"Forgiving does not erase the bitter past. A healed memory is not a deleted memory. Instead, forgiving what we cannot forget creates a new way to remember. We change the memory of our past into a hope for our future."
- Lewis B. Smedes

May 26, 2013

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WHAT IF ALL I GET IS THIS T-SHIRT?

by Pastor Kymone Hinds, Church Planter, Memphis

I got this nice t-shirt from a friend and mentor. It's his investment in Journey Fellowship, a church plant we are starting in Memphis. I am grateful for it, but it makes me think. Right now this is the most tangible thing we have to represent the dream of a new church. We have no building, no new converts, no ministries - just this website, a dream and a t-shirt.

Yet as we (my family and a few friends) have been working on it, I have realized something interesting has begun to happen. I have begun to ...

THE HARDEST LITTLE SERMON

by Loren Seibold

A few pastors get the privilege of working in an area of specialty, but most of us are generalists. We get called on to speak to general audiences like the congregation, but
also in the nursing home, the women’s group, Rotary club, the academy, the church school.

Here, a confession: one of the hardest things for me to do is to tell a story to the children. I’ve done it many times, of course. But if on a given Sabbath I have a sermon and a story, I’ll be far less content about the story than the sermon. I love the little ones, and generally they seem to like me, too. But there’s something about it that raises my anxiety. Perhaps it’s all those years of Eric B. Hare stories that makes me feel the bar is very, very high. Maybe it’s just that I’m a stodgy old … read the rest and comment here.

TAKING OVER YOUR LOCAL MOVIE THEATER

While local movie theaters may not be the first place you think of for evangelism several NAD pastors have recently taken over their town’s theater to teach grace. Andrew Shurtliff, Marlan Knittle and Steve Allred each sponsored a limited run of Hell and Mr. Fudge in their local towns. The film is based on the true story of Edward Fudge, a young evangelical who in his personal study discovered a God of grace, mercy and love, in contrast with the teaching of a God who keeps the lost alive forever in endless, conscious torment. In every setting a number of unchurched people came out to a neutral site and watched one of the core Seventh-day Adventist teachings unfold in a dramatic narrative.

In Yuba City California Pastor Steve Allred was approached with the idea of renting a theater in the local multiplex for a two-night screening of Hell and Mr. Fudge; the church would sell tickets for the premium price of $10 and give any net income to a local non-denominational charity that provides services to homeless children and their families. The rental cost would be approximately $1000 per night.

Allred made a straightforward appeal to the church for funds so that he could make the necessary advance payment to the theater. $1800 came in that Sabbath. Posters were put up in various places around town. Invitations were distributed. Church members were urged to bring non-member friends to the theater.

The movie played on Sunday and Monday nights. First night attendance: 200. Second night: 150. Some of the most conservative people in the church came and brought guests. No less than 75 non-Adventists attended the screenings. The church was delighted in the opportunity to present the doctrine of the state of the dead to their friends in the community. Read the whole story...

METHODS OF RESOLUTION FOR CHURCH CONFLICT

Every congregation experiences conflict. In fact according to Dr. Skip Bell, every relationship experiences conflict. “Conflict is a common relational dynamic that occurs when people are in relationship and experience differing ideas, goals or purposes.” Some churches explode. Others simmer for years. Others seem to be able to work through it. Bell suggests that there are some methods of resolution that may be more effective than others. In March of 2013 he gave a presentation to the local conference ministerial directors where he shared some of his expertise on conflict resolution. The presentation was recorded and you can watch his forty minute presentation as well as download his powerpoint.

READING FOR PASTORS

What counts as plagiarism in a sermon? Quote: "I want to be zealous so as not to represent myself as more brilliant and original than I really am. The truth is I have had only 3 truly original ideas in my life, and they were not really that good. Almost all the others have been learned from the historic church, both ancient and modern."

“Click ’pray’”: how Joel Osteen mastered social media ministry.

So you stuck your foot firmly in your mouth, and offended someone. What to do now?
Did Christ redeem unbelievers? Pope Francis sparks a debate. Quote: "The Lord has redeemed all of us, all of us, with the Blood of Christ: all of us, not just Catholics. Everyone. 'Father, the atheists?' Even the atheists. Everyone! 'But I don't believe, Father, I am an atheist!' But do good: we will meet one another there."

Bad theology in bad times? Quote: "'God never gives us more than we can handle.' I have learned to hate that cliché. As a clergy person, as a hospital chaplain intern and as a father, I have come to believe that, at best, that platitude is a classic example of meaningless bumper-sticker theology. It's easily said and only makes sense when it goes by you so fast you don't have time to think about it.

People move. Short term membership is becoming the norm. Quote: "The current church operating system must change. We can no longer anticipate that people with long years of church membership will be the only ones in leadership positions. If the current model continues, there may be no one left who qualifies!

Do we care enough about art in the Protestant church? Quote: "Artists who have a deep Christian faith actually have an advantage, I think, over people who don't believe in God. Because - theoretically anyway - if they love God, they'll be paying closer attention to what God has made, and therefore their work will take on greater complexity and beauty, like I think it has in ages past in the work of great artists like Johann Sebastian Bach or Rembrandt."

Using your pad computer for preaching.
“It was one of those perfect English autumnal days which occur more frequently in memory than in life.”
- P.D. James

“Scars have the strange power to remind us that our past is real.”
- Cormac McCarthy

“I heard a definition once: Happiness is health and a short memory! I wish I'd invented it, because it is very true.”
- Audrey Hepburn

“Just remember that the things you put into your head are there forever, he said. You might want to think about that. You forget some things, don’t you? Yes. You forget what you want to remember and you remember what you want to forget.”
- Cormac McCarthy

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IDEAS, EVENTS, RESOURCES, ANNOUNCEMENTS

Just a reminder that articles from **Best Practices for Adventist Ministry** can be shared in your newsletter, website or Facebook page, with attribution to **Best Practices** and the author of the piece.

From FellowshipOne, a free e-book about 7 critical church security issues. (You have to supply your name and email.)

The NPUC Adventist Leaders newsletter is well worth receiving. Contact Marcella to get on the mailing list.

Tony Romeo is a Manhattan pastor who comes from the world of advertising. Tony has just developed a series of “branding banners” for his church, and he’s willing help others. Contact him at romeo.anthony@gmail.com. Tony writes, “Community outreach is the continued aim of this church, and it is the single most important aspect of what Manhattan Seventh-day Adventist Church is doing, using advertising, graphic design and consistent ‘branding’ to make the church known to the community.” See all of Tony’s banners and how they’re displayed here.

Women's ministries emphasis day June 8: get resources for the service here.

Previous resource links:
- eGracenotes mobile app
- New PlusLine at AdventSource
- NY13
- Pastor’s convention, NAD Ministerial Department
- The Seven Campaign to stop child abuse
- Family Ministries Facebook page
- Andrews University Press, Homosexuality, Marriage, and the Church
- General Conference International Field School of Evangelism
- NAD Theology of Ordination Study Committee
- General Conference Annual Council response to ordination without regard to gender
- Jesus 101 Biblical Institute with speaker/director Elizabeth Talbot
- The ADVENTISTS - 2, by Journey Films
- The Great Controversy Project e-newsletter
- Real Family Talk
- Interactive health program on Hope Channel
- Meet Hiram Edson
- Free guide to using Facebook for your church

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What if All I Get is This T-Shirt? by... - Best Practices for Adventist Ministry | Facebook

- What if All I Get is This T-Shirt?
  by Pastor Kymone Hinds, Church Planter, Memphis

I got this nice t-shirt from a friend and mentor. It's his investment in Journey Fellowship, a church plant we are starting in Memphis. I am grateful for it, but it makes me think. Right now this is the most tangible thing we have to represent the dream of a new church. We have no building, no new converts, no ministries - just this website, a dream and a t-shirt.

Yet as we (my family and a few friends) have been working on it, I have realized something interesting has begun to happen. I have begun to pray more (Lord knows, I needed to do that). My faith has been stretched a whole lot. It's the difference between walking on dry land and walking on water. it's unknown and unprecedented. The exercise of faith has caused me to trust God more.

I have doubted myself more. I am not as confident in my own ideas and plans. I am desperately seeking a clear direction from God. There is a searching to hear God's voice and know God's will that I haven't experienced before. My family is praying toward one goal in a way we haven't before. My kids, in their childlike faith, pray over this like they would to get a new toy at Christmas. We have been reaching out to our neighbors to make friends in authentic ways.

I had a humbling thought today. What if after all of this - all this praying, all this seeking to know God's way, all this reorienting of life to reach others - this new venture never gets off the ground? Or what if it gets off the ground and sputters back to earth like a paper plane? What if this t-shirt is the most tangible thing I am left with after this journey? Will that be ok? After all, my relationship with God has gotten deeper. I have prayed like I have seldom done before. Could that be the real reward for all I am doing? Could getting closer to God and having a better relationship with Him be good enough for me?

Your situation may be different. You may be praying earnestly for a loved one to be healed. Your family may have gathered around that bed and called on the name of the Lord. And you know you have gotten closer to Him and to each other as a result. What if that's the reward at the end even if the healing does not come? What if the job you have been praying for, the financial blessing, or the relationship that needs healing, don't turn out the way you are praying for? But you get so much closer to God - much closer than you ever dreamed or imagined - would that be enough?

What if the goal we reach isn't what we prayed for, but we end up with a better, deeper relationship with God, and a t-shirt?
A few pastors get the privilege of working in an area of specialty, but most of us are generalists. We get called on to speak to general audiences like the congregation, but also in the nursing home, the women's group, Rotary club, the academy, the church school.

Here, a confession: one of the hardest things for me to do is to tell a story to the children. I’ve done it many times, of course. But if on a given Sabbath I have a sermon and a story, I’ll be far less content about the story than the sermon. I love the little ones, and generally they seem to like me, too. But there’s something about it that raises my anxiety. Perhaps it’s all those years of Eric B. Hare stories that makes me feel the bar is very, very high. Maybe it’s just that I’m a stodgy old guy. Certainly I’m used to putting most of my effort into the (far longer and more challenging) sermon, so just don’t prepare as well for the story.

Choosing a story is the first hurdle. Bible stories are good, but the children know most of them, so it takes special creativity to make them captivating. Though I don’t think it’s the best solution, I sometimes fall back on stories from my childhood, which usually end up being about how little Loren was naughty and mommy had to set him straight. I think the children deserve better than negative lessons. (Plus, I mustn’t have had that interesting of a childhood, because I can’t remember many events worth telling.) Lately I’ve been reading stories written by others, but many have the same flaw as my own childhood stories: they’re about naughty children who get corrected. I’ve also tried the “object lesson” kind of story, though I find it hard to construct good ones with useful lessons.

Yet often I’d prefer to do the story myself. Rotating storytellers from the congregation (as many congregations do for the children’s story in church) isn’t always a good solution. I’ve heard some excellent stories from lay storytellers, but also some dreadful ones: stories about dead animals and tortured children, once even an ordinary fairy tale. (One storyteller I heard informed the children in the course of the story that an Italian is called a “wop”, and illustrated it by pointing to an Italian man in the congregation! There are days you wish you could crawl under the pulpit and stay there. Clearly someone made an error in screening participants that day.)

Are there others of you who also find this simple little task challenging? I’d like to hear how you do it. Do those of you who feel gifted have suggestions for the rest of us? Are there resources that you draw on? How do you prepare in order to make the story interesting to the children?
Taking Over Your Local Theater

By Dave Gemmell While local movie theaters may not be the first place you think of for doing evangelism several NAD pastors have recently taken over their town’s theater to teach grace. Andrew Shurtliff, Marlan Knittle and Steve Allred each sponsored a limited run of Hell and Mr. Fudge in their local towns. The film is based on the true story of Edward Fudge, a young evangelical who in his personal study discovered a God of grace, mercy and love, in contrast with the teaching of a God who keeps the lost alive forever in endless, conscious torment. In every setting a number of unchurched people came out to a neutral site and watched one of the core Seventh-day Adventist teachings unfold in a dramatic narrative.

Andrew Shurtliff encouraged the Douglas, Georgia Seventh-day Adventist company, which has a membership of less than 20, to sponsor the film to be screened in their town. He says “We advertised the film on local TV networks, radio stations, and newspapers. We had a hundred and twenty-nine people respond from a population of 10,000. Following the showing of the film we encouraged individuals to fill out a short survey on their viewing experience. Overall the film was very well received and highly recommended to friends and family. A lot of free literature went out along with Amazing Facts Lake of Fire DVDs to everyone who filled out a survey. We are currently in the process of following up interests this film generated. We hope to develop small group Bible studies with individuals who remain in contact with us.”

In Bakersfield California, Marlan Knittle and the other Adventist pastors chose to highlight the film at their annual area wide convocation. Adventist churches played trailers of the film in advance of the screening and invited members to bring their friends and neighbors to the 1500 seat Fox theater. More than 1300 tickets were sold online, at the churches, at two or three local businesses, and at the theater door. More than 1300 tickets were sold online, at the churches, at two or three local businesses, and at the theater door: “There was already a long line of people waiting for the doors to open when my wife and I arrived at 5:30 p.m.,” says Knittel, pastor of the Bakersfield Central church. The film began at 7 p.m. with a nearly full theater.

In Yuba City California Pastor Steve Allred was approached with the idea of renting a theater in the local multiplex for a two-night screening of Hell and Mr. Fudge; the church would sell tickets for the premium price of $10 and give any net income to a local non-denominational charity that provides services to homeless children and their families. The rental cost would be approximately $1000 per night.

Allred went straight to the church with the idea and made a straightforward appeal for funds so that they could make the necessary advance payment to the theater. $1800 came in that very day. Posters were put up in various places around town. Invitations were distributed. Church members were urged to bring non-member friends to the theater.

The movie played on Sunday and Monday nights. First night attendance: 200. Second night: 150. Some of the most conservative people in the church came and brought guests. No less than 75 non-Adventists attended the screenings. The church was delighted in the opportunity to present the doctrine of the state of the dead to their friends in the community. "Hell and Mr. Fudge," was honored with the 2012 Platinum Award in the "Theatrical Feature Film – Christian" category at the Houston International Film Festival. The film produced by LLT Productions in Angwin, Calif., follows Edward Fudges quest for the truth about what the bible really teaches about hell. Fudge was hired to research the subject of hell, to determine whether indeed, God keeps the lost alive forever in endless, conscious torment. His year-long study dramatically shifted his own beliefs and resulted in the book The Fire That Consumes.

Pastors who wish to screen the film in their towns can either rent local theaters or sponsor efforts to bring the movie to their areas through the normal booking process. According to Jim Wood, "Booking the movie at a theater can be an expensive and time-consuming process, but the result may be a one-week engagement with 20 or more screenings." On the other hand, renting a theater for two or three screenings...
allows for more control of timing and follow up. Wood says, "Renting a theater may seem like the more expensive option, but it's possible for income from ticket sales to offset the lion's share of the rental cost."

Another creative way to screen the film according to Jim Wood is for the church to rent out the theater as a private event. Wood says “There are several important advantages to the theater-rental plan. First, you can usually pick your dates. This means that you can integrate the screening of HMF into a larger plan. Second, since your rental is a ‘private’ event, you can start with introductory remarks and end with Q&A, hand out literature, invite attendees to follow-up events, etc. And again, a significant portion of the cost of renting a theater can be recovered through ticket sales. This is not the case with a regular theater booking.”

For complete details on these options – as well information about screening the film in churches or other public venues – see the web page at www.hellandmrfudge.org/local. There you'll find the pros and cons of theater rentals and bookings, financial information, downloadable rental agreements, and links to promotional resources.

"All I can say is, “Wow!” It was a fantastic experience.

We arranged to show the movie at the largest cinema in our town, Carmike 15. We rented one of the theaters—started out with one that seats 172, and then about 10 days before the event upgraded to one that seated 225. Good thing we did, because we had standing room only! The manager of the cinema went row to row, trying to seat people in any open seats. Probably 10 people stood, and we may have turned away 30 – 40 people (or more, as the ticket agents turned away a few people we didn’t see).

We advertised on a crawler on the Weather Channel, our local 3ABN radio, and on cable TV, but our most effective advertising was through church members. I’d estimate that 40% of the attendees were people we did not know, although some of those were people who were friends of members.

The movie was excellent. Well-written, well-acted, and well-produced. I was a little afraid it would not measure up to people expectations of what a movie in shown in a theater should be, but it did. People really enjoyed watching it, and several wanted to see it again and/or purchase it for themselves.

We did a follow-up Bible study, and one person came. We have heard reports from members, though, about conversations they’ve had with friends who came—so although they didn’t come to our study, there was a spiritual impact made. We don’t see evangelism as based on an event, but as a stream of events and encounters that God uses to impact our community as we live Godly lives among our neighbors.

So we’d definitely do it again! I believe that movies are one of, if not the, biggest influencers of society at this time and I’d delighted that Adventists are starting to use this modality to get God’s message before the people."
The Nature and Reality of Conflict

Skip Bell, DMin
Definition

Conflict is a common relational dynamic that occurs when people are in relationship and experience differing ideas, goals or purposes.
How Conflict Benefits a Community

1. Expresses caring
2. Issues get explored
3. Increases group cohesion
4. Enhances identity
5. Improves decision making
6. Expresses diversity

Skip Bell, DMin
Conflict Categorized by the Parties Involved

- Within a single person - Intrapersonal
- Between two or more persons - Interpersonal
- Within a single group - Intragroup
- Between two or more groups - Intergroup
The Nature of the Differences

- Real issues
- Communication difficulties
- Attitudinal conflicts
- Emotional conflicts
- Antagonism
Conflict Level I (of 5)
A Difference Regarding an Actual Issue

- Actual problems exist
- The focus is on solving the problem
- Language is specific and clear
- Trust and openness exist
- If there are emotional or communication difficulties they are short-lived
- Some would not call it conflict—but it is—and is healthy

Skip Bell, DMin
Conflict Level 2
A Sense of Threat or Loss

- Parties become concerned about defending their position
- Language becomes general
- Others are drawn into the problem, usually friends or members of the immediate group
- Frustrations may exist
- Information may be withheld
- The idea of compromise is relevant

Skip Bell, DMin
Conflict Level 3
Contest

- Problems and solutions move to the background
- Right or wrong becomes an issue
- We draw others in and generalize other’s thoughts and feelings
- Groups begin to form
- Things are magnified “They don’t care about the church.”
- Feelings and emotions are expressed
- It becomes win/lose

Skip Bell, DMin
Conflict Level 4
Fight/Flight

- Objective becomes breaking relationship
- Non-verbal communication is frequent
- Opponents are shamed or attacked
- Outsiders are enlisted to strengthen the position
Conflict Level 5
Intractable

- People believe the others are dangerous and should be disciplined
- It is not enough to be separate
- Withdrawal from the conflict becomes almost impossible
Conflict and power:

Every conflict, whether helpful or harmful, whether benevolent or antagonistic, is in some way, unconsciously or consciously, a struggle of power with power.

Skip Bell, DMin
Theological Perspectives Regarding Conflict
Theological Perspectives

- God desires peace
- God commands us to seek peace
- Diversity is a part of creation
- We are to accept people who see things differently than we do
- Differences can be opportunities for witness
- Christians can glorify God when wronged in a conflict
- Placing others before ourselves is needed
- Individual sin can be dealt with in ways that do not produce conflict

Skip Bell, DMin
Why are Some Churches Constantly in Conflict?

- Significant family networks
- A high level of interaction
- Shifts in membership demographics
- Strong conservative attitudes or beliefs
- High expectations
- High levels of involvement
- Poor people skills
- Old wounds

Skip Bell, DMin
Conditions That Trigger Conflict

- Change
- New generations of members
- New members
- Misunderstandings
- Power and control issues
- Financial stress
- Specific performance expectations
6 Conflict Management Styles
(Speed Leas)

- Collaborate
- Negotiate
- Persuade
- Compel
- Avoid/Accommodate
- Support

Skip Bell, DMin
Systems Theory and the Church

Skip Bell, DMin
Phase One (of four) - Contracting

1. A representative of the church contacts the mediator. (first of ten steps in the contracting phase)

2. A face to face meeting with key people from within the church but "distanced" from the conflict is scheduled to explore the appropriateness of mediation in the context of the conflict.

3. An agreement form between the mediator and the church is voted and signed by the board including a payment schedule or other covenant.

Skip Bell, DMin
4. A face to face meeting is held with no discussion of merits of either position. The mediator establishes relationship and talks about process. The value of peace is emphasized.

a. If the dispute is among groups of members and not involving the pastor/s the mediator meets with the board and pastor/s, then with the disputant groups separately

b. If the dispute is among pastor/s and /or the board the mediator simply meets with each group alone

5. An agreement is signed by key disputants to enter mediation if the mediator chooses to continue
6. All interested parties are informed by their representatives that the meeting has occurred and that the mediator will be sending communication.

7. Representatives of each group receive a letter from the mediator with prepared questions to further test readiness for mediation and to be returned to the mediator.
8. Each group is asked to read a resource article/s on resolving church conflict

9. The mediator meets again with representatives of each group in the conflict separately to hear their concern as well as further establish a relationship

10. A “preliminary” meeting is scheduled with the original contracting group and disputants together to affirm and describe the process further
Phase Two - Preliminary Meeting

1. Prayer
2. Introductions and remarks
3. Presentation regarding the nature of conflict and constructive approaches
4. The process is described
5. Communication and process ground rules are established
Phase Two - Preliminary Meeting - 2

6. A written commitment is provided and signed by all, if the mediator chooses to continue

7. Agreement must be achieved on the nature of the problem and the issues. No solutions are offered.

8. A schedule for the mediation is established

9. Participants prepare by prayer – and everyone reads an article on scriptural conflict resolution

10. Close in prayer session
Phase Three - Mediation Session

1. Each party presents their perspective with presence of the mediator as referee

2. Underlying interests and values are identified – by the groups and the mediator

3. Options are presented by each group after time for caucus

4. An agreement is proposed by the mediator

Skip Bell, DMin
Phase Four - The Concluding Phase

1. The mediator prepares a memorandum of agreement

2. A draft is reviewed by all parties and feedback given to the mediator. You may choose to do this in person.

3. A final draft is formed by the mediator and reviewed by all parties

4. Opportunities for personal reconciliation are given

5. If organizational change is needed to address the conflict source, the mediator recommends a change strategy

6. A corporate reconciliation event may be appropriate

Skip Bell, DMin
Pro-Active Conflict Management in a Local Church

- Communication Skills
- Human Relations
- Team Building
- The Ethical Use of Power
- Conflict Management Workshop
What Counts As Plagiarism in a Sermon?

Here’s an article from the Desiring God blog on plagiarism that I ran across recently.

The question of plagiarism in sermon preparation is rather tricky, primarily because we are interpreting a document (the Bible) which has been interpreted by thousands of people for the last 3000 years. Almost everything we say has already been said elsewhere. If not, we have reason to worry! If you come up with “something no one has ever seen before,” there might be a reason. The faith was committed “once for all” to the saint.

A while back I did a study of the official “rules” of plagiarism in preaching. They’re really hard to nail down. There are lots of articles written about it—people seem to agree that you don’t have to acknowledge every single instance when you gain an insight from someone else. On the other hand, we can’t copy another’s work and ideas and represent them as our own.

“Jesus paid a debt He didn’t owe because we owed a debt we couldn’t pay.” That’s not a verse… but does that idea need to be cited to Anselm and the phrasing back to my middle school camp speaker (who I’m sure just plagiarized it from someone else)?

“Jesus is the true Noah, the ark in which we find shelter from God’s wrath.” That idea is not directly spelled out in the Bible. I heard it first from a Baptist preacher in high school, and most recently that idea has been popularized by Tim Keller. Do I need to cite either of them when I say it?

Does John Piper need to cite Jonathan Edwards when he advances the idea that God’s glory is demonstrated by our delight in him?

Generally, I operate by the following rules for myself:

1. **If I ever preach the gist of another person’s sermon, meaning that I used the lion’s share of their message’s organization, points, or applications, I give credit.** I don’t ever think it’s a good idea to preach someone else’s sermon… but in those rare times when you feel like you just can’t help it, you have to give credit. A sermon is a major thought unit. If it’s not yours, you have to acknowledge where it came from.

2. **If I glean an interpretation of a passage from someone, but the organization of the points, application and presentation are my own, I generally do not feel the need to cite.** After all, if it is a ‘new interpretation,’ it is probably heresy. We should be generally clear, however, that we are learning from others (*this is the tricky part—how much and how often so to be honest and yet not overly cumbersome*). Usually, I do not cite which commentary or author gave me the interpretation of a Greek or Hebrew word. Thus, I did not feel the need to explain when I learn a Hebrew or Greek nuance from MacArthur, Carson, Keller, Kidner, Kittel, or whomever.

Should you ever credit someone who illumines your mind to the real meaning of a passage? I think sometimes you should. For example, I learn a lot from Tim Keller and sometimes I’ll hear him interpret a passage in a way that blows my mind, but one that seems so natural and obvious to the text that I’m sure it is right—and it is so obvious that I wonder how everyone doesn’t see it that way. Often I’ll acknowledge my indebtedness to him, but if the title, organization, and wording of points and application are my own, often I won’t.

Piper says it this way: “To base the structure of your sermon on someone else’s sermon, but to use your own words, is plagiarism. The author on whose work you are basing the structure of your sermon would need to be cited.” That is tough, because sometimes I feel like someone’s outline cannot be improved on, or it flows so logically out of the passage that you wonder how you could be faithful to the text and use any other outline! When I come up with the exact same outline they did, I feel like that outline is now mine and the texts, not just theirs. But, I try to be zealous and cite… though, admittedly, probably not often enough.

My manuscript, which we publish each week along with the sermon, is much more robust in its citations than the spoken word. Putting citations in manuscript does not mean you never have to cite, but it can serve as a good “safety measure” for those instances when you just aren’t sure.

3. **When I take a direct point or a line or the creative wording of a truth from someone, I feel like I should cite.** I obey this rule…
usually. The first 19 times I said “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him,” I cited Piper. Now I only cite him on that phrase every other time. People at my church know where I got it from. A newcomer might think I am trying to imply that I made it up. But I would annoy my congregation to death if every time I mentioned it now I said, “As John Piper says…”

4. When I give a list that someone else has come up with or offer some piece of cultural analysis, I feel like I should cite. Again, a list or an organizational scheme is a thought unit. The truths inside that structure may not be unique to that person, but the organization of the presentation of those points is.

5. If I hear a story told by someone else that reminds me of a story of your own, and I tell that story from my own life, I don’t think I need always to identify where I got the idea for that story from originally. I frequently hear intros and applications for which I find corollaries in my own life. Sometimes I feel the need to cite where the idea originated, and sometimes I don’t… it’s kind of a gut thing that depends on on how truly unique the idea was. For example, Tim Keller tells a story about how he hated classical music in college and only studied it to graduate college to get a job to make money, but now he uses his money to go to classical music concerts because he has learned to love it. He uses that to explain the difference between Gospel-change and religious change. I found an analogy to that in my own life with a Drama/Theatre class I took in college. I didn’t make that up. I really took the class. Should I cite Keller as the inspiration for that story? Not sure. Probably. The first time I told that to my church, I noted that I had heard that explained by Keller. The 2nd and 3rd times I did not. Maybe I should have. It is a pretty unique story, but one I find corollaries to in my own life and that illustrates a very non-unique point quite well.

I once read Spurgeon to say that you should master a few authors to the point that you can predict what they will say before they say it. I heard Peter Kreeft and Keller say the same thing. And I have done just that. My dilemma is that I have listened to Tim Keller now so much that I tend to plagiarize him before even hearing him teach through a particular passage! By that I mean I know how he’ll spin a passage even before I hear him do it, and I will sometimes end up doing that even without hearing him teach on it. There’s a reason for that–I think he’s right in how he interprets the Bible. BTW, I told him that once, and he laughed and said he was the same way with Ed Clowney. And Ed Clowney was personal friends with Savanarola, and used to steal from his sermons, too.

I try to be as transparent as I can with my congregation that I am heavily indebted to some particular theologians and teachers, and even some friends. Recently these have included Keller, Lewis, Piper, Kreeft, Packer, MacDonald, Luther, Edwards, Powlison, Welch, Stanley, Driscoll, and others. We also publish a manuscript each week in which I try to be a little clearer about sources I am drawing from about various points. I’ve found that most of these guys are heavily indebted to their own set of people they draw from.

I want to be zealous so as not to represent myself as more brilliant and original than I really am. The truth is I have had only 3 truly original ideas in my life, and they were not really that good. Almost all the others have been learned from the historic church, both ancient and modern.

What are your thoughts? Can you help me think through this?
There are two factors that, taken together, make plagiarism a danger for those in the Christian ministry. First, those engaged in pastoring and teaching generally love to learn and share what they have learned with others. This is obviously a very good thing. But, second, the guidelines for giving proper credit to those we have learned from are not always clear. Hence, there is a danger that the good desire to share and spread truth will sometimes be carried out, unknowingly, through the untruthful means of plagiarism.

Defining Plagiarism

The essence of plagiarism is to give the impression that the ideas or words of another person are actually your own. This can be done intentionally (in which case it is outright theft) or unintentionally—but either way it is wrong.

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The tenth edition of Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary formally defines the term "plagiarize" from three different angles:

- "to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own"
- "to use (a created production) without crediting the source"
- "to commit literary theft: present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source"

In a nutshell, you have committed plagiarism whenever you use another's ideas or words without crediting or acknowledging the source.

Committing Plagiarism

We can spell this definition out more concretely. There are basically three ways in which plagiarism can be committed:

1. **Quoting someone else word for word but not crediting them as the source.**

2. **Paraphrasing another's words without acknowledging the author whose words you are restating. In other words, if you do not quote the person verbatim but instead just change a few words and do not give credit, you have committed plagiarism.**

3. **Using the ideas of another without acknowledging their source. Hence, even if you state another person's ideas entirely in your own words, you still must credit them as the source of the ideas. The only exception is when the idea is well known and has become common knowledge. For example, if I state that "it is 93 million miles to the sun," I do not need to cite a source. It is common knowledge.**

The Problem with Plagiarism

The central problem with plagiarism is twofold: (1) it is stealing; and (2) it bears false witness. Obviously, both of these are unacceptable for Bible-believing Christians (see Exodus 20:15; Mark 10:19; Matthew 15:19, etc). Stealing and bearing false witness fail to love your neighbor as yourself (Romans 13:9). The words and ideas of another person are precisely that—*their* words or ideas. To fail to acknowledge their source is to give the false impression that they have originated with you. Hence, plagiarism steals from another and gives a false impression to your audience. Both of these factors should be of utmost concern to the Christian, and especially pastors and teachers whose should have the utmost respect for the sanctity of truth.

Overcoming Plagiarism in Preaching and Teaching

It is not hard to avoid plagiarism. All that you have to do is acknowledge the source whenever you quote, paraphrase, or use the ideas expressed by another. But, of course, life almost always throws us complex situations where it is not clear how to apply a general principle such as this. Hence, it will be helpful to spell out some specific guidelines.
1. General acknowledgements do not suffice. It is not enough, for example, for a pastor simply to say to his congregation, "Once in a while I use the ideas or words of other theologians. I don't tell you every time I do it because I have reminded you from time to time not to think that everything I say originated with me." Instead, each instance of quoting, paraphrasing, or using another's ideas must be accompanied by attribution to the source.

2. Detailed bibliographic data is not necessary. It is not necessary to give detailed information as to the page number, publisher of the book, date of publication, and so forth when attributing a source in a sermon. It is helpful to do this in papers, but even then the absolutely necessary thing is to name the person from whom you got the idea or quote, and if possible the specific book or lecture or article.

3. Common knowledge does not need to have its source cited. "Common knowledge" does not necessarily mean that everyone in your audience knows the information. What is it then? The Purdue University English Department suggests helpful criteria. You have "common knowledge" when (1) "you find the same information undocumented in at least five other sources"; (2) "You think it is information that your readers will already know"; "You think a person could easily find the information with general reference sources" (source). Hence, "Jonathan Edwards was born in 1703" is common knowledge. "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him" is not common knowledge.

4. If the original source simply cannot be found, it is acceptable to say "As someone has once said..." (Most sources, however, can be found. For online searches, www.google.com is indispensable. You might also try the new "Search Inside the Book" feature at Amazon.)

5. Restatements, in your own words, of the positions of general movements do not necessarily require citation. For example, it is OK to say, "Calvinism holds X" without detailing the history of the movement or even discussing its historical origins in general. However, a restatement of the Calvinist position that follows the structure or outline or unique wording of someone else's prior work on the Calvinism would require citation.

6. The preaching of another's sermon is usually a bad idea, but is not plagiarism if the original author is clearly cited.

7. To base the structure of your sermon on someone else's sermon, but to use your own words, is plagiarism. The author on whose work you are basing the structure of your sermon would need to be cited.
Click 'Pray' to Pray: How Evangelical Megapastor Joel Osteen Is Saving Souls With Facebook

MIAMI -- Halfway through megapastor Joel Osteen’s sermon at Marlins Park stadium, seven frazzled people sitting in a press box overlooking the field realize they have a problem: The prayers aren’t going through.

“I can forward ‘prayer’ to ‘prayer request,’” volunteers a member of Osteen’s technical staff as a possible fix. He fiddles with the trackball of his BlackBerry as he tries his best to reassure Osteen’s marketing director, Jason Madding, that they can redirect people's emailed prayers to the proper place and prevent them from disappearing into the digital ether.

Hunched over a MacBook, Madding flips back and forth between a Skype chat and a page tracking traffic to Osteen’s sites. He coordinates with a remote team of developers as he monitors the popularity of Osteen's page to gauge whether the surge of visitors will overwhelm the servers and bring down the site.

On the field below, a musician blows two long blasts from a ram’s horn while drums thump in the background. “Every day has your name on it,” Osteen shouts to the crowd.

Osteen, a 50-year-old Texas native with an impeccable complexion, thick head of dark hair and a gleaming white smile, is the pastor of the largest church in America. On this April night in Miami, nearly 36,000 cheering people have gathered in the stands of the stadium to hear him speak. But for Madding, the crucial action is playing out on an iPad propped on a desk in front of him: He is watching the live stream of the pastor’s sermon as it appears to audiences who are tuning in from home -- a group numbering more than 138,000. They are absorbing Osteen’s “Night of Hope,” a gathering of evangelical Christians aimed at strengthening people's commitment to Christ, swaying non-believers and spreading Osteen's message of self-improvement through Christianity.

Madding’s iPad displays a ceaseless stream of comments from those taking part from their homes around the world -- people grappling with illness, joblessness, loneliness, despair and suicidal thoughts; people seeking comfort, prayer and fellowship here. These participants are not inside the stadium, but in an expanded gathering that connects the experience of those here in the flesh with those online.

Over the course of this night, Osteen’s team of social media consultants confronts the formidable task of making that synergy happen. They struggle to keep up with the relentless flood of digital interaction. In life, prayers may or may not be realized. But in the social media realm of the Night of Hope, all prayers must be answered.

Osteen's staff has instructed online congregants to post prayers to his Web site or phone prayers to a 1-800 number. They've also provided an email address -- prayer@joelosteen.com -- assuring digital participants that the church has dedicated prayer partners on hand who will field their missives and pray for them.

But at this moment, those emailed entreaties have no prayer of reaching anyone. The email address Osteen's helpers have supplied is the wrong one. It's an address that doesn't exist -- the staff was meant to offer up "prayerrequest@joelosteen.com." Thanks to the error, an automatically generated email reply is informing the faithful that delivery of their prayers has "failed permanently."

“It bounced back,” types one of the people in the chat room, who has tried to email from her home in Canada. “I need your prayers.”

She tersely summarizes her feelings about the situation: “=(.”
A man prays at the Night Of Hope in Miami.

THE ORIGINAL SOCIAL MEDIA

Social networking sites, long celebrated as avenues for up-to-the-minute information from friends, pundits, celebrities and corporations, are now being deployed in the spirit of higher powers. They have emerged as vehicles for spiritual salvation.

Increasingly, the road to Damascus is a hyperlink and the Epistle is a tweet.

In some sense, this seems inevitable. The Internet is effectively doing for present-day pastors what television once did for Jerry Falwell, Jimmy Swaggart and the rest of the so-called televangelists: helping them spread Christianity on a mass scale while liberating their congregations from the confines of the physical church.

Beyond the tens of millions of viewers who can be reached via television broadcasts, the Web has amplified the potential audience to the hundreds of millions, while transcending geographic boundaries. Pastors need not concern themselves with buying TV time in the appropriate markets. They can instead use tweets, streaming video, podcasts and Facebook status updates -- free, accessible anytime and widely shared -- to turn hearts and shepherd their flock. And while TV is a one-way form of communication, the Internet enables interaction, letting ministries converse with the people tuning in.

“Thirty years ago, televangelists used technology that did not exist before then to spread their message, and that is essentially what technology is allowing pastors and churches to do now,” said Todd Rhoades, the director of new media and technologies at the Leadership Network, which seeks to help churches master technical innovation. “But it’s on a much larger scale and in many ways it’s on a more individual scale -- it seems a lot more personal.”
Social media brand managers would pay dearly for fans as active as the followers that religious groups have attracted online. On social networking sites, megapastors’ fan bases are considerably smaller than those of pop stars or big brands, but church followers tend to be far more engaged and apt to spread the word of their preachers.

Religious groups regularly rank among the top five most-discussed fan pages on Facebook, according to PageData, a social media analytics firm. Rihanna, the most popular public figure on Facebook with over 70 million “likes,” averaged 41,000 interactions per Facebook post during the month of March, reported Quintly, an analytics firm that registers shares, comments and “likes” as individual interactions. Joel Osteen Ministries, with a relatively paltry 3.6 million “likes,” averaged 160,000 interactions per post, Quintly found -- nearly four times Rihanna’s average, three times Justin Bieber’s and almost sixteen times the White House’s.

Evangelical Christians and social media creators ultimately share something fundamental in common: Both are consumed with the nature of how information spreads, and both are intent on fashioning a sense of community out of individuals separated by time, space, language and culture. Both also passionately apply themselves to filling what they view as a void in the human experience.

“Religion is the original social media,” says Jonah Berger, author of Contagious: Why Things Catch On. “Even that phrase, ‘spreading the gospel.’ Religion is one of the original things that people shared to a good degree.”

'THE DIGIVANGELIST'

Osteen has long harbored aspirations of reaching enormous numbers of people. Early in his career, when he published his first book, Osteen's public relations team pitched him as “Billy Graham meets Tony Robbins.” His message of positive thinking and attaining personal prosperity through Christianity has attracted both devout followers and strident critics, who argue he preaches a watered down version of the Bible that overemphasizes material wealth. But his breed of self-empowerment evangelicalism -- "Be a victor, not a victim,” “[God] wants us to enjoy every single day of our lives” -- has proved so popular, Osteen delivers his song-filled sermons to traveling Night of Hope events held monthly in different cities around the world. He's also authored several bestsellers and reaches 10 million homes a month via his weekly TV broadcast. He has a passion for television and doesn’t seem to have ever met a camera he didn't like. “TV is Joel’s heart,” notes Madding.

But seeing new opportunities to expand his following and spread his brand of inspiration, Osteen has lately sought to master a new field: digi-vangelism.

In his telling, social media enables him to “impact more people in a positive way” -- an impact he no doubt hopes will ultimately tether believers and non-believers closer to his congregation (and maybe even sell some of his books or DVDs along the way).

Other churches, like Oklahoma’s evangelical LifeChurch, have been more ambitious and creative with their approaches to technology, though none can yet rival Osteen’s reach.

And Osteen, born in an era where the dominant screen was a television, not a computer, is facing some of the same challenges other churches are confronting as he attempts to update his message for the Facebook era. Larger churches have traditionally been technology’s early adopters, and smaller congregations are likely to crib from Osteen’s social media strategy.

Here’s where devotees can currently find Osteen online: YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, on podcasts, delivered to their email inboxes, as a blog on JoelOsteen.com, livestreamed via his website, in an iPad magazine and, coming soon, on two standalone iPhone apps. To handle the deluge of prayer requests posted to Osteen’s Facebook wall and phoned into his church, Joel Osteen Ministries has even launched a dedicated site, Pray Together, where people can post prayer requests for the ministry’s entire congregation to respond to. Just click “pray” to pray.

“It’s kind of like -- are you familiar with Reddit or Digg?” asks Brian Boyd, the chief executive of Media Connect Partners (or MCP), a social media consultancy that assists Joel Osteen Ministries with their with day-to-day online outreach efforts, as well as their Night of
Hope events. “You can vote a prayer request up or down, and actually pray.”

Some evangelical Christians view these developments with alarm, decrying what they portray as an insincere reach for souls with social media and a trend that could undermine the draw of in-person gatherings of people in one place. Evangelical Christian pastor John MacArthur railed against “flat screen preachers” in a 2011 interview with Christianity.com, declaring their form of ministry an “aberration” that moved “away from the core of sound doctrine.”

But Osteen’s social media consultants maintain they have witnessed the faithful finding real fellowship and solace in a virtual setting.

“You don’t have to sign up for an email, you don’t have to go to church, and you don’t have to go out and find it: you can literally log onto your computer or your phone, and you can get the encouragement or inspiration that you need,” says Kelly Vo, a twenty-something social media analyst manager with MCP who helps Osteen, along with other Christian figures, on his web strategy. “People share things on social media, with Joel, that I don’t think people would even share with their pastor in person.”

'I SPEAK JOEL'

It’s just after noon on Saturday, more than six hours before the Night of Hope is set to begin, and already a gaggle of web gurus have arranged themselves at a long desk in the empty press box at Marlins Park. They are seated elbow-to-elbow, MacBook-to-MacBook, as they prepare for the intense activity ahead. The room is silent, save for the growl of planes flying overhead and the occasional twang from an electric guitarist rehearsing on the black stage below.

For the Night of Hope, Boyd's MCP has rallied a team of 10 to run social media, with most of the moderators here in Miami and others working from their homes scattered from Las Vegas to Charlotte. Joel Osteen Ministries has tapped another 11 people, including Madding's marketing staff and a group of developers, to be sure Osteen's site doesn't collapse under the weight of its online congregation. In Texas, Osteen has seven prayer partners, made up of Lakewood Church staff and volunteers, on hand to pray via email and on the phone.

The mission for this sizable social media operation is to transpose and transmit the real-life experience of Osteen’s Night of Hope sermon -- a rock concert-like production where thousands pray, sing, shout, stand, stomp, hug, clap, cry and convert -- to people sitting alone, in darkened rooms, before the glow of computer screen.

“I want it to be real, interactive,” says Boyd. “I want them to feel like they’re sitting in the stadium.”

MCP will update Joel Osteen Ministries’ social accounts throughout the night in an effort to drive people to the main attraction: the live, online video stream of the Night of Hope and the public chat room that sits alongside it on the screen. Osteen's chat room will be open to all comers as a place where they can message with other followers or with the team of MCP moderators on hand to offer encouragement, share information on local churches and answer questions posed by the virtual attendees. A separate section of the screen will allow participants to post prayer requests for all to see and answer.
Vo, a slim brunette dressed in purple pants, a lavender collared shirt, and black pumps, works on putting together a list of pastors to follow on Twitter. Peering into her laptop, she shifts between Twitter, Facebook, a custom-made scheduler listing outgoing posts and the Instagram app on her iPhone.

Though this is Vo’s first Night of Hope, she has worked smaller Osteen events, and she has a sense of what’s in store. She has warned her colleague to steel himself for a virtual stampede.

“There are thousands of comments a second,” she tells another team member. “It’s just a massive undertaking. It’s exciting because his fans are excited, and so nice, and they’re so happy to be a part of it and they’re so enthusiastic.”

That deluge of comments is the most stressful part of the night for Boyd, who notes it’s simply impossible to interact personally with every virtual attendee -- though that's the aim.

"We really do want to try to reach everyone,” he explains. "If someone asks a question, we want to get an answer to them. If someone has a concern or wants to give a praise report, we want to be able to talk to them, and you just can’t do it. Even with 10 people, with that kind of volume, you're unable to get to every single person."

A former literary editor who studied creative writing at Arizona State University, Vo knows Osteen’s fans better than most. She’s helped manage Osteen’s social profiles for six months, and spends an hour or two every day responding to his followers’ comments or drafting status updates to send from the pastor’s accounts. The posts, based on lines from Osteen’s sermons and books, are each screened by Joel Osteen Ministries’ media relations chief, Andrea Davis, before they're published. Osteen is against personal updates and insists on short, motivational phrases: "It's hope, it's inspiration, it's stuff that they can use," the pastor explains. "That has helped us be effective." Though Osteen doesn’t tweet himself, he has a separate, private Twitter account from which he monitors his official feed. If Osteen sees a tweet go out that doesn’t sound true to him, Davis can expect a call.

“I eat, breathe and sleep Joel at times,” says Vo. “I speak Joel now … You pick up the voice and it’s like, ‘Oh, God bless you’ and ‘Would love to pray for you.’”

And yet, much like the majority of the congregants who will gather here tonight via social media, Vo knows Osteen primarily as a digital experience: She has met him in person only once -- the day before.
The MCP Web moderators in the Marlins Park press box, dubbed "Social Central JOM" (short for "Joel Osteen Ministries").

Osteen's Facebook and Twitter posts are relatively standard fare, but their reception is anything but typical. A tweet sent earlier that morning advised his 1.6 million followers, “Today, find something to be grateful for. Every day is a gift from God.” That message has been retweeted over 6,000 times, about average for Osteen, who takes a personal interest in his retweets. By contrast, Whole Foods, which boasts twice as many followers as Osteen and in 2012 was named the most influential brand on Twitter, is lucky to see one of its tweets retweeted a dozen times.

Retweeting and "liking" on Facebook amount to an effective way to convey the Word, as believers disseminate Osteen’s message through their genuine social networks.

“It opens up the doors for a lot of unbelievers,” says Alisha Brooks, one of the in-person attendees at the Night of Hope who follows Osteen closely online. “Through social media, I might have a whole bunch of people who follow me that may not be into the Word or anything like that. So if I see something [Osteen] tweets and I retweet it, now it has access to an extra 100, 200 or 300 people that didn’t have access to that or didn’t see it. And it might help.”

Vo breaks from her Twitter work to scan through the 400-odd comments on Osteen’s most recent Facebook post, systematically “liking” some and answering questions about the Night of Hope. That personal attention, says Vo, helps endear Joel to people by assuring them he’s hearing their prayers and praise -- even if it’s from the “JOM Team,” not Osteen himself.

“Joel is there. He’s touchable, he’s interactive. You don’t feel like he’s just a TV,” she says. “The followers know he’s there, he’s listening, he’s a pastor and he’s watching, so they get the interaction.”

'I NEED A PRAYER'

About twenty minutes before the Night of Hope is scheduled to begin, Vo resettles herself in front of her computer. In addition to updating Facebook and Twitter, she’s been assigned the role of “greeter,” meaning she will be welcoming people to the Night of Hope chat room. So-called “URL pushers” will answer queries with pre-written blocks of text that direct people to everything from Osteen’s Twitter account to local churches. Two others from the group will screen each incoming comment before publishing it to the public forum, and someone else will run giveaways (the prizes: free copies of Osteen’s books)

In the Night of Hope chat room, people waiting for Osteen to take the stage banter about where they’re from and where they’re watching the stream: Israel, Canada, Hawaii, North Carolina. Shortly after 7 p.m., Osteen’s big, pearly grin flashes onto the screen.

Prayer requests begin to flow into the chat room. Elsewhere on the Internet, people tend to present themselves in the best light. Here, people bare all, sharing stories about depression and abuse, seizures and strokes, infertility and lost children.

“Hey everyone I need prayer,” writes a woman, who identifies herself in the chat as “Lisa Elliott.” “I am dealing with Brain Cancer and
dealing with abuse in my life and asking for some prayers in this I feel like I cant keep going with the way my life is going.”

Vo writes back to Elliott assuring her Osteen ministries "would love to stand with you in prayer.” She advises her to share her prayer request online, or by phoning into a 1-800 line, where volunteer prayer partners will join callers in prayer and offer them scripture.

Then, 30 minutes later:

8:05 p.m. Comment From Lisa Elliott: siting here in tears
8:14 p.m. Comment From Lisa Elliott: I hatmy life my abusive boy friend is drunk sleeping if he wakes up I get beat

“Lisa, We are standing with you during this time,” types one of the moderators, called “Matt-ADMIN.” He directs Elliott to a prayer site and to the erroneous email address, prayer@joelosteen.com. “Our prayer team would love to pray with you.”

Another woman in the chat room, someone not part of the Osteen team, tells Elliott: “my prayers are with you, I was in your situation nine yrs ago, there is a way to get help, call your local womans help center as I did.”

“Can I have the number so I can call them now,” Elliott asks. Then, “crying over this I have never had something like this.”

“Enjoy the experience, Lisa!” a moderator answers cheerily.

Another half hour passes.

9:00 p.m. Comment From Lisa Elliott: please pray for me toight that nothig happens
9:00 p.m. Comment From Kelly-ADMIN: Lisa, we are standing with you in prayer and faith.
9:03 p.m. Comment From Lisa Elliott: I know he will beat me tonight

Another moderator is congratulating Elliott. Apparently, she has just won a free copy of Osteen’s newest book.

The MCP team is having trouble keeping up. The room grows quiet, save for the frantic tap of fingers clicking on keys. An unpublished queue of comments speaks to the agitation of people waiting for answers: “CAN YOU SEE ME???” one person has typed. A moderator sends a private message to a particularly frustrated user, assuring him they’re doing their best.

As tens of thousands of people absorb the live stream, the video is stalling, spurring even more gripes in the chat room and on Osteen’s Facebook wall.

“You’ve got thirty complaints on your Facebook page that the servers are down,” the wife of one of Osteen’s photographers informs Vo.

Vo clenches her jaw. The audience is diminishing, with the number of concurrent online viewers down to 34,000 from over 41,000 earlier in the night. People have spent an average of 48 minutes watching the Night of Hope, but the video’s hiccups seem to be costing Osteen his viewers. Boyd tells Vo to post a link to the live stream on Facebook. Now.

“It’s frozen, my thing is frozen,” Vo answers through gritted teeth. “It’s literally frozen.”
A view of the Marlins Park stadium on the Night of Hope.

In Rapid City, South Dakota, Janice Heigh, 53, logs on to the chat room to seek help. She and her husband have been overwhelmed by the work of caring for their three grandchildren. She feels distance and isolation seeping into her marriage.

She also feels removed from a community of people grappling with similar troubles. Though she attends weekly services and teaches Sunday school at a local Rapid City church, Heigh has struggled to find a Bible studies group for people in her predicament. There are meetings for parents with young children -- populated by people decades her junior -- and meetings for people in her age group, who generally have other worries. She has had trouble arranging her schedule around that of her local church.

But on the Web, church services are always happening, and support groups are to be found at every hour of the day. Heigh has tapped into them via Facebook, Prayer.com, and at sites like the one for Osteen’s Night of Hope. In this way, she has found other grandparents tending to their own grandchildren. She has taken comfort in seeing that other people’s lives are imperfect, too.

Unlike in person, these online exchanges spare Heigh from feeling like she's a burden: The people she chats with online are there because they want to be. She takes refuge in the anonymity of this interaction.

“At midnight, I can go to the computer, pull it up and there’s someone on there somewhere who can give you insights, a kind word,” she says. “They’re thinking about you, praying about it and it’s like, ‘I’m OK. I’m all right. It broadened my horizons spiritually because I was able to feel connected, even though I knew there was no way I could make it to this or that.”

On this night, in the chat room at the Night of Hope, she begins typing.

“I will be married 34 years tomorrow,” she writes. “My husband and I have had many years of trials and triumphs. We are now raising our daughters 2 girls. I feel that my husband and I have grown far apart since we took on the responsibility of these GOD given children.”

“Please pray that we can come together after all these years.” Heigh continues. “We have had the girls for 7 years so it is not a new situation but seems I am a single parent.”

Vo answers a minute later.

“Janice, thank you for sharing your story and your heart with us,” she types back. “We are standing with you in prayer and faith. May God's goodness and mercy shine upon you.”

From Miami to South Dakota, this message makes its way, arriving with the affirmation intended.

“It makes you feel validated,” Heigh explains later. “The Internet, to me, it has brought a whole situation to God.”

This story appears in the Issue 52 of our weekly iPad magazine, Huffington. in the iTunes App store, available Friday, June 7.
Foot in mouth.

By Ron Edmondson

All of us say things we wish we hadn’t said. We all offend people at times. Everyone knows what it is like to put foot in mouth.

**Doing so is common, but what do we do afterwards?**

**Here are 5 Steps When You’ve Offended Someone:**

**Recognize that you will offend some people.** – Actually, that should come before the incident. Even the most gentle-minded, peace-pursuing people are occasionally offensive. Sometimes the person on the other side of the offense has issues that make them easily offended. Sometimes we just say or do the wrong thing. It’s working to do so less often and never intentionally that should be our goal.

**Pursue peace** – Our goal should be to be at peace with others, as much as it depends on us. This too should be set, as a goal, before it’s needed, so you’ll respond accordingly when it is needed. Strive not to say or do things which are offensive. This often means learning to think before you speak.

**Ask forgiveness and seek to rebuild trust.** – Sometimes the best thing a person can do is to say they are sorry. Many times people want to pass blame, make excuses, or wait for the other person to make the first move towards reconciliation. If you know a perceived offense has occurred, put your “big boy pants” on and break the ice of forgiveness. Don’t be afraid to take the blame if it will bring peace in the end. Remember though that trust is built over time, so don’t be “offended” if it is not given to you instantly. You can release your own guilt once you’ve sought forgiveness.

**Examine your life.** – If you seem to consistently find yourself in situations where others feel offended by you; maybe the problem is you. Don’t be afraid to look at the “speck” in your own eye. Examine areas of your life where you are consistently offending others.

**Stay true to God’s plan for your life.** – While we should attempt to live at peace with everyone, we should never avoid offending people at the sacrifice of God’s plan for our life. Jesus’ best work was offensive to many. If you are being obedient to God, you will find it offends some (maybe many.) Don’t let that distract you from doing God’s will. And, don’t hide in the offense you made. Move forward.

**What do you do when you’ve offended someone?**
Heaven for atheists? Pope sparks debate

American atheists welcomed Pope Francis’ comments that God redeems nonbelievers, saying that the new pontiff’s historic outreach is helping to topple longstanding barriers.

“The Lord has redeemed all of us, all of us, with the Blood of Christ: all of us, not just Catholics. Everyone,” the pope told worshipers at morning Mass on Wednesday. “‘Father, the atheists?’ Even the atheists. Everyone!”

Francis continued, “We must meet one another doing good. ‘But I don’t believe, Father, I am an atheist!’ But do good: we will meet one another there.”

Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association, said that although he has been skeptical of Francis’ outreach to the nonreligious, he welcomed Wednesday’s comments.

“I gather from this statement that his view of the world's religious and philosophical diversity is expanding,” Speckhardt said. “While humanists have been saying for years that one can be good without a god, hearing this from the leader of the Catholic Church is quite heartening.”

He continued, “If other religious leaders join him, it could do much to reduce the automatic distrust and discrimination that atheists, humanists, and other nontheists so regularly face.”

Francis’ comments received a great deal of attention on social media, with a number of people asking whether the Catholic leader believes that atheists and agnostics go to heaven, too.

On Thursday, the Vatican issued an “explanatory note on the meaning to ‘salvation.’”

The Rev. Thomas Rosica, a Vatican spokesman, said that people who aware of the Catholic church “cannot be saved” if they “refuse to enter her or remain in her.”

At the same time, Rosica writes, “every man or woman, whatever their situation, can be saved. Even non-Christians can respond to this saving action of the Spirit. No person is excluded from salvation simply because of so-called original sin.”

Rosica also said that Francis had “no intention of provoking a theological debate on the nature of salvation,” during his homily on Wednesday.

Although the pope’s comments about salvation surprised some, bishops and experts in Catholicism say Francis was expressing a core tenet of the faith.

“Francis was clear that whatever graces are offered to atheists (such that they may be saved) are from Christ,” the Rev. John Zuhlsdorf, a conservative Catholic priest, wrote on his blog.

"He was clear that salvation is only through Christ’s Sacrifice. In other words, he is not suggesting – and I think some are taking it this way – that you can be saved, get to heaven, without Christ.”

Chad Pecknold, an assistant professor of theology at the Catholic University of America, agreed with Zuhlsdorf, pointing out that the pope’s comments came on the Feast of Saint Rita, the Catholic patron saint of impossible things.

“The remarks about atheists show that there is even a saint for atheists,” Pecknold said. “Including all of humanity, on this day especially, remarks like that are almost called for.”

“To stress that the gospel redeems all people, including atheists, is the teaching of the church,” he added. “This is an objective fact that the church believes.”
Greg Epstein, the humanist chaplain at Harvard University, said Francis' comments reflect “the interfaith and inter-community work many of us nontheists are dedicated to.”

That said, Epstein hopes that lay Catholics are listening.

“I hope Catholics, and all people hearing the pope's statement, will recognize that his words about atheists need to symbolize much more than just a curiosity or an exception to the rule,” Epstein said. “If someone thinks there are only a few atheists out there doing good just like Catholics do, that's a major misunderstanding that can lead to prejudice and discrimination.”

The pope’s comments come a few months after he told worshipers that Catholics should be close to all men and women, including those who don’t belong to any religious tradition.

"In this we feel the closeness also of those men and women who, while not belonging to any religious tradition, feel, however the need to search for the truth, the goodness and the beauty of God, and who are our precious allies in efforts to defend the dignity of man, in the building of a peaceful coexistence between peoples and in the careful protection of creation,” Francis said shortly after his election as pope in March.

Even atheists like David Silverman, president of American Atheists, who has had an antagonistic relationship with the Catholic church, welcomed the pope’s remarks.

“While the concept of Jesus dying for atheists is wrong on many levels (especially given that Jesus himself promised hell for blasphemers), I can appreciate the pope's 'good faith' effort to include atheists in the moral discussion,” Silverman said.

“Atheists on the whole want no part in Catholicism, of course, but we are all interested in basic human rights.”
My take: Keep bad theology out of Oklahoma

The Editors

Editor's Note: The Rev. Ian Punnett is the author of "How to Pray When You’re Pissed at God (Or Anyone Else For That Matter)" and a veteran talk show host. He has been married for 28 years and is the father of two college age boys.

By Ian Punnett, Special to CNN

(CNN) – “God never gives us more than we can handle.”

God, have I learned to hate that cliche.

As a clergy person, as a hospital chaplain intern and as a father, I have come to believe that, at best, that platitude is a classic example of meaningless bumper-sticker theology. It's easily said and only makes sense when it goes by you so fast you don’t have time to think about it.

At worst, however, claiming that God scales a tragedy up or down depending on our ability to handle loss is as heartless as it is thoughtless.

In the deadly aftermath of the tornado that destroyed so much of Moore, Oklahoma, pain is only compounded by the implication that somehow the survivors are complicit in the death of a loved one because of their strength as a person. In this view, if God is only giving me what I can handle, then it would seem my boys would be a lot safer if I were weak.

Anybody who has stood in the reception line at a child’s funeral likely has suffered through the repetition of this dubious claim and its equally insidious cousin, “God must have needed a new quarterback (or ballerina) up in heaven,” another expression that has hurt more people than it has healed.

Instead of simply saying, “I am so sorry this has happened” or “I am heartsick over what you are going through” or “This is just so wrong,” some mourners attempt to explain the unexplainable by forcing the world into the “Everything happens for a reason” paradigm. Bumper-sticker theology of this type reorders the universe less for the grief-stricken and more for the benefit of the person offering it.

Because what could be reasonable about the death of a child? Deadly tornadoes can be understood scientifically, to be sure, but there is nothing reasonable about a tornado wiping out a school full of frightened children.

CNN Belief Blog on Twitter

A tornado is not the finger of God squashing us like bugs on a sidewalk. If weather were God’s instrument of justice and tornado victims were singled out to reward the good or punish the bad, then meteorologists would be theologians.

In researching my book "How to Pray When You’re Pissed at God (Or Anyone Else For That Matter)," I spoke with dozens of people who told me that they lost their ability to pray - at a time when they needed it most - when family and friends pressured them into believing that God took their loved one on purpose, and that they were supposed to feel good about it.

In Oklahoma the death toll is 24, and it's expected to rise. I believe that God stands innocently with all the victims. The difference between those who lived and those who died is not the difference between those who had more or less faith, but the random difference between those who turned left and those who turned right.

In our hearts, we might crave the order of a world where God never gives us more than we can handle, but ultimately platitudes are placebos. They only work some of the time and their effectiveness requires the buy-in of the recipient.

CNN’s Belief Blog: The faith angles behind the biggest stories

If a bereaved parent finds peace in believing that God needed a little quarterback in heaven, far be it from me to challenge that perspective.
That said, in the face of tragedy, I believe that the faithful can best serve victims with sympathetic ears and warm hugs in what is called “a ministry of presence.” If they want to cry, cry with them. If they want to laugh and tell stories, smile through the pain, and if they want to yell “Why, God, why?” at heaven, then shake your fist too and leave the question unanswered for now.

*The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of Ian Punnett.*
by Cynthia Weems

May 21, 2013

About a year ago, a young woman in her 30s began attending our church. Rebecca had traveled a great deal, and most recently had lived in Brazil. She had moved to Miami for her job and was excited to get to know the city. I was excited to see her enthusiasm about finding a church home.

Rebecca first became involved in our homeless outreach ministries by signing up to serve breakfast at 7:30 a.m. on Sundays. She also volunteered to help at the holidays. Although she traveled quite a bit for work, Rebecca always made it a point to let me know where she was and when she’d be back. She was a regular worshipper and joined the congregation in membership about three months after first visiting.

I found myself beginning to dream, as pastors do, of the ways Rebecca’s many gifts could be utilized in our congregation. I prayed for how the Lord might open possibilities for her growing involvement in our church.

Six months after Rebecca joined, however, she approached me after worship with excitement in her eyes. She had been offered a promotion and would be moving to Tokyo. Easter would be her last Sunday with us.

“It’s been so great to worship here this last year,” she said that day. “I’ll miss you,” she lamented as she hugged me.

Not as much as I will miss you, I thought to myself.

And so it has gone with more than half a dozen young adults since I arrived to serve this downtown congregation four years ago. Another six young couples have arrived, and left, in this four-year window. Graduate school and job opportunities call them away.

But it is not only the young. Empty nesters who moved downtown to experiment with condo living have decided to move on to another adventure. Others have moved because of job and family changes.

Is this sounding familiar?

It used to be that these scenarios were common only in urban churches. People, it was thought, do not stay long in the city. They come and go. Churches in these areas, of course, will feel the weight of these transitions. “Tough luck,” a colleague in the suburbs once told me.

My sense is that many congregational leaders are struggling with the same tough luck these days. The nature of all our communities is fundamentally changing. In 2010 alone, more than one in 10 U.S. residents moved within the previous year, according to the U.S. Census. Are churches, and church systems, ready to adapt to these changes?

Historically, churches could absorb short-term members, because the majority of congregants were long-term residents. These permanent members would serve on committees, lead stewardship drives, sing in the choir and chair committees. The short-timers could fill in as they were able without significantly affecting the overall operating system.

Today, however, more and more church members do not have deep roots in the community and may never grow them. But they do desire a relationship with a church.

Rebecca was as active as any of our “regulars” during the nine months she lived in Miami. She even paid her annual pledge up front the week she moved to Tokyo — a greater commitment than some longtime worshippers. Commitment, desire and faithfulness are not the questions at the heart of this struggle. A changing way of life is.
My initial assessments draw some conclusions about how the current church operating system must change. First, we can no longer anticipate that people with long years of church membership will be the only ones in leadership positions. If the current model continues, there may be no one left who qualifies!

In a new model, leaders will constantly be lifted up, rather than joining committees that remain intact for several years. Projects may be managed by a more mobile group of people who are willing to meet, problem-solve and strategize for the time they have to give to that task.

Second, more responsibility will be given to church staff. In my opinion, this is unfortunate. However, in many cases a church staff person will know as much of the history of the church’s functions -- bookkeeping, historical records, facilities -- as any parishioner. Church staff will provide structure and documentation for what has long been carried on through oral memory. Resources will have to be allocated to staff with these expectations in mind.

Third, pastors will be relied on for longevity and continuity. This is, potentially, the most perilous of the possibilities before us. In my own tradition, the United Methodist Church, most pastoral appointments are not lengthy. What will it mean for the pastor to be a fundamental part of the fabric that holds churches together when laypeople are the ones coming and going? In order for faith communities to withstand the growing transience of the larger community, I believe longer pastoral appointments are increasingly important.

In the past, our churches have experienced growth and vitality precisely because they have been churches representing communities of people who have stuck around. This lifestyle is fast declining among every age group in congregational life. If we continue to provide ministries and encourage structures that cater primarily to long-term residents, we are in big trouble. Where will faithful passers-through like Rebecca find a church home?
Bruce Herman answers: Why is it important for Christians to make art?

Oil painting by Bruce Herman

"Second Adam" oil on wood. Collection of Gordon College

May 21, 2013

Bruce Herman

Position: Lothlorien Distinguished Chair in Fine Arts at Gordon College, Wenham, Mass.
Vocation: Painter, teacher, writer
Education: Boston University School for the Arts

Why is it important for Christians to make art?

Well, if you’ll permit me to comment on your question before I try to answer it, it’s really interesting to me that that question is being asked these days, for a number of reasons.

The fact that that question should be asked as though it’s unusual that Christians should produce art is a question that needs to be examined. This isn’t the way it’s supposed to be.

It’s normal for Christians to produce art. For 1,800 out of the last 2,000 years, Mediterranean, European and Northern European and also North American culture has been dominated by Christians in the arts. That includes architecture, art, music, poetry and other sorts of literature.

There are historians who are not believers, not Christians, who will say, “Without Christianity, visual art would not have flourished in the Western world.”

So in our day and age, to answer the other part of your question, why is it important for Christians to create art? Because one, we always have done so; and two, it has a leavening effect on the arts in general to have people producing art that comes from a deep place of faith, a place of engagement with the Creator of the entire visible universe.

I don’t even accept the category “Christian art.” There’s just art. Art by Christians, art by non-Christians.

I guess I would say, if you’re talking about religious subjects that deal with stories from the Bible or saints or traditional sacred subject matter, I’ve done that. I’ve done that, and I’ve done abstract. I’ve done other sorts of painting as well. [Including QU4RTETS, an artistic response to T.S. Eliot’s “Four Quartets,” with Makoto Fujimura, Christopher Theofanidis and Jeremy Begbie.]

For me, they’re all the same thing. They all deal with color. They all deal with texture. They all deal with composition. All the same things go into making a painting that has an identifiable sacred subject as go into something that maybe is not specifically religious but deals more with the natural world, say, or the human portrait.

In one sense, I’ve thrown my lot with people like William Blake, who once said, “Everything is holy.” There is no sacred and secular divide. Everything is sacred, everything from a wildflower to the cosmic level of looking at the Crab or the Eagle Nebula -- and everything in between.

Artists who have a deep Christian faith actually have an advantage, I think, over people who don’t believe in God. Because -- theoretically anyway -- if they love God, they’ll be paying closer attention to what God has made, and therefore their work will take on greater complexity and beauty, like I think it has in ages past in the work of great artists like Johann Sebastian Bach or Rembrandt or someone like that.

There’s no such thing as Christian art per se. There’s art that has a deep level of integrity, that celebrates the complexity, the intricacy, the
beauty, the mystery of the visible universe, which is created by God and therefore is his handiwork and deserves our careful attention.

The traditional way of saying it in Christian lingo is to say, “We do this to glorify God,” but everything that exists glorifies God -- everything. There is nothing that is not part of God’s glory; even the darkness will glorify God.

*The preceding is an edited transcript.*
Using Your iPad for Visual Preaching

A few months back, I decided to try using my iPad for preaching. When I speak, I don’t use a manuscript, instead relying on the sermon graphics as visual cues. My problem was that when we moved into a new facility earlier this year, the screen on the back wall was too small for me to read from the stage, and the congregation’s screen is almost directly overhead. So I had to print out my slides with a color printer, which added a significant extra step to my preparation and limited last-minute changes.

The iPad offered a promising solution to the problem, while adding some nice features. First, the large, bright screen made it easy to read the slides. Furthermore, when presenting with the iPad you have 4 different possible views, which you can change on the fly: current slide, next slide, current and next slide side-by-side, and current slide with speaker notes.

Second, you actually control the slides from your iPad, so you don’t need a remote clicker, too. Third, the iPad presentation display shows a timer, which starts when you make your first slide change, so you can easily see how long you’ve actually been speaking. Fourth, it allows you to make quick changes just minutes before you begin, right from the iPad. And finally, if like me you use slides as visual cues for your sermon, it gives you confidence to know that even if the projector quits working—or the power goes out completely—you could still preach your sermon from your slides, right on the iPad.

The best part is that all of SermonView’s slide sets are compatible with Keynote on the iPad, so I was able to seamlessly move my preaching graphics to the device for presentation.

Aside from a small technical glitch (more on that later), the experience was amazing, and I’m hooked. So I wanted to share the specific technical details of how this works, along with some tips for making it easier.

The big picture

The key to this whole solution is a new Apple technology called “AirPlay.” This allows an iPad, iPhone, or iPod Touch to send whatever is on the screen to another Apple device.

Until recently, you had to have a Mac connected to the projector for this to work, which made it a very expensive proposition. But last year, the company released Apple TV, which is a small black box that would typically sit next to your TV. This device also receives AirPlay, so by putting an Apple TV in your projection booth you can take anything on your iPad and project it.

What you need

Here is what you need for this solution:

- An iPad with Keynote installed. Keynote is Apple’s presentation software, a $5 app for the iPad.
- An Apple TV. This small $99 device is what your iPad connects with to send images to the projector.
- A WiFi router. If you don’t already have one, get the cheapest new WiFi router you can find, generally $30 or less.

Tip: This doesn’t have to have an Internet connection. You just need a network to which both the iPad and the Apple TV can connect.
A projector with HDMI input. Almost every new projector in the last few years has an HDMI input. But if the projector in your sanctuary is more than 5 years old, you might need an HDMI-to-VGA adapter, which you can pick up online for under $10.

A computer for building your slides. This can be either a Mac, using Keynote, or a Windows PC, using Microsoft PowerPoint.

The bottom line: If you already have an iPad and a projector, you can get completely set up for less than $150.

Initial setup

Tip: if you’re not technically inclined, ask one of your young adults for help.

1. If you don’t already have a WiFi router installed in your building, set that up first. It doesn’t need to be connected to the Internet, though if you have a DSL or cable modem connection that would be helpful for updating the Apple TV software.

1. Connect the Apple TV to the projector, turn it on, and connect it to your WiFi network. You use the little remote to enter your WiFi password into the Apple TV. If you have an Internet connection, it will probably want to update the software, which can take up to 30 minutes, depending on your connection speed.

Tip: Set your screen saver delay to an hour or more, so that it doesn’t kick on during the sermon. Also set the sleep delay to 5 hours, because if it’s sleeping AirPlay can’t wake it up.

1. Enable AirPlay in your Apple TV settings.

Tip: You should also set up an AirPlay password, so that someone else with an iOS device can’t hijack your projector during the service.

1. Connect your iPad to the WiFi network.

Remember: If you don’t have an Internet connection, your iPad will show that it is connected to a network, but you won’t be able to access email, browse the web, or use any apps that require an Internet connection.

Using AirPlay

Once you see the main Apple TV screen being displayed with your projector, and have your iPad connected to the same network, you’re ready to try out AirPlay.

To turn on AirPlay on your iPad, double click the home button. (That’s the one button on the front of your iPad.) This brings up the “multitasking bar,” which shows the most recent apps you’ve used on the iPad.

Now swipe that bar to the right, revealing some audio/video controls. If the Apple TV and iPad are both set up correctly on the same network, one of those will be the AirPlay button.

Tap the AirPlay icon, select your Apple TV, and turn on “Mirroring.” (In the image, you’ll see that I named my Apple TV “Slide Booth.”) You should now see the contents of your iPad screen on your projection screen.

Preparing your slides

1. Use your computer to build your slides, as you normally do. I find creating new presentations on the iPad to be incredibly frustrating. Keynote on the iPad doesn’t have a lot of the presentation development features found in PowerPoint or Keynote for the Mac, making it hard to get things to look the way I want them to. So I just use my laptop to create the slides. Download whatever
graphic sets you need from SermonView.com, import them into your presentation, then add your key points and scripture verses. If you use PowerPoint, you can add notes in the bottom notes field for each slide. You’ll be able to view these on your iPad during the presentation.

Tip: If you want to use a nice cross-dissolve between slides, like I do, in PowerPoint I would select “Fade,” or “Fade Smoothly” on PowerPoint 2003 and previous versions. However, this does not import to a similar transition in Keynote. You’ll need to use the “Dissolve” transition in PowerPoint, which Keynote imports as a nice, smooth dissolve.

1. Transfer the PowerPoint file to your iPad. I use Dropbox extensively, so when I save the file in my Dropbox folder it will automatically be available using the Dropbox iPad app. You can use another method for transferring, or simply email the presentation to yourself and open it on the iPad.

2. Open the PowerPoint file in Keynote. This will take a moment to import, then will be available for you to use.

3. Make last-minute edits on the iPad. While creating complete presentations is difficult on the iPad, it’s pretty easy to fix typos or add a slide here or there.

Preaching with the iPad

Before the service begins, turn on the Apple TV and make sure you can connect your iPad to it with AirPlay.

Tip: Turn off AirPlay after you test it in the morning, because while it’s on everything you do with the iPad is getting sent to the Apple TV device.

A few minutes before you begin preaching, turn AirPlay back on.

When you get up to speak, have your A/V person switch the projector over to the Apple TV. You now have full control over your slides while you preach. When you’re done, turn off the projector before you turn off AirPlay.

My technical glitch

The first time I preached with my iPad, I added a slide just a few minutes before I started. I had already turned on AirPlay, so everything was getting sent to the Apple TV.

As I stood up to speak, my slide guy switched the projector over to the Apple TV input. But instead of showing my title slide, the Apple TV had a dialog box open: “An update for Apple TV is available. Download it now?” Uh oh, I thought. “Hey, Grant,” I said, “would you mind canceling that update? Now is not a good time.” Laughter.

When he canceled it, suddenly the Apple TV started racing through a history of all the screen states of the iPad since that Apple TV dialog box opened. In about 30 seconds, it showed every letter I typed, every slide I moved, and every app I had opened during the previous 30 minutes. I stood there watching, and just said, “Wow.” When it was done, and my title slide was showing, I said, “Well, that’s my sermon for today. Let’s sing our closing song and go home.” It ended up being a delightfully funny moment, and we moved on from there. The rest of the sermon slides went off without a glitch.

Here’s why I share this story: any time you adopt new technology, especially for something as important as your weekly worship service,
you need to test it. A lot. Don’t just assume it’s going to work the way it does at home. The best thing to do is actually run it real time during the week before your first time, doing your pre-service test at 8:30 a.m., for example, then waiting until at 11:30 a.m. to do a full run-through. Better yet, do the testing with your A/V team, so they get some experience, too.

In this case, I had already used the system for several weeks in our new believer’s class. But in that environment, my WiFi router wasn’t connected to the Internet. Upstairs, it was, and that small change caused a pretty significant glitch.

**It’s your turn**

Preaching with an iPad is clearly not for everyone, and it may not be a tool you’re comfortable with. As the saying goes, you need to fight in your own armor.

If you’ve read this far, though, I encourage you to try it out. Let us know how it goes, and come back to share your experience.

For me, this powerful tool is a game changer, and God willing I look forward to preaching with an iPad for many years to come.

**Links**
YOU WERE CALLED TO BE AMBASSADORS OF PEACE & SAFETY.

YOU WERE CALLED TO BE AMBASSADORS OF PEACE & SAFETY.

7 CRITICAL ESSENTIALS FOR CHURCH SECURITY

*active faith*

You were called to be ambassadors of peace & safety.

7 CRITICAL ESSENTIALS FOR CHURCH SECURITY

The Rise of Violent Crime = A Church Problem

Once upon a time, the lack of peace and safety church leaders worried about mostly happened somewhere else; occasionally in homes, often on the street, and mostly on the other side of the world. Now, the rise in deadly shootings and other crimes has disproportionately visited churches, driving the leaders of many houses of God to increase their preparedness for the unthinkable. Thankfully, the ranks of those who say “It couldn’t happen here” have begun to shrink. 1 Thessalonians 5:3 declares that it is when “peace and safety” are being proclaimed that sudden calamity brings destruction. In the wake of the recent shooting spree at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut on December 16, 2012, we hope that all churches, schools and even corporate entities are entering into the conversation about proactive, preventative protection of those in their care. In the 21st century, peace and safety have evolved from a normal state of affairs to a call to action.

So Much More Than a Gun Issue

While the likelihood of a deadly shooting at a church has increased dramatically in the last ten years, there are many other types of threats to church-goers, and especially children, that are more likely and, often, more preventable, including physical or sexual abuse, kidnapping, and theft of property or private information. Churches cannot afford to ignore this reality.

We understand why this is a difficult topic for churches:

+ Leaders want to preserve a peaceful atmosphere, and overt security measures would threaten this goal
+ The gap between faith and action can be infused with fear, and the balancing act between the two is often a source of great personal and corporate tension
+ An undesired and uncomfortable debate on the use of deadly force in the protection of church-goers is likely to occur

Please do not let these challenges keep you from examining the risks, solutions and true stories of churches confronted with crimes of all types. Each church must decide for itself what steps to take, but we want to empower those decisions with vital information.

September 6, 2011 – A shooting at the IHOP in Carson City, Nevada left 4 dead and 3 wounded.

As many churches do in such cases, the Lifepoint Church in nearby Minden, Nevada held special services for the community to address the grief and tragedy. Minden is a smal, close-knit community, but during this special service, while a teacher conducted an outdoor class for children, a man approached and grabbed a 10-year old boy, fleeing with him around the building. Children’s Ministry Security Team members were alerted and gave chase. The man was preparing to sexually assault the boy but they were able to wrestle him free. The suspect ran to a car and fled the scene. The security team followed and, using cell phones, were able to apprise the police of the suspect’s location. He was apprehended and charged with several crimes.

Later, while interviewing the Children’s Pastor, the local news filmed the church’s check-in stations, and was impressed with the steps the church takes to keep its children safe and secure. “Fellowship One is a wonderful, effective product that makes security highly visible but still user friendly,” says Tammy Thayer, Lifepoint’s Communications Director.

“We prayed to our God and posted a guard.” – Nehemiah 4:9

Creating a safe and secure culture here is part of what lead to the heroic efforts on the part of our Children’s Ministry team. While our team is well-trained on security procedures—which clearly work—Check-In is a big part of that culture. This incident goes to show that a predator will look for every opportunity, but by using Check-In, we’ve closed the door to most of the opportunities a predator would look for.”
We have interviewed a variety of experts on church security in order to better equip church leaders with the information, statistics and action plans necessary to protect their congregants. As a result, we have identified seven critical areas for security in today’s churches:

1. **Background Checks**
   Chris Wilson, president of Clear Investigative Advantage (CIA) says most churches limit searches to specific departments and often use free, online searches, which are not thorough enough. Not all background checks are created equally! Less than 40% of churches run complete background checks through experienced firms.

2. **Check-in System**
   A secure check-in system for children & events heads off many issues, especially with policies that ensure child-pick up occurs only with a matching tag. Fellowship One Church Management Software increases security by embedding into its tags randomly generated codes that cannot be duplicated. A good check-in system allows administrators to know exactly where every child is at any given time.

3. **Aggressive Friendliness**
   Chuck Chadwick, president of Gatekeepers Security Services and founder of the National Organization of Church Security and Safety Management, advocates training key people—often members of a security team—in de-escalation techniques aimed at gently confronting suspicious or hostile individuals in a non-threatening way.

4. **Emergency Action Plan**
   There are many types of emergencies: medical issues, power outage, bomb threat, fire, or intruders. “Most churches wait for something to happen,” says Jeff Kowell, Director of Life Safety at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where a shooting claimed the life of two teenagers in 2007. It is critical to have a plan for different scenarios before something tragic happens.

5. **Triage Teams**
   By creating small volunteer teams of doctors, nurses and paramedics, every church can help with minor incidents and provide critical triage care prior to the arrival of paramedics, fire or police. Kowell warns that churches can be liable if something goes wrong, so it’s important to have clearly defined policies in place.

6. **Emergency Response Team (ERT) Kits**
   ERT kits should include large, reflective vests, powerful flashlights, additional emergency radios, and building maps. By placing emergency response team kits at strategic locations around the campus, distribution is made easier in the midst of an emergency. New Life Church also keeps a stash of “Go Bags” for children (water, space blankets, snacks) in the event of an evacuation.

7. **Communications**
   “Simple two-way radios are the most effective way to share information and coordinate people during emergencies,” says Chadwick. “They’re better than cell phones that depend on coverage and up-to-date numbers.” The emergency response teams should have a clear command structure, knowing who will be responsible for communicating with teams throughout the facility. In large churches, it is important to have specific “zones” identified so that each team knows the specific evacuation plans or, in certain situations, lock-down protocols to keep people safe.

**ACTIVE Faith wants to make the church world safer. How can we help you join the church security conversation?**