *Really Bad PowerPoint (and how to avoid it)*, (ebook published by Do You Zoom, Inc, 2001), 3. This can be found online at <http://www.sethgodin.com>.

²¹³ Ibid, 3. Rude language deleted.

²¹⁴ Wilson and Moore, 73-74.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 308.

As was previously discussed, high art is not the only kind that has power. Popular art can also be powerful. A new form of art is emerging in the digital age. Software programs like Adobe *Photoshop* or *Macromedia Flash* have allowed users to create beautiful works of art that are useful in digital, multimedia presentations. Bert Monroy does with the computer and his Wacom Art Pad²¹⁶ what Davinci did with a canvas. Monroy describes himself as a “photo-realist painter,”²¹⁷ and he creates images that look real but are totally fabricated with a computer. John Bell does the same thing in the Christian world, creating beautiful images to the glory of God.²¹⁸

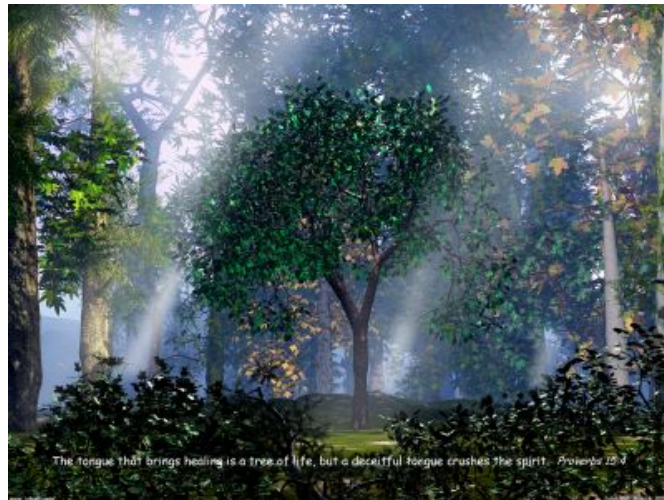


Image illustrating Proverbs 15:4 by John Bell

The key to using art effectively, according to Wilson and Moore, is to use it in a narrative way. In other words, the art furthers the story we are telling. Art can include pictures, paintings, objects, movies or music. They say that art is anything that creates an

²¹⁶ A Wacom (pronounced like wackum) Art Pad is a device that allows an artist to input using a pen and tablet instead of a mouse. This allows the artist finer control over the digital art than would be allowed with a mouse. A picture of a Wacom Graphire 3 art pad can be seen at <http://www.computer.donetsk.ua/image/wacom.3.jpg> retrieved on May 6, 2004.

²¹⁷ Bert Monroy, <http://www.bertmonroy.com/>. Retrieved on February 24, 2004.

²¹⁸ John Bell, <http://www.jrbell.com>. Retrieved on February 24, 2004.

experience, communicates emotions or inspires response. When used as it should be it facilitates the telling of a story in a way that evokes a response.

Wilson and Moore claim that digital art is for this generation what stained glass was for previous generations. The difference is that “now with the screen, the glass can be changed from week to week. What once took highly skilled craftsmen months to produce can be done by the artists of today in a fraction of the time.”²¹⁹ However, this form of art must be used carefully or it will become a distraction from rather than a complement to our message.

Dave Paradi surveyed 159 people asking “what they found most annoying about *PowerPoint* presentations that they see.” Here are the results:

The speaker read the slides to us	60.4%
Text so small I couldn't read it	50.9%
Full sentences instead of bullet points	47.8%
Slides hard to see because of color choice	37.1%
Moving/flying text or graphics	24.5%
Annoying use of sounds	22.0%
Overly complex diagrams or charts	22.0% ²²⁰

Paradi did a study in one company and found that poor use of the technology cost that company 400 to 500 man hours per week. The time was spent fixing the poor presentations. Training the company to use *PowerPoint* correctly, he estimated, would save them \$133,000 per year. Of course he is a salesman attempting to convince businesses to hire him to train their employees to use presentation technology more effectively. But the concept is valid. How much is using presentation technology costing the church, if it is not done correctly? If poor communication takes place, then people are

²¹⁹ Wilson and Moore, 414.

²²⁰ Dave Paradi, “Survey Shows How to Stop Annoying Audiences with Bad *PowerPoint*” <http://www.communicateusingtechnology.com/articles/pptsurvey_article.htm> retrieved on February 25, 2004.

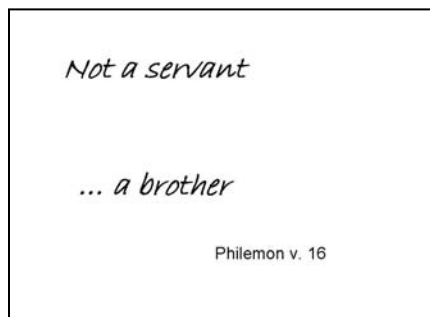
less likely to take a further step on their path to spiritual growth, including the initial step of trusting Christ.

In order to keep from creating terrible presentations, there are a few things to avoid.

1. Don't use presentation technology as a "teleprompter." Remember that presentation technology is used "for the benefit of the audience, not the presentation. Even if you remember this one fact alone, your presentations WILL get better."²²¹
2. Only use a couple of fonts on any slide. For text that is to be read, such as Scripture references or song lyrics, use sans-serif fonts like the Arial or Tahoma fonts; these are easier to read on the large screen. For headlines, you can use **decorative fonts**. You can also use them for "word art," which is a picture made with words or characters. One can break the two-font-per-presentation rule only in these cases.
3. If there are so many words on a slide that it is hard to read quickly on a computer screen, putting it on a 12-foot screen will not make it easier to read. Limit the number of words or lines per page. Seth Godin says not to use more than six words on each slide. He is adamant about this. Others suggest no more than six lines of text. But what if you want to present a text of Scripture or a quotation from Billy Graham? My personal preference is to only give Scripture references and ask the people to look them up in their Bible. If I am preaching from John 15, I want the

²²¹ *PowerPoint* Guidelines and Tips (ebook published by thepresentationpeople.com). Retrieved from <<http://www.thepresentationpeople.com/guidelines.pdf>> on February 24, 2004.

congregation to have a Bible open to John 15 most of the time. However, if I am quickly quoting a verse from Paul that supports the idea in John 15, then I only put the phrase from that passage that is important. The slide might refer to Paul's letter to Philemon. Instead of quoting all of verse 16 on the screen²²², only quote, "Not a servant ... a brother." Ask them to turn to the verse and at the bottom of the slide in slightly smaller, but still readable font, give the actual reference.



4. *PowerPoint* allows you to show both your slides and your notes (a note attached to a slide for use by the presenter only). This is called Presenter's View. Do not show this to the audience. It is only to be used on the presenter's screen if your computer system allows for dual display. Dual display is a system that has a monitor for the operator to use that cannot be seen by the audience on the big screen.
5. Leave room around the edges, because not all projectors or monitors can show every square inch of a slide. This is especially true if it is connected to a television monitor. Some presentation software packages, such as *MediaShout*, take care of this automatically.

²²² Philemon v. 15-16 says, "For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?" (KJV).

6. Do not use wild animations. Less is more. This is also true of slide transitions. An animation is motion of a single item on a screen. For example, many people have their bullet points fly into the screen and contort them before they stop moving. This can be distracting. Slide transitions are the same thing, except that the entire slide moves at once. This also applies to transitions between scenes in video; simple cuts and dissolves are most effective. But if transitions are used, be consistent. Never use the “random” transition or animation function in *PowerPoint* which is a function that automatically chooses different kinds of transitions for each slide.
7. Give the files you create descriptive names. “In a few months time you will regret naming that important presentation SLIDES.PPT.”²²³
8. Do not read your slides. This is boring. While you are reading, people will be thinking about your presentation skills rather than your message. Instead, “make slides that *reinforce* your words” or that “demonstrate, with emotional proof, that what you are saying is true.”²²⁴ For example, don’t give a list of bullet points about why families are in disarray in modern America. Show pictures or video clips that illustrate ways families are in disarray.

²²³ thepresentationpeople.com.

²²⁴ Godin, 7.

9. Use pictures, but make sure they are not too generic.²²⁵ They should show emotions or metaphors. If necessary take your own pictures using a digital camera or scan a photograph from a regular film camera.
10. Do not use *PowerPoint*'s built-in sound effects for transitions.²²⁶ Sound should have a purpose. If it furthers the emotion or idea of a story or metaphor, then use it. The built-in sound effects in *PowerPoint* are silly and ineffective. You can use music from your own collection of music or from live performances by musicians in your church. Sounds can be transferred to the computer using simple recording devices. If your metaphor is traffic, get some real traffic noise from a nearby busy intersection. Take a picture of the same intersection. Or even better, shoot a video clip of the intersection. Then use it to illustrate how God brings people into the intersections our lives for the purpose of ministry or witness.
11. Don't use text and backgrounds that blend. The text and the background should use contrasting colors like dark text on light background or light text on a dark background. The second example is easiest to read; too much white or very light space can be overpowering.²²⁷
12. The technology should not be seen—only the results. Never let the audience see the *PowerPoint* interface on the large screen. The buttons

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Dave Paradi, *PowerPoint Slides – What Really Works*, (published by the author on compact disc). Retrieved from <<http://www.communicateusingtechnology.com/colors.htm>> on February 25, 2004.

and menus will be distracting. Almost as bad is seeing the mouse cursor over the slide during the presentation.²²⁸

13. Do not end the presentation with *PowerPoint*'s black screen. This is turned on or off in the Tools > Options section of the program. Turn it on so that you do not violate the previous rule. But never plan to let it be seen. The operator might accidentally advance the last slide so that the black screen would be seen. A way to avoid this is to add three copies of your last slide at the end of the presentation. Then you will never have to show the black slide with the small white letters that say, "This is the end."²²⁹ And if you plan to speak for more than a minute after the last image is shown, end with a blank slide or a logo that the audience is so used to seeing that they are not distracted by it and giving the screen their attention instead of the speaker.
14. Don't present until after those involved have practiced together.
15. Don't forget that the audience should be looking at the speaker more than the images in the presentation. William Willimon says that "you are performing the Scripture. You do want to make it come alive."²³⁰ The speaker along with the Holy Spirit is who makes that happen. The electronic media only supports the speaker in bringing the passage to life in that moment of delivery.

²²⁸ Dave Paradi, "How to Avoid 'Death by *PowerPoint*,'" retrieved from <http://www.communicateusingtechnology.com/articles/avoid_death_by_ppt.htm> on February 25, 2004.

²²⁹ Dave Paradi, "Ten Secrets For Using *PowerPoint* Effectively," retrieved from <http://www.communicateusingtechnology.com/articles/ten_secrets_for_using_powerpoint.htm> on February 25, 2004.

²³⁰ *Ten Great Preachers*, ed. Bill Turpie, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2000), 162. This is an interview with William Willimon after his message entitled, "God's Dysfunctional Family."

The above suggestions will help to make presentations a positive experience for preacher and audience alike. The key to giving a good presentation is having something to say. Presentation technology, video and audio clips, drama and props are not substitutes for good expository preaching. They are merely tools to enhance the message in order to better communicate with the emerging culture.

Now that we have listed some things to avoid, we turn to the process of creating a presentation for use in preaching a sermon.

Before you can present, you must prepare the message. Preparing a sermon that is delivered using your voice alone is slightly different from preparing a sermon that is presented with multimedia presentations. In both cases, a text is selected and carefully studied, and a main idea is discovered from the text.²³¹ Once we have a Big Idea, the sermon's purpose is discovered and then a strategy to fulfill this purpose is devised. This is where a multimedia presentation differs from a traditional sermon. Once you have determined the Big Idea of a text, a metaphor may emerge. As stated above, a metaphor is an overarching illustration that helps communicate the main idea of a text. Moving mountains was a metaphor Jesus used for faith. Sowing seeds and growing crops was a metaphor Jesus used for how we accept the Gospel. Selecting a metaphor will affect how you present a message

Each sermon takes on an overall form. It is either deductive or inductive.

In deductive sermons the idea appears as part of the introduction and the body explains, proves, or applies it. ... In an inductive arrangement, on the other hand, the introduction introduces only the first point in the sermon, then with a strong transition each new point links to the previous point until the idea emerges in the

²³¹ For explanation of the "Big Idea" see Wilhite and Gibson. For a description of good sermon preparation see Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1980).

conclusion. Inductive sermons may also grow through a series of cumulative examples which when taken together lead to one general principle.²³²

Most sermons that use an overarching metaphor are going to be inductive. The metaphor will be presented and the text will be dealt with, but the main idea that the metaphor and the text address will not be presented until the end.

Supporting material is another way that preaching using multimedia will differ from traditional sermons. After one decides what is the best form for the message, the outline is formulated and then supporting material is added to give the bones some meat, skin, hair, eyes and teeth.²³³ The preacher will have to strategize what kinds of supporting material will best serve the overall purpose of the message.

Supporting material serves to “explain, prove, apply or amplify”²³⁴ the ideas of a message. If you are explaining an idea, you may wish to use object lessons, also known as props. I experienced a sermon on trust where a preacher asked a member of the congregation to stand up against a wall. He then took a gasoline can filled with concrete and tied it to a rope from a hook in the ceiling. He demonstrated how it would swing from the rope and hook. He stated the general principle of physics that says the can will never swing further than the original distance from the center. He asked the volunteer if she believed that principle. He then tested her belief by placing the can within an inch of her chin and letting go of it. As the pendulum swung to its furthest point away she was fine. But as it returned to its original location, an inch from her chin, she flinched and ducked.²³⁵ This was a good explanatory illustration using an object lesson for the concept of trust. To further support the concept of trust, the preacher might have shown a video

²³² Robinson, 125.

²³³ Ibid, 137.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Greg Williams at summer camp at Look Up Lodge in Traveler’s Rest, SC, summer 2001.

clip of a recent movie in which one of the main characters exhibited trust. He might also have shown images of a person who has shown trust in God in the area of finances as he told the story. In traditional sermons all of these illustrations could be used, but they would be described by the preacher rather than shown.

Using a gas can to illustrate trust was a powerful tool for communicating with postmodern people. It was experiential, participatory and image-driven, and it connected the audience with the participant.²³⁶

In multimedia preaching, each message will use a metaphor that will be experienced using multiple signal systems. Each principle stated in the message will also have some kind of multimedia element to it, whether it serves to explain, prove, apply or amplify the idea. But not everything has to have a multimedia format. Sometimes a story told with vivid language will be more powerful if only one image is used to support it. A recent example from my own preaching came from a message on Matthew 22:34-40, in which Jesus is being challenged by a Pharisee who is described as a “legal expert.” He asked Jesus what was the most important commandment, and Jesus said it is the Shema, from Deuteronomy 6, which states that we are to love God with all our being. To explain the confrontation, I shared how legal experts enjoyed debating the law. I surmised that if this had taken place in our times it might have been on the campus of a major university. I then displayed a picture of a packed auditorium with a lectern and a table with chairs all set up for a symposium of some kind. I told a fictitious story that served to present a setting that my congregation would recognize that compared to what was happening in

²³⁶ Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims*. The key to communication with postmodern people is to be “EPIC” as he states throughout his book.

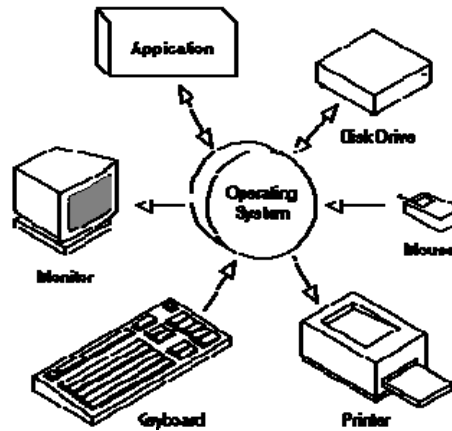
the passage. The story was the main supporting material, but it was further supported by a lone image on the screen.

TECHNICAL ISSUES IN DOING MULTIMEDIA PRESENTATIONS

This section of the study addresses the technical issues, such as what equipment and software should be used.

Personal computers are the primary tools used to show presentations today. A computer is connected to some kind of monitor so that the audience can see the images, video, audio and text. Software runs the computer, creates the presentation and helps in manipulating the images, video, audio and text.

The first decision one must make is which operating system to use. An operating system is the software that makes the computer work. It accepts input from the keyboard and mouse and outputs images and text to the screen on a monitor or to a printer. The operating system also keeps track of information on the storage devices in the computer. All computers have one. The following illustration shows how the operating system interacts with the hardware in a computer.



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The three most popular computer operating systems are *Microsoft Windows*, *Macintosh OS* and *Linux*. The best choice is the operating system the operator already knows how to use. If you have volunteers and staff people who have skills in Windows, do not pick Macintosh or Linux. But if you are starting from scratch, choose whichever operating system is most likely to be supported by the software you want to use. If *Microsoft PowerPoint* is the only software you plan to use for presentations, then a Mac will do. However, other presentation packages are designed with churches in mind. Almost none of them run on Macintosh OS or Linux. For that reason, most churches will use the more widely used Microsoft Windows operating system.

Besides operating system software, there is presentation software. The most popular is, again, Microsoft's offering called *PowerPoint*. However, *Corel WordPerfect Office* is a cheaper alternative and includes a program called *Presentations*. *PowerPoint* and *Presentations* both run on Windows. Only *PowerPoint* runs on the Macintosh OS. There are even free alternatives like *OpenOffice*, which also has built-in presentation software and runs on the Linux operating system. Because Linux is free and uses less

²³⁷ "Operating System," *Webopedia*, retrieved from <http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/O/operating_system.html> on March 12, 2004.>

computing power, a church on a tight budget might find it an attractive alternative.²³⁸ But since Linux options are so limited in this area, it will not be discussed further.

Most churches will select *PowerPoint*. It is easier to find skilled users since it is by far the most widely used software. It also interfaces with many of the worship software packages that will be discussed in the next paragraph. Some excellent training can be found online. However, two good books for learning to use *PowerPoint* are *Using Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2003*²³⁹ and *Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2003 for Dummies*.²⁴⁰

Although *Microsoft PowerPoint* is the most popular software for doing multimedia presentations, it is not necessarily the best for churches. A new genre of software called Worship Software has emerged now that so many churches are using computers and data/video projectors in worship leadership. Tim Eason lists eight different worship packages ranging in price from \$129.95 to \$379.²⁴¹ These packages can display images, video clips, flash animations, text, music lyrics and Bible verses easily. They can also play sound clips, and some will display slides created in *PowerPoint*. Worship software is not very good at creating slides. *PowerPoint* does a better job of content creation, so one will have to use *PowerPoint* or a graphics creation application to make the slides. After testing many of the packages listed on Eason's site, my church

²³⁸ For more information on the Linux operating system and software available for presentations, video editing, audio editing, and image editing see www.linux.org. This is a very inexpensive way to get started as much of Linux software is free and runs on older computers. However it is more challenging for new computer users.

²³⁹ Patrice-Ann Rutledge, Jim Grey and Tom Mucciolo, *Using Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2003*, (Indianapolis: Que Publishing, 2004). This version covers version 2003, but editions covering previous versions of *PowerPoint* are also available.

²⁴⁰ Doug Lowe, *Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2003 for Dummies*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2003). This version covers version 2003, but editions covering previous version of *PowerPoint* are also available.

²⁴¹ *Church Media.net*, retrieved from <http://churchmedia.net/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Store_Code=CMN&Category_Code=WS> on March 12, 2004.

uses a worship software package called *MediaShout*.²⁴² We create our slides in the graphics-creation application called *Adobe Photoshop* or in *Microsoft PowerPoint*. Then we import them into *MediaShout*.

Another category of software that churches will need to consider is content creation software. This includes image editing, video editing, sound editing and animation software. There are dozens of each to consider. Due to lack of space, I will recommend only a few.

Image editing software is used to manipulate picture files. The primary sources for images are a camera, the internet, a collection of images that can be purchased on the internet or photographs that are scanned into a computer using a scanner.²⁴³ Another source is images created from scratch. The image below was created by digital artist Bert Monroy entirely from scratch using *Adobe Photoshop*.



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Photoshop is the premiere image editing package. However, it is also one of the most expensive. Two alternatives are *Photoshop Elements*, which is a simplified version of

²⁴² See <http://www.mediashout.com/> for more information on this package.

²⁴³ See www.churchmedia.net for online sources of images that can be either downloaded or purchased on CD.

²⁴⁴ Bert Monroy, *ointment*, retrieved from < <http://www.bertmonroy.com/fineart/text/oint.html> > on March 12, 2004.

Photoshop, and *Jasc Paintshop Pro*. A free image editing package is *The Gimp*.²⁴⁵ Tim Eason includes a helpful tutorial on basic image editing on the companion disk that comes with his book *Media Ministry Made Easy*.²⁴⁶

As in the case of video editing, Adobe has the number one video editing package. And it is called *Adobe Premiere*.²⁴⁷ But it is a complex solution for what churches will be doing. Simpler packages focus more on people who are not professional video editors. Two of these packages include *Ulead VideoStudio* and *Pinnacle Studio*.²⁴⁸ My own preference for ease of use and features is *Pinnacle Studio*. Regardless of which software you use, video editing is a must if you plan to use video clips from movies, television programs, or video captured with a camcorder.

One use of made-from-scratch video is the “man on the street” interview. In one message, a volunteer and I went to a high traffic spot in our town and asked people the question, “What is a true friend?” The message was on how Christ is our friend and what that means based on His statement in John 15:13, “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for a friend.” The clips were spliced together and played at the beginning of the sermon to introduce the idea.

The process begins with “capturing” the video. This is a process of copying the video from its source to a computer. The source might be a digital video camera, a video cassette recorder or a digital versatile disc, also known as a DVD. The method of capturing the video depends on the source. If the source is a digital video camera, then

²⁴⁵ *Photoshop* and *Photoshop Elements* are from Adobe. Please see www.adobe.com for more information. *Paint Shop Pro* comes from Jasc Software. Please see www.jasc.com. *The Gimp* is a free image editing software program which can be found at www.gimp.org.

²⁴⁶ Eason, *Media Ministry Made Easy*.

²⁴⁷ Please see www.adobe.com for more information on Adobe Premiere. Tim Eason has an Adobe Premiere tutorial on the disk with his book *Media Ministry Made Easy*.

²⁴⁸ Please see www.ulead.com and www.pinnaclesys.com.

you will connect it to the computer using a “Firewire” cable, also called an IEEE-1394 cable. This is a special kind of interface that allows the video to be copied to the computer in its native, digital format. Nothing has to be done to change the video because a digital camera records the video in a digital format.

A complete definition of the terms “digital” and “analog” is too technical for this paper. For our purposes, digital refers to the format of any video, sound or image that a computer can be used to edit, store or display. Analog refers to the form of video, sound or images that a computer cannot edit, store or display. Video and audio cassettes are analog. DVDs and Compact Discs are digital. If a camera needs film, it is an analog camera. If it stores the images on “flash memory,” it is digital. “Flash memory” is a storage device used in digital cameras to store images in digital format. One can take the card out of the camera and insert it into a device on a computer to copy the images to the computer. In order to use analog pictures, one will have to have the pictures developed and then one can convert them to a digital format using what is called a scanner. A scanner takes a digital picture of the image and stores it on the computer.

All analog video, sound or pictures must be converted to digital format before they can be edited for use in a computer presentation. To convert from analog video to a digital format, a computer with an analog capture device is required. The analog capture device can take video from a VCR or camcorder and convert it to digital format. The camcorder, VCR or other source will be connected to the capture device. The capture device then changes the video from analog tape format to digital format. The capture device and its companion software not only converts the video, but also stores the video in the new digital format on the computer.

Transferring video from a DVD to the computer is complex and might even be illegal.²⁴⁹ It is better to play DVD video using a DVD player. In an upcoming release of the worship presentation software *MediaShout 3*, one will be able to play specific scenes from a DVD within the software so long as the computer has a DVD-ROM disk drive. A DVD-ROM disk drive allows the operator to play DVDs on a computer without having to copy the video. This will be simpler and legal as long as the church has purchased a Church Video Copyright License from CVLI as was previously discussed.²⁵⁰

Video editing software can transfer video regardless of whether it comes from an analog or a digital source. After the software captures the video, it then allows you to edit it. You can cut unneeded video and rearrange it. You can also add sound effects, text, music or voice over.

One project currently being planned at my church is a video of our shut-ins, which will be edited and shown during a worship service. One of our shut-ins is a woman named Mary. She is in a rest home where she did not want to go. But now she will admit that God has given her a special gift; she is able to visit with other residents and encourage them, pray for them and witness to them. A worship service with the theme “For such a time as this” will be used to show her story and communicate the concept that God puts us in places by divine appointment to be used for that special moment. A popular Christian song by the same title will be added to the video.

Sound editing allows the computer operator to take digital sound and edit it for use in worship as sound effects, background music for video or accompaniment for

²⁴⁹ *The Digital Millennium Copyright Act* states that subverting copy protection is illegal. DVD has an encryption that is very easy to subvert, but this would break the law and should be avoided. See the footnote on page 104 for the internet address of the DMCA.

²⁵⁰ See page 102 for information on the CVLI program.

singers. You can also record sound and use it in worship, or you can record worship services and/or sermons and put them on the internet.

Pro Tools is the premiere package in this category.²⁵¹ It is also very complex and expensive. Unless you are a sound engineer or a professional musician, it is too complicated. There is a version that will run on Windows 98 SE or ME that can be sampled for free. It does not work on Windows XP, 2000 or NT at this time. Another choice is *Adobe Audition*.²⁵² It used to be called Cool Edit and was much cheaper. Surprisingly, one of the best packages is also free. It is called Audacity and it can be downloaded at no cost from www.sourceforge.net.²⁵³

The last category of content creation software is animation software. *Macromedia Flash* is the premiere package but, as in the other categories, the best is expensive and complex.²⁵⁴ With it you can create mini-movies that give your images motion. For example, a popular flash animation that has been circulated on the internet is a crucifixion scene. All you see is a slope with a sunset behind it. Pretty soon dark shadowy figures appear that seem to be soldiers leading Jesus up the slope. They crucify Jesus, and a lightning bolt, followed by a thunderclap, accentuates the animation.

Flash animation allows you to put sound and motion to static pictures. An inexpensive alternative to Macromedia's product is from a company called Swish. It has packages ranging from \$24.95 up to \$99.95.²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ Please see www.digidesign.com for more information.

²⁵² Please see www.adobe.com for more information.

²⁵³ Audacity Download site, retrieved from http://sourceforge.net/project/showfiles.php?group_id=6235&package_id=6294&release_id=220784 on March 12, 2004.

²⁵⁴ Please see www.macromedia.com for more information.

²⁵⁵ Please see www.swishzone.com for more information.

Along with the software, you will need certain hardware to be able to do multimedia. The basic elements will be a source of content and a means to display it. In most cases the source will be computer generated multimedia. Video tape, DVD, cassette tape and CDs are other sources. Listing all the available computer systems, VCRs, DVD players or audio tape and CD players is not possible.

The basic setup will include a sound system, a computer, a video projection unit, a screen or television monitors, and media players such as CD, audio and video tape, and DVD. It is important to remember that, while you do not need the latest and greatest hardware, buying a Radio Shack sound system or having a 486 computer donated to the church will almost always lead to a poor experience. The right equipment is needed.

Tim Eason makes the following recommendations. He says, “The computer needs to be a near top-of-the-line model with plenty of horsepower, dedicated solely to the media ministry.”²⁵⁶ If the computer is able to run the latest version of Windows, Macintosh OS or Linux, it will likely be adequate for multimedia ministry.

For most churches, a desktop computer gives you more machine for less money. If portability is a must, get a laptop. One feature that is a necessity is the ability to run two different displays, also called dual display mode. You will likely need one display for the person running the system and another for the congregation’s viewing of the images and videos. If you do not have this ability, much of the worship software will not run properly. If you are only using *PowerPoint*, you will not be able to use one of its best features in Microsoft’s latest version of the program, which is “presentation mode.” What the congregation is supposed to see is displayed on the big screen, and the smaller display shows helpful notes and the next slides. It also has the ability to black out the display,

²⁵⁶ Eason, 29.

which is helpful if the speaker is finished talking about an image, video or text. The operator can black out the display so that what is on the screen will not distract worshipers.

There are many brands and kinds of projectors. Eason says that the following characteristics are most important when selecting a projector. The first is brightness. Projectors are measured in ANSI lumens. One does not need to understand what “ANSI lumens” refers to. Just remember that the higher the number the brighter the projector display will be. This is important because, if your worship space is very bright due to lighting or windows with sun shining through, then you will need a very bright projector. A minimum number is 1,000 lumens in a small dark space. Two thousand lumens is necessary for normal lighting. If the area is large and bright, go with three thousand lumens or more. The brighter the projector, the more it costs. So you will have to weigh cost with brightness. Do not just buy what the church can afford. Instead, wait until enough money is available to purchase what is needed.

Another important factor in projector selection is resolution. Resolution refers to the number of pixels a projector can project. A pixel is a very tiny dot of light. If you look at a photo in a newspaper very closely, you can see the pixels or dots that make up that photo. In a projector the pixels are made of light instead of ink. In an entry level projector the resolution will be 800 pixels across by 600 pixels down. Projector makers say that an 800 x 600 pixel projector has an SVGA resolution. An SVGA projector is adequate. Higher end projectors can have a resolution of 1024 x 768 pixels or higher. If you use a laptop connected to the projector, it is important to make sure that it can display your images in the same resolution as the projector. This will be done in one of three

ways. Some laptops will allow you to connect a “data cable” to a projector. Others use what is called an “S-Video” cable. The third kind of connection is an RCA cable. Most VCRs use this kind of cable. To get the best picture use a data cable. S-Video produces the second best quality image, and the RCA cable transmits the poorest quality image.²⁵⁷

If you have a recent model laptop it will probably be able to handle “dual display.” A dual display laptop lets you display one thing on the laptop’s screen and another thing on the projector. Make sure your laptop is capable of dual display. The benefit is you can have the list of images, videos and songs in your presentation on the laptop display so that only the operator can see them. On the secondary display your audience will see only what you want them to see—the words to a song, the text of a Bible verse, pictures or videos. This secondary display is a projector or monitor connected to the laptop’s data or video connector.

If your computer is not capable of dual display, then you will have to match the native resolution of the laptop to the projector’s resolution. If your laptop has an 800 x 600 pixel display, get a projector with an 800 x 600 pixel resolution too. This is not an absolute necessity, but it will be easier to work with. The images will look better and the computer and projector will be more compatible. When I used my old laptop, I had to change its resolution. It had a native resolution of 1,280 x 1,024 pixels. Our Epson projector only displays 800 x 600 pixels. If I did not change the laptop display, then the image shown on the screen by the projector flickered and the edges were cut off.

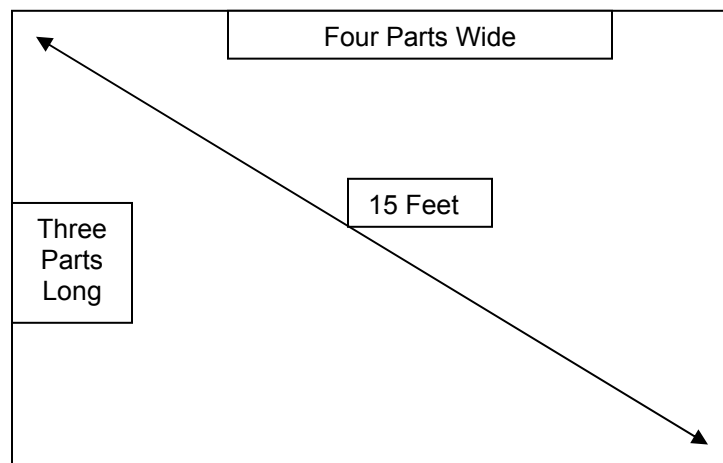
When selecting a projector one should also consider contrast ratio. According to Alicia Zapper, “contrast ratio is the measure of a projector’s blackest black compared to

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 32-33.

its whitest white. It equals brightness over room light.”²⁵⁸ A higher contrast ratio is better. Zapper says contrast ratio higher than 400:1 is unnecessary. The minimum number is 300:1, while some projectors claim to go as high as 2,000:1.

Installation is another issue to consider. If the computer is far away from the projector you will have to get very long cables. You might also need equipment to boost the signal from the computer to the projector. A distance of fifty feet or more makes a video signal booster necessary. If the video source is more than fifty feet from the projector, the images and text will be blurry or very dim without a booster. A signal booster can cost more than a hundred dollars. It will be connected to the video source and then a cable will run from the booster to the projector.

Finally, a screen is needed. There are three guidelines to follow. The first has to do with size. According to the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers, the size of the screen should be equal to the number of feet between the screen and the first row of seats divided by two. If the screen is thirty feet from the first row, then the screen should be fifteen feet from the top right corner to the bottom left corner. You should also



²⁵⁸ Alicia Zapper, “Contrast ratio debate continues” *InfoCom*, (June, 2003). Retrieved from <<http://www.infocomm.org/index.cfm?objectID=C572571F-38F8-4F3C-9B0DD4E26EC3BE37>> on May

calculate the number of feet from the screen and the last row and divide by six. So if the screen was sixty feet from the last row, then a ten-foot screen is enough. When the two figures are different, as in our example, take the larger one. This is called the “2x6 rule.” Also the screen should have a proportion of 4:3, meaning that the screen would be four parts wide and three parts high. So if a 4:3 screen is twelve-feet wide it would be nine feet high.²⁵⁹

The second guideline to consider in choosing screens is whether a front or rear projection screen will be used. Front projection screens are usually matte white material and are designed to have the projector in front aiming at the screen. Rear projection screens are made of non-reflective materials including vinyl, acrylic or even glass. This kind is designed to have the projector behind it aimed at the back of the screen with the image showing through to the front. Most projectors have a setting to show a mirror image for this reason.²⁶⁰

Also, one must choose between electronically controlled, manually controlled or permanent screens. An electronically controlled screen has a switch or even a remote control that allows the screen to be raised and lowered automatically. These are more expensive and require an electrician to install them. But they are more convenient if you must place your screen in front of a baptistery or choir loft.

Manually controlled screens require someone to raise or lower the screen by hand. If it is hanging from a high ceiling or mounted high on a wall, manually lowering and raising it can be a challenge. If it is ever necessary to raise or lower the screen during the worship service, using a pole or rope will be awkward and distracting.

6, 2004.

²⁵⁹ Len Wilson, *The Wired Church*, 133.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

An ideal situation is a screen that can be permanently installed and does not need to be raised or lowered. This is the cheapest alternative.

Another alternative to using screens is using televisions or monitors. If a room is small, then one or more televisions installed around the room might suffice. Using TVs or monitors is actually more complicated and can be more expensive by the time you factor in the hardware needed to hook up more than two or three monitors.

NON-TECHNICAL MULTIMEDIA

Besides technologically driven multimedia, a preacher or worship leader might consider non-technical forms of visual communication. Object lessons are a great source for communicating in a visual way. Most people think of children's sermons when they hear the term *object lesson*. But a sermon on priorities might include a reference to a person's keys. The preacher would take out his or her keys and visually demonstrate how many priorities are represented. We have keys for our house, our place of employment, a shed with gardening supplies, the car, and maybe a boat. Talking about keys would be less effective than actually asking the congregation to take out their keys.

Another example of an object lesson is a Bible study I did on Jesus' statement regarding a mustard seed of faith. I went to my local garden store and bought some mustard seeds, and I asked each person to take just one as they entered the auditorium. Having that tiny, almost microscopic seed in the palm of their hand made the metaphor Jesus used concrete.

Still another means of communication is drama. Maybe a church cannot afford video projection equipment to show video clips from the latest movie or TV show. But if

the church has a handful of talented thespians, the group could introduce a sermon with a skit that raises a thought-provoking question.

CONCLUSION

Using multimedia can be an effective means to communicate with not only the postmodern generations, but all generations. The key is being a careful student of the Word of God, handling accurately the Word of truth. Preachers need to preach expository messages with a single Big Idea supported by a contemporary metaphor that communicates with their audience. Only then can a preacher effectively use multimedia to support his or her sermon in the power of God's Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER FOUR: OUTLINE FOR WORKSHOP ON USING MULTIMEDIA IN PREACHING

INTRODUCTION

Chapter four is the outline for a workshop I taught on using multimedia in preaching. The workshop began by asking the question, “What are the biggest challenges our audience has in taking what we give them in our sermons and letting it affect their lives?” The workshop was designed to answer that question as it relates to multimedia in expository preaching.

The workshop was offered to local pastors and hosted at the church where I am serving as pastor. We covered three things. First, we covered some of the content from chapter two of this project, answering the question, “Does the Bible support the idea of using multimedia in communicating the Gospel?” Second, we discussed how one can bridge the gap between the four generations discussed in chapter three of this project. Third, we covered the practical issues in communicating via multimedia. Included in this third portion of the workshop was an exercise in which pastors were asked to identify the main idea of John 3:16. Then they chose one potential metaphor that could be used to communicate that idea to modern day audiences. Finally they brainstormed some potential multimedia that could be used in a sermon on John 3:16.

The content of chapter four is the syllabus that I handed out to pastors attending the workshop, the teaching outline I used to conduct the workshop, the handouts I gave

the pastors who attended, and a description of the environment in which I taught the workshop.

SYLLABUS

On the next page is a copy of the “syllabus” that was handed out to the pastors. Since this is not a traditional course it is not a traditional syllabus. It was the first page of a packet that was handed out. The rest of the packet will follow the teaching outline.

Multimedia in Preaching Workshop
September 14, 2004
Long Creek Memorial Baptist Church
Kevin A. Purcell, facilitator

Intended Outcome for the workshop: By attending this workshop, pastors will be able to use multimedia in their preaching in order to help their audience listen more readily, understand more clearly and remember more completely what they preach.

First Session

Goal of this Session: Survey how primitive forms of multimedia were used to communicate in the Bible.

- Objective: List an example of how the Bible described the use of multimedia to communicate a spiritual truth in each of the following areas: symbols, imagery and artistic forms.
- Objective: If asked by a church member why you want to begin using multimedia when you preach, explain it based on Paul's example and Jesus' "Parable of the Talents."

Second Session

Goal of this Session: Show how four different generations can benefit from multimedia if it is done effectively and using the proper resources.

- Objective: If asked by a church member why a pastor thinks he can change the way he preaches, he will explain it based on the way the four generations in our churches communicate, on the model of communication and on the ladder of signal systems.
- Objective: Define the AV Mentality and describe an example of it.
- Objective: Identify the Big Idea of a Scripture passage, a contemporary metaphor that could be used to communicate that idea and a multimedia element that could be used for the three forms of support discussed in the session.

At the end of the workshop you will be asked to evaluate this workshop using the above objectives.

In the future, if you have any questions or need some advice on anything related to the use of multimedia in worship and preaching, please feel free to contact me at my office at 704-922-3306.

WORKSHOP TEACHING OUTLINE

Course Introduction: What are the biggest challenges our audience has in taking what we give them in our sermons and using that to benefit their spiritual life? (Wait for possible answers.)

A. There are at least seven potential answers.

1. Remembering what we preach.
2. Understanding what we preach.
3. Believing what we preach.
4. Understanding how to apply what we preach.
5. Being able to pay attention to what we preach.
6. Remaining focused on what we preach.
7. Deciding whether to attend the preaching event.

B. This course will be taught with the assumption that you have a degree of expertise in expository preaching. If that is not the case, then a couple of books that can be of use to you are as follows:

1. *Biblical Preaching* by Haddon Robinson²⁶¹
2. *Christ Centered Preaching* by Bryan Chappel²⁶²
3. *The 12 Essential Skills in Great Preaching* by Wayne McDill²⁶³—for those looking for a Southern Baptist connection.

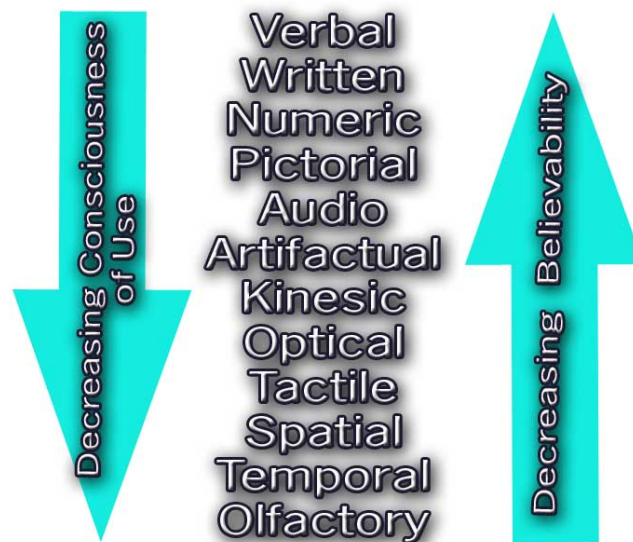
C. What do you think of when you hear the word *multimedia*? Allow time for answers.

²⁶¹ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980).

²⁶² Bryan Chappel, *Christ Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).

²⁶³ Wayne McDill, *The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994). I included this book only because many Southern Baptists like to have a connection to our denomination. Since about half of the pastors in my workshop were Southern Baptist, I included this book. I also mentioned the weaknesses that I saw in the book compared to the other two.

1. The following is an object lesson demonstrating multiple media.
 - a. Take out a pair of cups connected by a string. Ask for a volunteer to take one cup and place it next to his ear. Whisper into the other cup, “Ice cream is cold.”
 - b. Now hand the volunteer a scoop of ice cream and ask him to taste it. Ask, “Is that ice cream hot, cold or room temperature?”
 - c. Put the words “ice cream is cold” on the screen with a picture of ice cream.
2. Explain the basic model of communications explaining the concepts of encoder, message, media and decoder. (See graphic at the end of this chapter labeled “Basic Model of Communication.”)
3. Show the following chart and explain the various signal systems from Donald Smith’s book.²⁶⁴



I. The Bible supports the idea of using multimedia when preaching.

²⁶⁴ Donald K. Smith, *Creating Understanding* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992), 163.

A. We must be very careful that we do not violate the sanctity of worship when we attempt to use new forms of communication.

1. David and Uzzah and the ark in 2 Samuel 6.
2. James calls on us to be careful when seeking the position of teacher in James 3:1
3. Jesus warned against being a stumbling block to children in Matthew 18:6.

B. The Bible does not directly address the use of multimedia.

1. Does not directly answer question “Is it biblical to use multimedia?”
2. We must discern a higher principle that may apply (explain the ladder of application if people do not understand this concept).

C. Here are four examples of God using symbols to communicate a spiritual truth.

1. Adam and Eve and the trees of the garden communicate the limitations that God put on them, which they violated. Their violation led God to offer grace and redeem them and all of creation.
2. God and Abraham entered into a covenant in Genesis 15 with the sacrifice of animals. Abraham placed the animals cut in two on either side of a path, and the flame passed between them, representing the truth that if the covenant is broken, God promised to sacrifice Himself as punishment.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ *That the World May Know*, directed by Ray Vanderlaan, Focus on the Family Video, 1999, videocassette.

3. The Passover festival was instituted to foreshadow the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The Jews were required to celebrate it to remind them of God's redemption of the people of Israel from Egypt.

4. Both the Lord's Supper and baptism were symbols used to communicate the Gospel message to the church and the world.

D. There are many others (list these quickly without comment).

1. The tabernacle furniture prefigures Christ.

2. The priestly garb represents the priest taking the nation into God's presence.

3. The sacrificial system represents the blood atonement that Christ eventually fulfilled.

4. The many feasts of Israel all had a symbolic meaning, most of which represented Jesus Christ.

5. Ezekiel, Hosea and Amos were all symbols themselves.

E. God used vivid imagery to communicate spiritual truths.

1. Psalm 23

2. Psalm 58

3. Proverbs 3

4. Daniel 2—the king's dream

5. Jesus' parables

F. Even though God used symbolism and vivid imagery, is it acceptable to create new media to communicate the message?

1. Mark adapted the Greek biography to create the Gospel.

2. Paul adapted the form of the epistle to communicate his truths.
3. John adapted apocalyptic literature to present his message in Revelation.

G. Art is a big part of communicating the truth in Scripture.

1. Hymns – Psalms and elsewhere.
2. Poetry
3. Drama was used by the author of Job, Song of Solomon, and possibly John in Revelation.

H. Paul taught and practiced the concept of being good stewards of the Gospel message.

1. The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 teaches us to use our resources for the benefit of the Master, or else we might disappoint Him.
 - a. We have the message in the Bible.
 - b. We have more tools of communication today than ever.
 - c. Since advertisers spend billions to communicate the great taste and less filling nature of Miller Lite, shouldn't we use all the resources at our disposal to communicate the filling nature of a relationship with Jesus Christ, which is not destructive but edifying?
2. Paul taught us to be accommodating with our audience in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, and followed the concept himself.
 - a. Preached in synagogues using traditional forms of communication (Acts 13).

- b. His message, however, was very accommodating (Acts 13:16) to non Jews.
- c. Used small group prayer meetings (Acts 16).
- d. Used apologetics at the Areopagus (Acts 17).
- e. Repeatedly preached in court (Acts 25-28).
- f. As discussed previously, he communicated via epistles.

Conclusion: The Bible supports the idea of using multimedia in communicating the Gospel since God used symbols, imagery, and art. There are many examples in Scripture of the use of new forms of communication. And the concept of being good stewards of our resources requires that we use multimedia in some form to more effectively communicate the Gospel.

BREAK

Introduction: Remember the seven challenges that we discussed at the outset?

Multimedia can be a tool to help with these challenges.

I. There are generally four generations with whom we must communicate the Gospel.

(Display the slides from page 155 titled “Who Are the 4 Generations?” Explain the differences between the four generations using the information in the chart below)²⁶⁶

	Builders	Boomers	Busters	Bridgers
Who are they?	Born before 1925 and fought WWII.	Born after their parents came home from the war and continued till	Born in mid-sixties until early eighties. Children of the Boomers.	Currently children and teens. Parents are busters and young

²⁶⁶ Gary L. McIntosh, *One Church Four Generations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002).

		late fifties and early sixties.		boomers.
What are they like?	Called builders because they fought WWII and came home to build America. Strong willed and committed. Built the church and were very successful in 1950s. Some believe the format was successful then and can be now. Least likely to appreciate multimedia.	Independent spirit. Opposed to institutions. Brought up on TV and Rock and Roll. More educated than their parents.	Believe challengers are greater than themselves so some are drop outs and others want to join with others to solve problems. Relationship oriented since they came from broken families. Less focused on materialism as a goal but assume more than their parents did since it was always there.	Computers were invented “a long time ago” to them. Lived in a strong economy and very peaceful world until 9/11, which has changed them more than we know. Hard to define yet what they are like. Few grew up in church.
How do they learn	Word and concept focused, but have lived in the TV world for the last 50 years.	TV makes them less word and concept focused and more multimedia focused. Seek excellence and practicality.	Technology is a given. Grew up with TV, VCRs, and video games, and computers became big part of their culture. Communication must be excellent, quick paced, and relationship oriented. Word based communication will not be as effective.	Technology is part of their fabric. Instead of phoning friends they Instant Message them. They expect to carry a cell phone by the time they are 13. Totally image and sound dominated. Word based

			Images and symbols are necessary.	learning alone will fail with this group. Images and symbols are necessary.
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A. Multimedia can work with each generation.

1. The two younger generations assume it.
2. Busters have lived with it through TV their whole lives.
3. Builders did not grow up with it, but have lived with it in TV most of their lives. They appreciate it as a means to overcome hearing problems but will take much more time to adapt.

B. Which group do you have the most of, and which do you need the most of?

1. If you have more seniors, move slowly and deliberately to introduce multimedia and help them see the benefits.
 - a. Helps those who are hard of hearing.
 - b. Helps memory.
 - c. Show the connection with children, youth and young adults who are not in church.
2. If you have more of any of the other generations, you are more likely to have quicker adoption of the use of multimedia.
3. If you are attempting to attract younger groups, communicate to your current group how they assume technology and multimedia.

II. Failures of multimedia can eliminate any added benefit since it will give ammunition to those who oppose it and will not attract those who want it.

- A. The AV Mentality.²⁶⁷
- B. Equipment problems.
- C. Improper balance—too much multimedia.
- D. Substitute for careful sermon preparation.

III. Using multimedia effectively requires good preparation.

- A. Starts with personal preparation and good sermon preparation and exegesis.
- B. Take your carefully studied passage and determine what is the “Big Idea” of the passage.²⁶⁸ *Use James 3:7-8 to illustrate this with them.*
- C. After discovering the “Big Idea,” brainstorm possible contemporary metaphors that communicate that idea. *Use examples from James 3:7-8.*
- D. Find multimedia support material to illustrate your Big Idea. *Use examples from James 3:7-8.*
 - 1. Explanation focuses on understanding.
 - 2. Proof focuses on belief.
 - 3. Application focuses on how to live it.
 - 4. Using multimedia helps make it more memorable, easier to focus and stay focused, and might make them want to attend more.

EXERCISE: Take a verse provided on the handout given (see handouts after this outline) and in your group discern the Big Idea, a contemporary metaphor and one multimedia

²⁶⁷ Len Wilson, *The Wired Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 38.

²⁶⁸ Wilhite, 17.

support illustration for each of the three primary support needs (explanation, proof and application).

IV. Advice on how to get started.

V. What do you need to use technological multimedia?

VI. Consider using non-technical multimedia, also known as object lessons. *An example was given using an object lesson. Then others were asked to take an object in the room and come up with a spiritual truth it could illustrate.*

VII. Discuss sources of multimedia material.

HANDOUTS

The handouts for this workshop included the syllabus, which can be found on the second page of this chapter, and the following pages.

EXAMPLES OF SYMBOLS USED TO COMMUNICATE

1. Adam and Eve and the _____ were used to communicate _____.
2. Abraham's _____ was used to communicate _____.
3. The Passover _____ was used to communicate the _____ of Christ.
4. The _____ and _____ were used to communicate the _____.

EXAMPLES OF VIVID IMAGERY USED TO COMMUNICATE

In the blank write one vivid image in this passage.

1. Psalm 23 _____
2. Psalm 58 _____
3. Proverbs 3 _____
4. Daniel 2—the king's dream _____
5. Jesus' parables _____

NEW FORMS OF COMMUNICATION IN SCRIPTURE

1. Mark adapted the Greek _____.
2. Paul adapted the _____.
3. John adapted the _____.

EXAMPLES OF ART IN SCRIPTURE

1. The Psalms are examples of _____.
2. Job, Song of Solomon and possibly Revelation are examples of _____.
3. The lives of Hosea, Amos and Ezekiel were examples of _____.

EXERCISE ON FINDING MULTIMEDIA
TO COMMUNICATE A BIG IDEA

Passage: John 3:16

What is the Big Idea?

What is a modern day metaphor that communicates that Big Idea?

What kinds of multimedia could you use to communicate the Big Idea in the following areas?

Explanation:

Proof/Evidence:

Application:

EVALUATION FORM

Please answer the questions as best you can remember. This is not a test of your knowledge and memory, but rather of my ability to teach what you have learned. So relax and answer the questions. If you do not know the answers, just put down the first thing that comes to your mind.

List an example of how the Bible described the use of multimedia to communicate a spiritual truth in each of the following areas:

1. Symbols

2. Vivid Imagery

3. Artistic Expressions like Music, Poetry, or Drama

If asked by a church member why you want to begin using multimedia when you preach, defend it based on Paul's example and Jesus' "Parable of the Talents."

What are the four generations that make up most of our churches?

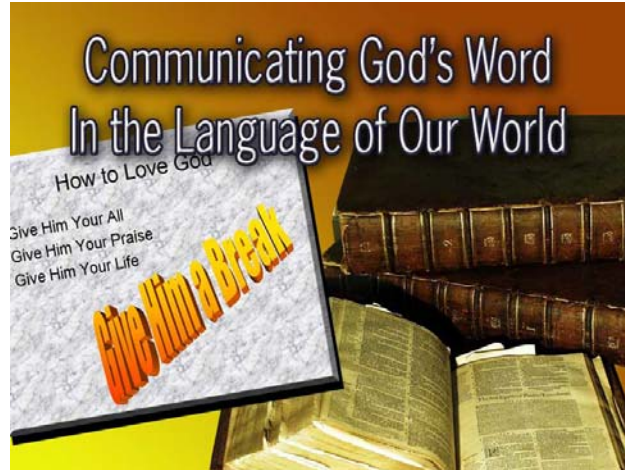
Which of the four generations is more book and word focused in learning?

Which of the four generations is more symbolical and technical in learning?

If a church member told you that older people don't like multimedia, how would you answer them?

True or False. The AV Mentality is an attitude that comes from the business world and causes people to use a lot of words and graphs in non-artistic slides.

PICTURES USED IN WORKSHOP



Title Slide



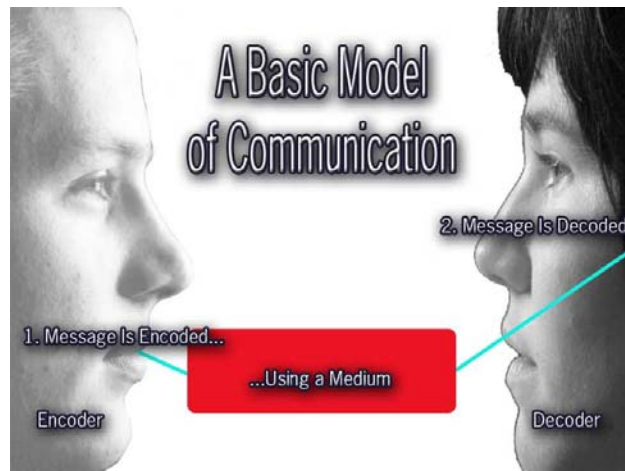
Introduction Slide



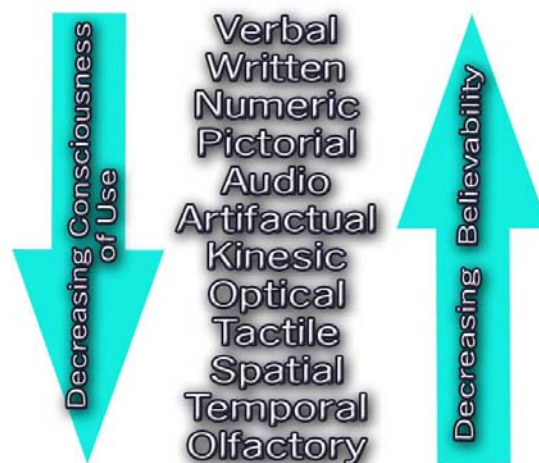
Book Recommendations



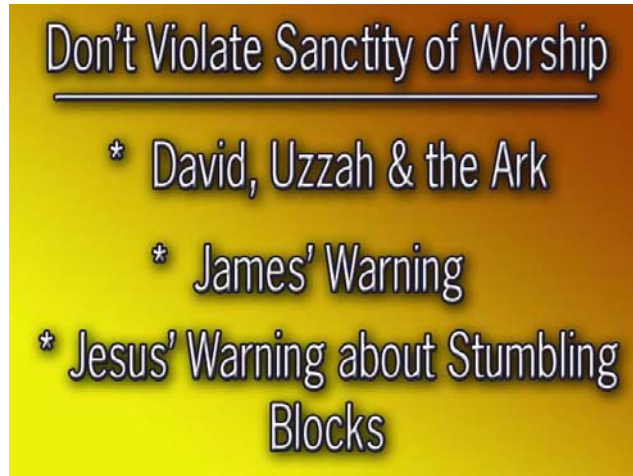
What do you think of when you hear the word *multimedia*?



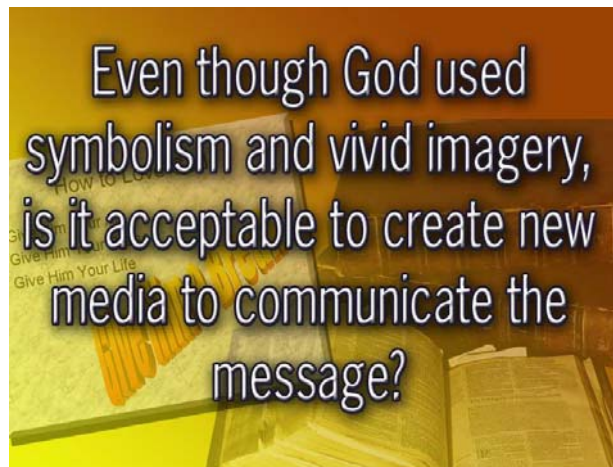
Basic Model of Communication



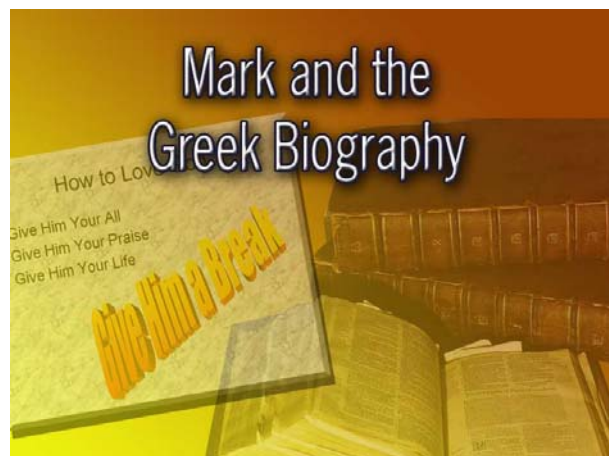
Explanation of Signal Systems



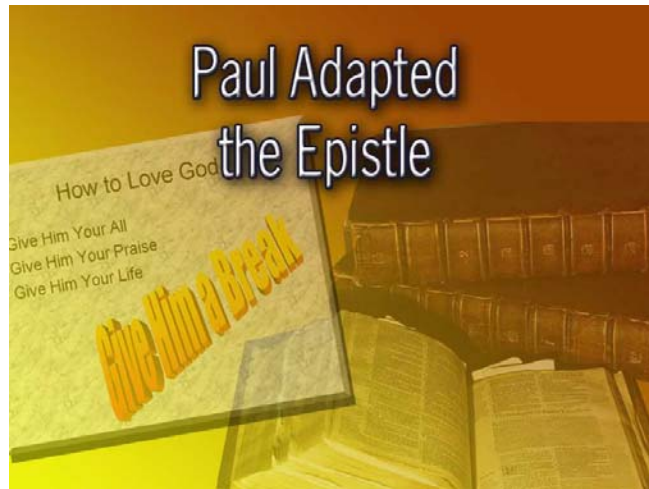
Warnings About Worship



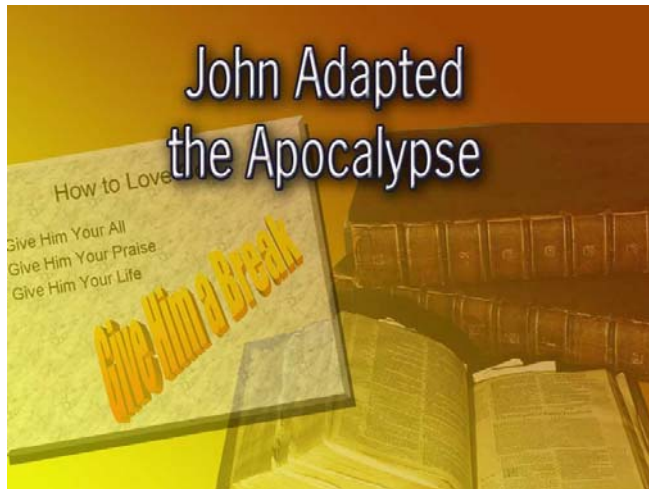
Transition to explanation of how new forms were used in the Bible



One of the new forms of communication in the Bible



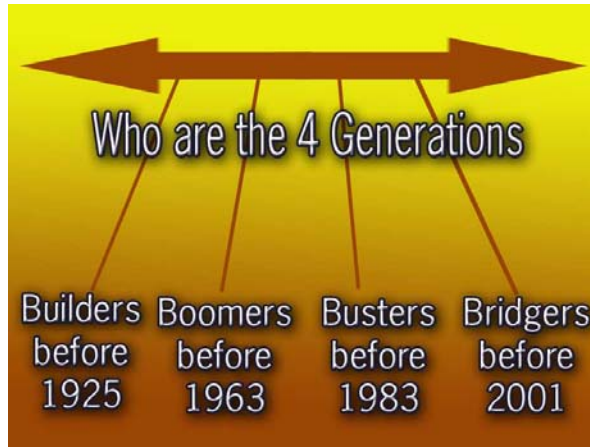
One of the new forms of communication in the Bible



One of the new forms of communication in the Bible



Parable of the Talents



Identification of the ages of the 4 generations



How the 4 generations primarily learn



Example of a metaphor of the untamable nature of the tongue from James 3



The biggest challenges to communicating the Gospel



The ladder of abstraction



Paul's example of accommodation from Corinthians



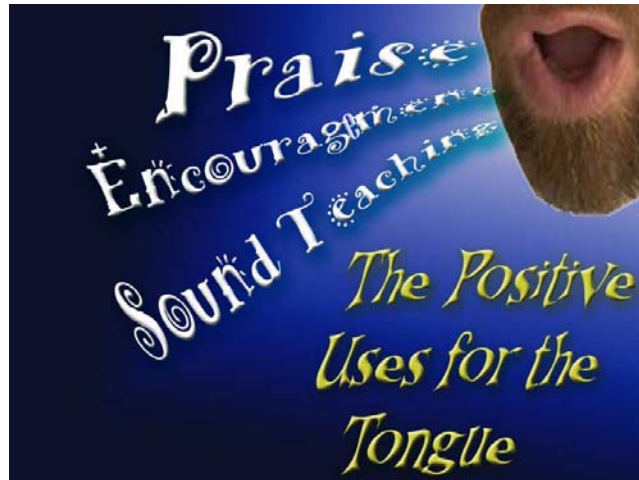
Used in experiment to prove the most effective methods of communication use senses



Example of a slide that supports explanation of an idea



Example of a slide that supports application of an idea



Example of a slide that supports evidence for an idea

DESCRIPTION OF WORKSHOP SETTING

The workshop was hosted at Long Creek Memorial Baptist Church, where I am pastor. We held lunch in our fellowship building and then had the actual workshop in the worship center of the church. The group sat in pews and I stood behind a portable lectern in front of the first pew. We have an installed Epson PowerLite Data/Video projector and a large 12 foot by 12 foot screen on the wall behind the pulpit area. I had my laptop computer on the front pew and ran the *PowerPoint* by myself using a radio frequency mouse. I pointed out that I was breaking the rule that one should not run one's own presentation equipment while preaching because it is distracting. This was necessary because my volunteers were not available at the time of day the workshop took place.

CONCLUSION

The workshop was a success. All who attended complimented me on the meal, the presentation and the content. I was pleasantly surprised to find that I enjoyed teaching this material. I hope that I can do so again, with a larger group of people and taking three hours instead of just two.

CHAPTER FIVE: GENERALIZATIONS AND CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This project deals with the issue of communicating God's Word using multimedia. The questions to be answered were, as stated in the first chapter, "What effect does using multimedia have on expository preaching? Does it enhance it, hinder it, or is it neutral?" The workshop described in chapter four was taught to help other pastors in my community to use multimedia to support their preaching. Before teaching this workshop, I wanted to test my conclusions with my own preaching. Therefore, I preached two sermons, one using multimedia and the other not using it. I then asked a group of people to evaluate the two messages.

Included in this chapter are the results of the evaluations of the two sermons and the workshop. Also included are my conclusions regarding the entire project.

EVALUATION OF TWO SERMONS

ONE USING MULTIMEDIA AND ONE NOT USING MULTIMEDIA

In order to experience whether using multimedia positively affects my congregation, I preached two very similar sermons from the same book of the Bible. On Sunday morning, May 30, 2004, I preached a sermon from James 3:1-13. It included video clips, pictures, text, audio clips and props. That same evening I preached a sermon in the traditional way using no video, pictures, text, audio clips or props. The evening message was from James 4:1-10. The passages are from the same book and similar in

style. The hope was that the subject of the sermon would not be a variable in how well people received each message. I was careful to spend equal amounts of time in exegesis and preparation. My goal was to determine whether or not using multimedia made an expository message clearer, easier to understand and easier to gain the attention of the audience.

The group that evaluated the two sermons met on Sunday evening after the worship service in which I preached my non-multimedia sermon on James 4:1-10.

Included below is the manuscript of the first sermon, which was preached using multimedia. Following the manuscript is a summary of the evaluation of that sermon. After the first sermon's summary, the manuscript for the second message, which was preached in a traditional way, is included, followed by evaluation of that message.

Text in italics describes the multimedia content. Normal text is the content of the sermon that was intended to be said.

MULTIMEDIA SERMON

BIG THINGS COME IN SMALL PACKAGES JAMES 3:1-13

Not many should become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive a stricter judgment; for we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a mature man who is also able to control his whole body. Now when we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we also guide the whole animal. And consider ships: though very large and driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So too, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. Consider how large a forest a small fire ignites. And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among the parts of our bodies; it pollutes the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is set on fire by hell. For every creature—animal or bird, reptile or fish—is tamed and has been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who are made in

God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things should not be this way. Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water.

Who is wise and understanding among you? He should show his works by good conduct with wisdom's gentleness. (James 3:1-13 HCSB)

Sermon Subject: What kind of power does the tongue have over people?

Sermon Complement: The tongue is virtually uncontrollable and tends to have a destructive power over people, but if we will seek God's wisdom and help, it can have a positive impact on us and those around us.

Introduction

Sermon begins with video clips of "Man on the street interviews" in which the question was asked, "What do you think of the statement, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me.'? The last statement was that the "tongue" can be damaging.

The truth is the tongue has an impact on our lives. There is a passage in the Bible that talks about this very issue. It is in the book of James, which was written by Jesus' brother to Jews who were also Christians. The passage is James 3:1-13.

Listen to actor Max McLean as he reads the passage for us.

The problem that James is really dealing with is the desire of some to become teachers. This book was probably one of the earliest if not the earliest written. The church had not really developed much of a structure of leadership yet. So it seems that a person might just declare himself a teacher and ask people to come to his living room to study the Bible and the words of Jesus. James, who was Jesus' brother, was saying to them, be careful, because being a teacher is a high responsibility, and if you mislead anyone, you are doing a terrible danger to the cause of Christ. For that reason you will be held, by God, to a higher standard. And the number one reason for this danger is the volatile nature of the tongue. He says, the challenge is the tongue is hard to tame because ...

Our tongue has great power. (vv. 1-5)

Not many should become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will receive a stricter judgment; (2) for we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a mature man who is also able to control his whole body. (3) Now when we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we also guide the whole animal. (4) And consider ships: though very large and driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. (5) So too, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. Consider how large a forest a small fire ignites. (James 3:1-5 HCSB)

Verse 2 may be a little bit sarcastic. James is actually saying that it is next to impossible to never fail in this area because of the power of the tongue. He compares the tongue to three things, all of which are small like the tongue, but have great power.

Video clip of horses at a local stable run by a member of the church. Shows a room full of bits hanging on the wall with the stable owner discussing how the bit works. It also showed some youth riders learning how to control a horse.

This little thing can control a powerful animal. *Take out the small brass bit and display it to the congregation.* James didn't stop with just that one illustration. He also talked about the rudder on a ship. The rudder is small, and yet it turns a large ship and controls its direction.

The last illustration James used was a spark, which can cause a fire. *Take out the flint stone and start striking it.* A tiny spark. But look at the danger and devastation it can cause. The wildfires out west that rage every summer are often started by some small spark.

When you came into the sanctuary, you were given a Hershey's kiss. *Take it out now and unwrap it and eat it.* Hershey's kisses are one of the smallest candies you can find. But they have a strong taste. The commercial said, "Big things come in small packages." Just like a Hershey's kiss, your tongue is not very big. It can control your life as you speak. The promises you make will determine what job you take or what volunteer activities you perform in the church or community. The way you talk to or about people will determine who your friends are. So remember that while it is small, the tongue has a great power.

The problem with the tongue is that it is not just powerful, but usually powerful in a negative way. That is because ...

Our tongue's power is often destructive. (vv. 6-8)

James says this small part of the body often pollutes the whole thing. It only takes a little dirt to make something clean look bad. And in the case of our words it only takes a few poorly chosen words to damage everything we say.

James illustrates it this way. He says that taming the tongue is like taming a wild animal. *Display an image of a man who is holding a whip and a chair like a lion tamer. But instead of a lion there is a giant tongue.* [See sample images at the end of chapter four; look for image labeled "Example of a Metaphor of the Untamable Nature of the Tongue from James 3."] It is nearly impossible. In fact he says it is impossible for us to do.

The people who learn this are those that we hurt. Has anyone ever said anything to hurt you?

When I was a teenager and my voice was changing, it was a scary thing. A boy never knows when it's going to crack. My sisters and I were in our youth choir at church. We had a summer youth minister. He was a musical person, so he formed a youth choir that summer and we performed a musical called *LightShine*. My family and I were on our way to church listening to the tape of the music in the car to help us learn it. I was sitting in the backseat singing out at the top of my lungs, and I'm sure my voice was cracking. But I didn't care until my dad said something that I will never forget. He was a very good singer with a smooth, baritone voice. And he heard me singing and said, "One thing is for sure, you didn't inherit my singing ability."

I know my dad was not intending to hurt me. But to this day I still remember the sting that those words had on me. It was like a wasp stung me in the face. I was embarrassed, and that night I quit the youth choir. Later I rejoined because I decided not to let someone else's words control me.

But we have to be careful about what we say. We can have a powerfully destructive effect on others by the words we say. Sticks and stones may break our bones, but names can kill the spirit. Just look at a verbally abusive parent and you will see children who have been harmed almost as significantly as if their parents had hit them. My father was not what I would call abusive. That was one of the few times that his words hurt me.

The tongue can be a powerfully destructive force. But despite all the damage it can do ...

Our tongue can have a positive result. (vv. 9-12)

James said there are two uses for the tongue—praising God and cursing men. James says to do the second negates the value of the first because we cannot curse men and praise God. Cursing men is the same as cursing God, because we are all made in God's image.

James illustrates this with two examples.

1. Spring—can it produce both clean and bitter water? *Show video clip of two little boys tasting water coming out of a spigot. One says, "MMM tasty." The other spits it out and says, "YUCK!"*
2. Fruit tree—can it produce two kinds of fruit? *Display picture of apple tree with both apples and oranges on it (made in Photoshop).*

In the same way it is inconsistent for our mouths to praise God and to curse men. When he says curse men, he is talking about the words we use to harm others. If our words are like a spring in the desert, it is impossible for them to quench God's thirst for praise if they are not also quenching man's thirst for encouragement. It would be ridiculous for one person to taste the water and get cool, refreshing water, and the other to taste the same water and find that it is like disgusting water that has sat and collected bugs and filth.

So the real question is how can we tame the tongue and use this small part of our body so as to be a benefit to both God and our fellow believers? The answer is ...

The only way to control the tongue is to ask God for wisdom. (v. 13 and 1:6)

James lays down the challenge. If you are truly wise, then prove it by your actions. You might respond, "I'm not wise." But you can be. Because in James 1:6 he said that you can become wise by asking for wisdom. James says God will grant your request if you ask for it.

How will that help us? Wisdom is the correct application of knowledge. Knowing the power of the tongue will lead the wise man to daily praise God, but also to ask for His help in controlling his tongue. With the Holy Spirit convicting us and with the knowledge that our words about God are tainted every time we use our tongue to harm someone, we will be more likely to control our words and please God and encourage people.

Conclusion

There are a few different places where you will need help with your tongue. *Each of the following elements are listed on the screen.*

The first is mentioned here. Teaching the Word of God. The only way to control your words so as never to lead anyone astray is to study carefully the Word of God.

The second is only implied. It is the critical things we say about people. Usually this is done away from the person. I know that some of you are going to have roast for lunch today. That's right. You are going to go home and eat fried chicken, but you'll actually be having roast as you roast your Sunday school teacher or the pastor or one of your fellow church members who rubbed you the wrong way. Just know that while you are enjoying that roast, you are tainting the words of praise you sang to God while here at church.

The third way that we struggle in this area is saying more than we should. It is called gossip. There are people that you better not tell your secrets if you don't want anyone to know about them. When we were kids we would make fun of this kind of person by saying, "Telephone, Television, TeleKevin." *Display collage of photos of a telephone, a television and me as a child.* Now sometimes that can be useful. If you want everyone to know about someone that person might be your own personal pony express getting word out for you unwittingly. But most of the time this is a bad thing.

If you have a tendency to let whatever comes into your ears go out of your mouth, then you need to tame the tongue. And you cannot do it alone. Praise God and ask Him to give you the strength to shut up.

The book of Psalms offers three prayers that will help you. *Each is displayed along with the theme photo of the tongue.*

You have tested my heart; You have visited by night; You have tried me and found nothing evil; I have determined that my mouth will not sin. Concerning what people do: by the word of Your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent. (Psalm 17:3-4 HCSB)

Who perceives his unintentional sins? Cleanse me from my hidden faults. Moreover, keep Your servant from willful sins; do not let them rule over me. Then I will be innocent, and cleansed from blatant rebellion. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to You, Lord, my rock and my Redeemer. (Psalm 19:12-14 HCSB)

Lord, set up a guard for my mouth; keep watch at the door of my lips. (Psalm 141:3 HCSB)

Recite these verses when you are tempted to unleash your tongue.

EVALUATION

The group of evaluators were all believers who were members of Long Creek Church. One was a nineteen-year-old single man. Two were single men one in his thirties and one in his fifties. There were three married people in their thirties and forties. There

were also two older ladies, one who is retired and the other nearing retirement; both of them were widows. This is not exactly a broad cross-section of the church, but they were chosen because they have different backgrounds and are also willing to voice opinions. I did not personally choose them. My wife picked people, with the instructions, “Do not pick ‘yes men’ who you know will be unwilling to give constructive criticism. Pick people who are opinionated and willing to offer criticism when appropriate.” They were asked to perform this function the Sunday prior to my preaching these two messages, so they knew they were going to evaluate the sermons. The only instructions she gave them was to pay careful attention to the multimedia content in the first message and the lack of it in the second.

What follows are the questions and a summary of the answers given by the group. The questions were tested by reading them to a couple of people, who were asked to paraphrase in their own words what I was looking for in each question. If needed, I tweaked the questions after testing them.

1. What was the main idea of the sermon?

The answers given showed that they had a good grasp of the message. One said that the message was “How to control your tongue and how to think about what you say before you say it.” Another said, “Don’t be hurtful of others using words.” The youngest member of the team said, “The tongue is small but has a great power.”

While none of these are as complete as I would state it, they are very close to what my intended message or Big Idea for the sermon was.

2. *Was the message clear and understandable?*

One person said, “Yes. Very clear.” No one was willing to disagree.

3. *What was the purpose of the message?*

When it came to the purpose there was a little less clarity. One person said, “Realize how powerful the tongue can be and to offer ways the tongue can be damaging or helpful.” However when pressed for specific application on what those “ways” were, he could not give an answer.

Another man said, “Think before you speak.”

One of the ladies said, “Emphasized learning how to harness the tongue. Don’t contradict yourself by speaking blessings to God and cursing people.”

My sermon’s application could have been more specific. The visuals had little to do with application and more to do with meaning and concepts. That was a weakness of the sermon and the multimedia content rather than the method of communication. If multimedia is as powerful as my research and experience seems to suggest, then shouldn’t the most important aspect of the message include multimedia?

4. *Did the images and video help you better understand the message?*

The teen said, “Yes. Mainly it made it more entertaining.” One of the married ladies said, “I am a visual learner, so I can get it better because visual learners are stimulated when you preach this way.” The multimedia helped one woman relate when hearing a testimony of another person in the man-on-the-street video at the beginning. She was drawn in by the emotion displayed in the woman’s face when she talked about being hurt by another person’s words.

A mother said that it got the kids' attention. This was the first time her youngest son had stayed for the whole service instead of going to the children's room after the children's sermon time. However, she also said that some of the pictures were a little hokey. Specifically she didn't like the lion tamer taming the tongue.

5. Did any one video clip or picture distract you?

Some said the video clips were a little hard to hear due to being too soft or too loud and distorted. Also because of where our screen is, it was hard to see some of the words. This is being dealt with as we plan to move our screen forward so the people on the far left and right sides of the worship center can see better.

6. Were the props helpful or distracting?

All said that they were helpful because one can actually see what is being talked about as in the case of the bit. That brought out the subject of small things having big effect. One person mentioned that there was also an emotional connection since it was from a family in the church who owns a horse farm. She said, "It made me more interested because it was the Summeys' horses instead of just some horses."

7. Were any of the multi-sensory things distracting or disturbing?

Initially they all said, "No." But after thinking some said the Hershey's kiss was distracting because one lady could not eat chocolate and another said her small child let it melt and it was a mess. One person didn't get one. These were all minor problems, and I don't think they hindered the meaning behind the prop. It added another dimension that is seldom part of worship, and that is taste. Only during Lord's Supper do we usually get smell and taste in worship. And that is something our church doesn't do every week. Add

to that the flint stone and the smoke, which also had impact due to the sense of smell, the most powerful memory sense.

8. Did the multimedia add or detract?

One man said, “It added because I could see it in my mind long afterwards.” And another said, “It showed that this topic is important because you put so much extra time into this message.” A third person said, “The pictures were memorable, so when I remember pictures I can remember what you said about it.”

I have concluded that using more than three sensual forms of encoding a message is a powerful way to help people remember a message. Since I preached this message, I have had repeated comments about this one sermon. In August, after preaching these messages in May, a Sunday school teacher taught his class a lesson based on this passage in James. I sat in on the class and, without prompting, many remembered much of the content of the passage and referred to the multimedia elements from this sermon.

NON-MULTIMEDIA SERMON

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

JAMES 4:1-10

Subject: What is the source of conflict that affects many churches?

Complement: Many churches are in conflict because of the selfish desires of their people, who will often do anything to get their own way instead of submitting to God, which is what actually leads to a high ranking in God’s kingdom.

Introduction

Thursday night after one of my son’s ball games we sat down to watch a Tivo’d episode of Super Millionaire. That is the show where you answer trivia questions and win money. After each right answer the level of money you win goes up, ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 to \$100,000 all the way up to \$10,000,000. Each time a contestant would win, my youngest son would jump up and down and scream out the amount of money. To him \$5 is a lot of money. So he couldn’t even fathom winning \$50,000.

I asked him what he would do if we won that much. He said he’d buy toys. I asked him if he would give any of it away. He said he’d give his brother a dollar, his mom three dollars and me four.

I was quite impressed with his generosity. Most kids would keep it all for themselves.

We like to fantasize about such things, don't we? Winning a million dollars or being invited to a party with famous people, or what if I was king for a day. That leads me to a question: If you could have your way, what would you ask for?

Sometimes we fantasize about controlling people around us. Especially when it comes to a church. Each member has a degree of control. Your opinion matters here because you have a vote in a congregationally governed church. In some denominations the bishop or pastor is in charge. In others there is a board of elders. But in the Baptist church, you the church member are in charge. But unfortunately we have to let other church members have a vote too.

So that leads me to ask you a question: If you could control the church, what would happen? How would it change? How would it stay the same? How would it look with you in charge?

It is this very question that gets churches into trouble. In fact it is individual desires that lead us into conflict. James knew that, so he addressed the issue in James 4. [Read James 4:1-10]

If you are looking to get your own way, you won't get it. (vv. 1-3)

What is most important to you? The problem that many have is they desire things more than God. What do you desire most?

The *New England Journal of Medicine* reported a strange discovery made by French doctors in 2002. A 62-year-old man entered Cholet General Hospital suffering from stomach pain.

An X-ray revealed a huge mass of metal in his stomach. When doctors operated, they removed twelve pounds of coins as well as necklaces and needles.

Despite his family's attempts to keep money and jewelry away from him, the man swallowed 350 coins, both francs and euros, over the course of a decade.

Bruno Francois, one of the physicians who treated him, said, "When he was invited to some homes, he liked to steal coins and eat them." The condition is known as "pica," a compulsion to swallow inedible items. A person suffering from pica will swallow just about anything, and Francois once treated someone who ate forks.

The coin fixation of this particular patient badly damaged the man's stomach. Twelve days after doctors removed \$650 from his belly, he died.

That is a pretty extreme example. But while less destructive physically, our selfish and greedy desires are just as harmful to us.

People often want both. They seek from God what they want for themselves. James deals with this in verses two to three. He says we are willing to do anything to get what we want. The problem is that we have a source for all that we need. God is that source. And He wants to give us good things. But we often want what we should not have.

We are like the child who wants two bowls of cereal, to stay out past ten on school nights and our own sports car to drive as fast as we want. But those are not necessarily good for us.

The same is true of our plans for our lives. Sometimes we seek things that we should not have. So if you seek after things, you often cannot have what you want.

The problem, according to verses four to six, is priorities.

If you are looking for your own way, you can't have God. (vv. 4-6)

When we put other things above our relationship with God, then we are as good as an unfaithful spouse. That is why James calls his recipients “adulteresses.” They were desiring something other than God.

When talking about our relationship with Christ, the word *jealousy* is a good thing. It is like a husband and wife. If a wife is not jealous when her husband is found with another woman, there is something wrong with the relationship. God never puts anything above us. So we never have to worry about His loyalty and faithfulness. But we often become disloyal.

One of the biggest culprits is our feelings. Christian psychologist Larry Crabb said, “Feeling better has become more important to us than finding God.”

As a boy, Chiune Sugihara dreamed of becoming Japan's ambassador to Russia. By the 1930s, as ambassador to Lithuania, he was a step away from fulfilling his dream.

One morning a huge throng gathered outside his home. Sugihara learned they were Jews who had fled there from Poland, seeking Sugihara's help for Japanese visas that would permit them to escape the German Gestapo.

Three times Sugihara wired Tokyo for permission to provide the visas; three times he was rejected. Sugihara, a committed Christian, had to choose between his dream and the lives of the crowd. Sugihara chose to disobey orders. For the next twenty-eight days he wrote visas by hand, barely sleeping or eating. Recalled to Berlin, he departed, still writing visas and shoving them through the train window into the hands of refugees running alongside.

Ultimately his work saved six thousand lives. Back in Japan, Sugihara's remaining days were spent selling light bulbs. When his story was finally told, his son was asked, “How did your father feel about his choice?”

“My father's life was fulfilled. When God needed him to do the right thing, he was available to do it.”

He learned that you have to make a choice between God and your own desires, dreams and feelings.

But if you are willing to make that choice ...

If you're looking for God's way, you can have it all. (vv. 7-10)

First, submit to God and His plans.

Author and pastor Gordon MacDonald tells the following story:

In the 1920s, on the heels of the Bolshevik Revolution when Joseph Stalin was extending his chokehold over all of what became the Soviet Union, he sent political speakers out to Russian towns and villages to brainwash the people about Marxism and the Russian form of Communism. Peasants were forced to hear the harangues telling them what they must believe. It was made clear that the teaching of the Christian faith was to come to an immediate end. The church was no longer to be active.

What none of them realized was that hundreds of years of Russian Orthodox teaching about the resurrection couldn't be rubbed out of people's souls just like that.

One large crowd of people sitting in a public auditorium listened for three hours to the speech of a Russian commissar as he tried to convert them to Marxism and the glories of the Communist party. When he finished, he was exhausted, but he had taken

his best shot. He was sure he had convinced the crowd, so he invited questions. Here and there people rose to ask questions, but he was satisfied he had done his best.

Just as things were about to end, and he was to sign his success seal over what he had done, a Russian Orthodox priest stood up at the back of the hall: "I just have one thing to say to you. Christ is risen!"

Instantly the entire crowd responded, "Christ is risen, indeed!"

MacDonald went on to say in his sermon to his large church, "This is the third time I've told that story this morning. At the end of the second worship hour, a couple came up and introduced themselves. The women said to me in a heavy accent, "I am from Russia. Thank you for telling your story; it moved me greatly. But I must tell you one more thing about that story, which you did not tell. You need to tell people that when the crowd said 'Christ is risen indeed!' they knew for certain they would all go to jail."

Sometimes we will have to sacrifice in order to do it, but we must choose to submit to God.

Second, get right with God.

A carpet cleaner was talking about one of the techniques he uses for finding the stains that animals can cause in a home.

"To show potential customers their need for the service, I would darken the room and then turn on a powerful black light. The black light caused urine crystals to glow brightly.

"To the horror of the homeowner every drop and dribble could be seen, not only on the carpet, but usually on walls, drapes, furniture, and even on lamp shades. One homeowner begged me to shut off the light: 'I can't bear to see anymore. I don't care what it costs. Please clean it up!' Another woman said, 'I'll never be comfortable in my home again.'

"The offense was there all the time, but it was invisible until the right light exposed it. It would have been cruel to show customers the extent of their problem and then say, 'Too bad for you' and walk away. I brought the light so that they might desperately want my cleaning services."

Just like that light, we must submit to God.

"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way" (Psalm 139:23-24 HCSB).

Third, humble yourself.

President Theodore Roosevelt's love of the outdoors is well documented. He was responsible for the creation of several national parks and monuments. In his first inaugural address, he spoke freely of the blessings of God upon our nation, saying, "I reverently invoke for my guidance the direction and favor of Almighty God."

It is said that when President Roosevelt entertained diplomatic guests at the White House he was fond of taking them out to the back lawn at the end of the day. As the president stood gazing at the night sky, all eyes would eventually be cast heavenward, as his were. In his day, the vast array of stars was not dimmed by the city lights, and the magnificent display of God's brilliant creation would overcome the party. After a long moment, Mr. Roosevelt would say, "Gentlemen, I believe we are small enough now. Let's go to bed."

If you will submit to God and open your heart to God in humility, then God will take care of all your desires, needs, wishes and hopes.

Conclusion

Once, four village men confessed their sins to one another in the presence of the Pope. One of the men cried out, “How can God let us live on the earth? Why doesn’t He kill us to purify creation?”

“Because, Michelis,” the Pope answered, “God is a potter; He works in mud.”

When it comes to priorities, we have to choose. Will we put God first or our own desires?

EVALUATION***1. What was the main idea of the sermon?***

After asking the question there was a long pause. Then one person said, “Know what you are asking God for, and ask with the right motive.”

One person talked a lot about getting mad at God for not getting what you want.

Other answers included, “Stay in God’s will and seek what He wants for your life.” “Be humble not wanting to put your own interests first. If you submit to Him, then He will lift you up.”

Their understanding of the Big Idea was less certain for the second message.

2. Was that message clear and understandable?

They agreed it was, but when pressed to explain one person said, “Seek first God’s kingdom. You have not because you ask not is about the kingdom.”

3. What was the purpose of the message?

They all answered something different. One said, “Put God first and serve Him and worship Him without having selfish needs.” Another said, “Don’t just ask God for something and expect it. You have to believe it and it will happen.” Other answers included: “It is not just individual lives. We need to do this as a church as well.” “Don’t argue about what doesn’t matter and always try to get your own way.” “Humble yourself.”

I then asked how they could do these things and they couldn't think of any ways that I mentioned in the sermon. Again this shows a weakness in my two sermons. Both were weak on specific application.

4. Did the stories or examples help you understand better?

They said some of them were helpful. But they could not be specific.

Another had one to give as an example, but then lost it. She finally got one but needed help to remember it better.

5. Were any stories or illustrations a distraction to you, or did any one seem not to fit?

One person said, "There was one, but I can't remember where it was."

Another mentioned the story of the potter. One woman said that story helped because of a song about a potter. It connected that her back to that song.

COMPARISON EVALUATION BETWEEN TWO MESSAGES

1. Which sermon was more enjoyable and easier to follow?

One person said, "The first one (the multimedia sermon) because it 'stepped on my toes.'" Another said that he "felt more involved" in the multimedia message. Only one person enjoyed the non-multimedia more. Another said the flow was better without the multimedia.

2. Which sermon was more clear?

All said the multimedia sermon was clearer.

One said that he had to focus more without multimedia and therefore due to his working harder he probably focused more.

However one person cautioned, “If you have too much multimedia it can be distracting. There needs to be a ‘happy medium’ between the two sermon styles.”

3. Which sermon grabbed your attention more?

They said that the subject made the morning more attention getting. At this point I began to feel like the group didn’t want to admit that the multimedia elements were helpful. They all seemed to say the multimedia was helpful when they evaluated the first sermon. But when comparing the two they seemed to almost change their minds.

4. Was the application more clear in the multimedia or non-multimedia?

All said the application of the first sermon was clearer. This was a closed end question. But no one could give a reason why.

5. Did the multimedia make the sermon clearer, or was it the message itself?

All said that sermon would have been just as clear without the multimedia. This contradicts what they said above, however. I got the feeling they began to want to say the first sermon was better with or without the multimedia. That may be so, but much of the delivery of the message was done through multimedia itself. That led me to believe that something was keeping them from being totally honest with themselves about the impact of the multimedia elements of the first sermon. However, others who have read the two sermons since agreed with the group from my congregation. The first sermon was clearer due to its content.

6. Do you think the reason you enjoyed one sermon over the other had anything to do with the multimedia content?

The teen said the one with multimedia was more enjoyable. And another young single man said the multimedia made it more engaging.

7. *Would you prefer more of the multimedia or non-multimedia?*

This was mixed. The younger the person the more they liked the multimedia. After discussion they agreed that variety was best.

8. *Is there some way that I could illustrate my sermons better to make them more meaningful, clearer or easier to apply?*

One person quickly said she liked the way I used a lot of stories. But another person said that sometimes that was distracting. However, others quickly responded and said he was wrong. But none of them really answered the question until I rephrased it by saying, “Is there something that I’m not doing that I could be doing?” They said no and then reiterated the need for a mixture of different styles.

CONCLUSIONS FROM SERMON EVALUATIONS

I believed that the majority of the audience would be able to identify the Big Idea of the multimedia sermon more easily than the non-multimedia sermon. Some evaluators believed the multimedia sermon’s content was easier to remember. Because I only preached two sermons, the results were probably incomplete. A better way to compare the effects of multimedia in preaching would be to preach more than just a few of each style of sermon. If four or five sermons of each format were preached, it would be less likely that the content would distort the results.

When discussing only the multimedia sermon they were able to recall very specific things about the sermon. Months later people were able to recall specific things about that sermon. So for the goal of memory, I believe that multimedia has a decidedly

positive effect. But this experiment is weakened by the limited number of sermons preached.

Does the use of multimedia in preaching impact people's behavior? That is a harder question to answer; it is not possible to evaluate based on this exercise. An argument could be made that if people will more readily remember a sermon many months later, they are more likely to apply the message so long as specific application was given. After reading these two messages, the application was weak on both of them regardless of the use of multimedia. If I had given more specific application and reinforced it with some kind of multimedia content, I believe it would be easier to apply such a message based on the evaluations given by the team.

The single biggest failing of the preaching experiment was that I chose a passage that was very visually oriented and used multimedia to preach it. The second sermon was far less visually oriented and so the people were probably less able to recall its message even though I interviewed them immediately following the second sermon. One way to improve the experiment as it was done might have been to preach the second sermon using multimedia to see if it would have been clearer. This was not a complete test of my hypothesis that multimedia makes an expository sermon's message clearer and more readily remembered.

EVALUATION OF "PREACHING WITH MULTIMEDIA" WORKSHOP

The workshop described in chapter four included an evaluation at the end of the workshop. The questionnaire was given to the participants as part of a selection of

handouts that are also included in chapter four. Below are the questions along with a description of their answers.

The following paragraph was at the top of the evaluation form:

Please answer the questions as best you can remember. This is not a test of your knowledge and memory, but rather of my ability to teach what you have learned. So relax and answer the questions. If you do not know the answers, just put down the first thing that comes to your mind.

The questions are followed by the course objective that each question was designed to test. The question and the objectives are in *italics*. The objectives are in parenthesis. The summary of the participants' answers are in normal print, double-spaced.

A. List an example of how the Bible described the use of multimedia to communicate a spiritual truth in each of the following areas: (Objective: Be able to list an example of how the Bible described the use of multimedia to communicate a spiritual truth in each of the following areas: symbols, imagery, and artistic forms.)

1. Symbols

All but two responders gave specific examples of symbols used to communicate in the Bible that were mentioned in the course. One did not answer the question, and the other came up with his own examples that were in fact good examples of symbolism in Scripture.

2. Vivid Imagery

Half of the responders wrote down something I said in the workshop. Of the other half, most of them gave examples that would apply to this category, but that I did not say in the workshop. One did not give an acceptable response.

3. Artistic Expressions like Music, Poetry or Drama

As in the first category, all but the same two answered with something that I mentioned in the workshop. One did not respond and the other wrote down something that was discussed in the workshop, but had nothing to do with this topic. He identified the three examples of forms of communication that were adapted by biblical authors Mark, Paul and John.

B. If asked by a church member why you think you can change the way you preach, defend it based on Paul's example and Jesus' "Parable of the Talents." (Objective: This objective is stated using the wording of this question.)

All but one answered as they were expected to answer. I wanted them to be able to relate the concept Paul communicated in 1 Corinthians when he said, "I have become all things to all people ..." and they did so. Some also mentioned that given the resources of multimedia, we should be good stewards and use them to communicate the Gospel.

C. What are the four generations that make up most of our churches?

D. Which of the four generations is more book and word focused in learning?

E. Which of the four generations is more symbolical and technical in learning?

(Objective: If asked by a church member why you think you can change the way you preach, defend it based on the way the four generations in our churches communicate, on the model of communication, and the ladder of signal systems.)

All responded correctly to these three questions.

F. If a church member told you that older people don't like multimedia, how would you answer them? (Objective: If asked by a church member why a pastor thinks he can change the way he preaches, he will explain it based on the way the four generations in our churches communicate, on the model of communication and on the ladder of signal systems.)

Most of the responses had something to do with what we discussed in the course about how multimedia is effective in communicating because the more senses are touched the more a person is likely to learn. Some gave examples of how most Americans already use multimedia in their lives via television. Most of the responses also included something about the strategy of using multimedia to reach multiple generations.

G. True or False. The AV Mentality is an attitude that comes from the business world and causes people to use a lot of words and graphs in non-artistic slides. (Objective: Define the AV Mentality and describe an example of it.)

All but two responded correctly with “True.” One further discussed what it was and how it impacted preaching. I should have spent more time on this. I also did not really test their ability to give examples of the AV mentality in my evolution questions.

CONCLUSIONS FROM EVALUATIONS OF THE WORKSHOP

I was pleased that most of the attendees were able to correctly answer the questions proving they had retained, for at least a little while, what was communicated. A more accurate test of what level of knowledge was attained would have been to give this questionnaire to the attendees a week later. That was not possible in this setting.

During the workshop there was also an element of evaluation included in the group exercise. Attendees were asked to come up with the “Big Idea” of John 3:16. They were then asked to choose a modern day metaphor that would help communicate that idea. Then each group was asked to brainstorm ideas for possible multimedia elements that would explain, prove and apply their idea.

Each group came up with an adequate idea for John 3:16. All were similar, which is not a surprise given that John 3:16 is such a familiar passage. Their strategies were very different. Each group had good ideas, but the best idea came from a group that said the “Big Idea” was that “God sacrificed his most prized possession because He prized us highly too.” The metaphor of a prized possession guided their ideas. They decided to include an object lesson as the multimedia element that would help describe the idea. They said they would bring some prized possession and then ask the audience to think of what is most prized to them. They would then discuss Jesus as God’s Son being His most

prized person. In order to prove that God's sacrifice was so significant, they decided to show a video clip in which a boy is playing and runs out into the street. His father sees this and notices a truck coming. He also notices another group of children playing in the path of the truck. They are far enough from the man's son that he cannot save both. Just as he is running to the road, they would freeze the image on screen and ask the audience, "What would you do?" After discussing the sacrifice of Christ, they decided they would show a clip of a boy on a stretcher. He looks at his dad, who has tears in his eyes, and says, "Thanks for saving my friends." They would end the message with a plea to choose to trust Christ. The application would be the invitation to trust Christ. While they did not have a multimedia element for application, none was needed in their example.

This may be a melodramatic, maudlin example. But it also demonstrated that they understood how multimedia can be used to support the communication of a sermon idea.

If I were to lead this workshop again I would make one major change and some minor ones. First, I would either attempt to cover less material or add another hour. That way I could spend more time communicating the information more effectively. I felt rushed and we actually finished fifteen minutes past the advertised time. A few attendees had to leave in order to make other appointments.

Second, I would spend more time talking about the concept of the AV Mentality. This is important because most churches fail in this area. They buy a video projector, hook a computer up to it and just put outlines or bullet points on the screen with cute clipart. This falls so far short of what we could be doing that it is not really bringing honor to God and not having the desired effect of appealing to the younger generations. For a few weeks that kind of approach might "wow" some people. But after a while it

gets boring. One of the attendees uses *PowerPoint* in every sermon he preaches. I had an opportunity to view one of his presentations. It was filled with the kind of slides that exhibit the AV Mentality. My description of the AV Mentality and why one should not use it failed to affect that preacher. More time needs to be given to that concept since it is so important.

Finally, I would work harder to tie what I was saying to the handouts. I neglected them entirely, and one man had to come up afterward and ask me what to fill in the blanks. I also noticed a big error in the handout. It was corrected for this paper, but the version the participants received was wrong.

CONCLUSIONS REACHED FROM RESEARCHING AND TEACHING

At the beginning of this project I assumed that I would learn that the use of technological multimedia was absolutely necessary in communicating to the younger generations that are emerging in American culture. I also assumed that multimedia would only be useful in communicating with younger generations and that older generations would gain nothing from it. My prejudice was that younger people had to have it and older people would never want or accept it. I now know that my preconceived notions were inaccurate.

Good communications theory teaches us that the more signal systems used, the more effective our communication will be. I learned this from personal experience when I attended a Sunday school class of adults ranging from early twenties to early forties. The teacher referred to the multimedia sermon on the tongue that I preached for this project.

He remembered the main idea of the message and was able to recite to the class many of the applications made. Other class members remembered other parts of the sermon. That would have been impressive if the sermon had been preached a week or two before, but it was preached three months before.

My first assumption that only technological multimedia is effective in communicating with today's audiences was proven wrong not only by my research but my experience. Object lessons are just as effective and don't cost as much. They work so long as they are fitting and creative rather than commonplace and gimmicky. Sometimes, communicating through a dialogue is more powerful because the younger generations enjoy a relational approach.

My second assumption was that multimedia would not be appreciated by the older generations. I found that this assumption was wrong. As a group, senior adults are more resistant to the change from traditional preaching to multimedia. Once the idea is accepted, they can appreciate it. For some who suffer from hearing loss, it adds a dimension to the sermon experience. Senior adults have been watching television for fifty years. It is not surprising that they can be positively affected if they will give multimedia a chance.

Another surprise was that using multimedia was more than just putting pictures and bullet points on a screen. Worship requires an artistic touch to be honoring to God. Not putting effort into your presentation is like not properly preparing to preach. You can do it, but will it be consistently effective? This requires a team of people to support the effort instead of doing this alone.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that the use of images, symbols and art is not just a tool of modern communications. God has been communicating this way for thousands of years. If it is good communication theory for God, then shouldn't preachers make an attempt to follow the Divine's example?

One of the most enjoyable parts of this project was teaching the workshop for local pastors. It was fulfilling to help them learn something that I have learned. I also enjoyed preparing the course. For years I have prepared and taught lessons on the Bible and church-related topics as a pastor and youth minister. But I have never had the experience of being able to help fellow ministers learn something that could help them grow as preachers. I hope that I will be able to do this again at some point, with the changes discussed above.

Finally, I learned through this process that regardless of whether I use multimedia, I am weak in the area of practical and specific application. It seems that since multimedia is a powerful way to explain and prove an idea, that it would also be a powerful way to show application. That is one area of my preaching I need to work harder to improve.

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VITA

Kevin Purcell was born October 17, 1969 to James and Janice Purcell in Mequoketa, Iowa. His family soon moved to central Illinois and then a few years later to central Wisconsin. In June, 1980, at the age of 10 his family moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It was there that he trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior in a summer camp sponsored by the local Baptist Association. He quickly felt a calling to ministry. During his high school years he felt a calling to preach and was licensed in August 1987 by Northwest Baptist Church in Milwaukee to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Kevin graduated from Milwaukee High School of the Arts, with concentrations in both Drama and Music. The creativity nurtured there has served him as he began to train to become a preacher at Georgetown College in Georgetown, Kentucky. Kevin earned a Bachelor of Arts, graduating cum laude with majors in both Religion and Philosophy and a minor in Communications Arts. He began his theological education at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky in January 1993. As part of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth, Kevin focused on an evangelistic style of pastoral ministry. In January 1996, Kevin transferred to Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, and graduated with a Master of Divinity with Languages in 1998.

Throughout Kevin's education he has served local churches on staff as a youth minister in three different churches in central Kentucky from 1988 to 1993 and as a pastor beginning in 1993. Blanket Creek Baptist Church in rural Pendleton County, Kentucky, was his first assignment. He was ordained into the Gospel ministry there. His second assignment was at another rural church near Clinton, North Carolina, called Evergreen Baptist Church. While serving at Evergreen he felt a need to further his training in the area of preaching and enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry degree program at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary's Charlotte campus in the Winter of 1999-2000. Between the first and second residency at Gordon Conwell, he was called to Long Creek Memorial Baptist Church in Dallas, North Carolina, where he has served since September 2000.

Kevin is married to Barbara Roseman Purcell, originally from Cincinnati, Ohio. She is a school teacher and serves alongside Kevin in a very active way. They have two sons. Michael was born April 15, 1994 and Daniel was born March 23, 1998.

Growing up in a Southern Baptist Convention church has affected his preaching style and focus in ministry. The denomination has emphasized missions and evangelism while focusing on the inerrancy of Scripture. However, the convention has a tendency to be parochial about education and instruction. An effort to avoid being closed to other parts of the Christian community is what led Kevin to pursue further training at an institution like Gordon Conwell, which is not aligned with one particular Christian denomination or fellowship.