

# Media on Mission

by [Michael McFatridge](#)

Not long ago, I left a stable job in Christian television to pursue full-time church ministry. It was a step of faith that almost seems like insanity in hindsight, but God confirmed the decision and provided for our family in ways I had never thought possible. It was an amazing adventure, but it was also a relatively short assignment.

A few whirlwind years later, full-time ministry is already becoming a fading memory. I am now working again in the Christian media industry, where I sit in a new office, caught somewhere in the blurred middle of corporate and ministry worlds.

As far as our denomination is concerned, I am “in-between assignments,” as I drudgingly mark on my monthly minister reports. But I am not bored, and I am certainly not retired from active duty. In fact, I am blessed to be gaining experience in two very different but related worlds.

## Coming In

During my short season of working full-time within a local church, I was excited to have the task of exploring new ways to draw people into God’s house. As a *creative minister*, I have an undeniable, God-given drive to pioneer new ground in this area. Ministers built like this are constantly looking for new ways the church can interact with the world around us. Print. Video. Voice. Pencil. Instrument. In these exciting times, we are able to use them all at once. A creative minister is called to take the limits off and to think outside that box with a steeple on it. Anything less is unsatisfying . . . and falls short of the mission.

As I reminisce about my work within the church, I think of the time we asked members of our congregation to invite their friends and family to an IMAX-style presentation of the life of Jesus and His work on the cross. It was part musical, part video, and all gospel. We designed and handed out simple cards that members could personalize and pass to friends. We went beyond challenging them to invite others and began empowering them to do so. The event made an impact: Our attendance tripled, and so did salvations.

It was a rewarding effort, but we quickly saw attendance return to normal. The salvations became anonymous and hard to follow up on, and the exciting results began to disappear into the fog. Like many churches, we never adjusted. Year after year, we repeated the process . . . and the results stayed the same. As many as we could bring in, we would quickly lose. My creatively evangelistic heart became quietly frustrated.

I wanted to know, *where were these people going, and how could I find them?* My years of church work taught me the value of *inviting* people to church. This is a necessary strategy, but deficient on its own. Now that I have stepped away, I am learning the value of the opposite approach.

## Going Out

I am taking stock of my new role in a very different environment. I am currently part of a small but scrappy nonprofit team that promotes Christ-centered marriages in a culture where so many

have given up on the traditional institution. We teach scriptural concepts as they apply to a married couple, and help them grow a godlier atmosphere in their homes.

We accomplish this by utilizing a diverse array of outlets to distribute our message: television shows, web-based programs, printed resources, streaming media, and worldwide simulcast events. We distribute our message as broadly as we can, and are constantly looking for additional channels that will reach more people.

While *MarriageToday* does not have a traditional pulpit, it is a discipleship ministry using all forms of media at our disposal to encourage Christlikeness in believers' lives. In an effort to broaden our impact, we are training church leaders across the country to set up a similar type of ministry in their local congregations. Pastors who work alongside us understand that healthy families and marriages will inevitably produce a healthy church.

Both organizations I have worked with are working toward the same goal but are operating under different philosophies. While the church has largely adopted the strategy of inviting people to come to a weekend worship service, countless Christian media ministries have decided to go and reach people where they already are. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive, and when they coexist, we find a well-rounded strategy for evangelism and discipleship. True growth will begin when we both invite people to come and go where they are.

### **Finding the People**

The Great Commission (Matt. 28:19) is no secret to either the pastor or the layperson. Yet to see our mission carried out to all people, we must first find where they are hiding. (Hint: It is not inside a church building, where we spend most of our time.)

People today are scattered abroad, with their eyes fixated on glowing screens. Scrolling web pages, tablets, e-readers, media boxes, and the latest smartphones swallow their minds. They are enjoying movies and concerts, be it theaters or in their home . . . or both. They are consuming hours of media every day.

Yes, they are distracted; but they are not unreachable. To find them, the church must reach people where they have already given their attention. With all of the possibilities of modern media, the Great Commission is no longer confined by geography. Even more exciting is that modern media is no longer reserved for million-dollar ministries.

*Every church can reach with media.*

### **Practical Suggestion**

There is good news for the pastor or church that wants to begin reaching the world through new outlets: Most of the work has already been done. Your latest sermon has been prayed about, meticulously developed, and delivered during a weekend service. *Now there is a crucial decision to make:* Will you lay this Spirit-inspired message to rest on Sunday afternoon, or will you choose to broaden its reach?

Why put a limit on a God-given message? Let it breathe in perpetuity, and let it reach an entirely new audience through new media channels. Besides the standard podcast audio, there is a much greater potential. The transcript of that audio could be fine-tuned and transformed into readable

text, and then shared on a new type of device. Adding discussion points and questions could turn that content into something new—small-group curriculum.

Perhaps a video of your message could be edited into smaller, more digestible clips, and uploaded to a variety of video-streaming sites. When you make this leap, think with an evangelistic strategy. Where you might previously be inclined to post a longer video titled “Sermon: Sunday, September 5th,” rework the shorter clip titles to something more specific such as, “The Solution for Loneliness.” Think deeply about what someone might need or search for online. Let them know that you have answers for their queries.

Of course, these are mere starting points for changing the world through media, and new outlets are constantly emerging. If you actively engage the creative young minds around you, they will be able to walk you through the possibilities for both now and the near future.

After a decade of work within various church and Christian media organizations, I have formed a definite conviction:

***Creative media has always been one of the primary vehicles for God’s mission in the world.***

It has been disguised as vivid stories, painted canvases, inked pages, and etched stone. However, the heart of the production has never changed. We, as the church, are called to creatively evangelize and disciple all people, using every multimedia tool God has given us.

Sitting at my desk at *MarriageToday*, I’m musing on how I can meet this goal of reaching and changing the world. At my disposal are tons of creative ideas, the latest technology, and a sincere heart for the gospel.

The only thing left to do is go.

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