



Sharing *Jesus* in the Digital Age

Digital evangelism is the use of digital mediums to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. These mediums include televisions, cell phones, the Internet, social media, podcasts, live and archived streams, and religious graphics.

Digital evangelism is important today because it is the most effective way to reach large masses of people. More and more people are available on the Internet. When Christ was on earth, we found Him wherever the crowds were. Back then, it was in the marketplace and by the seaside. Today, people are gathering online. They choose mates online, shop online, do most of their communication through online means. And, with the advent of COVID-19, they participate in religious activities primarily online because of our inability to have safe, large gatherings without risking life or health by contracting or passing on the virus.

It is unfortunate that many Seventh-day Adventist churches were caught flat-footed by the COVID-19 pandemic. For years we taught about a cashless society, yet

large numbers of churches were unprepared when COVID-19 forced us out of our buildings and made online giving and online worship the new norm. Hopefully, having learned from this experience, we can be prepared for the unexpected in the future.

At this stage, thanks to COVID-19, everyone should be involved in digital evangelism. There is not an age group that cannot be effectively reached with this method of evangelism. Retirees and other senior citizens have become the easy reach, since they are at home and looking for things to do. They are connecting more and more to Facebook and watching livestreams of gospel preaching at all times of the day. Plus, Smart TV has brought the Internet to televisions so that, even without a computer, one can enjoy the digital offerings available on the Internet.

The millennials, who are most comfortable with digital mediums, are probably the hardest to reach through this medium. I believe this is because they are usually ahead of the curve, and the church is generally behind the curve.



So, where the church goes for evangelism, the millennials have already moved on. This challenge can be solved, I believe, by having pastors trained to be digital storytellers, using social media as an effective way to reach the younger sector of our community. I do believe 3D animation and creative graphics and video production must be included in this training.

Tools of the Trade

There are many different tools that one can use for digital evangelism, depending on the platform to be used. But it all begins with a good podcasting microphone, an HD camera, a soundboard, a powerful computer with a good graphics card, and a reliable Internet connection, preferably a business Internet service, since home Internet service is susceptible to bottlenecks and is not very dependable. Most of the items mentioned are probably already available in a modern smart phone, and this can also be an effective evangelistic tool for sharing one's faith live online. But with the streams being as competitive as

they are, one would probably be more effective by getting some additional equipment, which allows for a little more creativity and flexibility.

A great podcasting mic will help you sound good, and this is very important. A simple search on Google for a podcast mic will reveal many good choices. Some prefer a USB mic that plugs directly into the computer, but, personally, I prefer a regular mic that plugs into a soundboard, and then the soundboard plugs into the computer. This allows for easy access control at the tip of your finger.

Choose Your Evangelism Platform

With equipment in hand, the next step will be to choose your platform for evangelism. YouTube and Facebook are popular choices because of the ease of livestream, and the sheer numbers of people who are available on these platforms. Both YouTube and Facebook give you immediate access to Smart TV audiences, as most Smart TVs have them built in, making your content immediately available



to thousands of people. Many streaming services allow for streaming to multiple platforms at the same time, so there is no need to limit yourself to any single platform. Some of these services include BoxCast (boxcast.com), StreamYard (streamyard.com), Livestream (livestream.com), ChurchStreaming (churchstreaming.tv), Vimeo (vimeo.com), and Faithlife (faithlife.com). Personally, I livestream to 19 channels daily using BoxCast, scheduling each stream as you would a television show. BoxCast even allows me to rebroadcast an archived stream as if it were live.

It is important to include a livestream on your website. This is the only place where you have total control over your content, and you can include your call to action for decisions, donations, and registrations. Furthermore, your website gives you more options to stream music, and allows more control over your digital content. Plus, streams from your social media channels can be embedded into your website. The website also allows you to brand your content more effectively.

program. The more people come to trust and respect you, the more you have the power to influence them for good. This should be done on as many platforms as possible to develop fertile ground for evangelism.

Consider Podcasts

The simplest method of sharing Jesus digitally is a podcast. This is just an audio recording done in a series that is distributed for easy listening to which people can subscribe. The most widely-known podcast delivery system is Apple Podcasts, but there are various streaming applications and podcast delivery avenues, which makes the distribution of a podcast easier and more far reaching than ever before. This can be done daily, weekly, monthly, or at whatever interval you choose, via RSS feed.

A podcast would simply require some kind of audio recorder. My favorite is the Tascam DR 40. This becomes more sophisticated if the podcast includes two or more

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To stream to the various social media channels, you will need to set up accounts at all these channels. You should give some thought to the name of your channel, as this is usually not changeable. In the case of Facebook and Instagram, you can do much more with a business account than you can with a personal account, so make sure to set up business accounts on these channels. This allows you to get stats and track your viewership and engagement.

Develop a Following

After you have set up an account on each of these platforms, you need to develop a following. You do this by becoming an authority in some area of expertise. You share your expertise online daily, weekly, or monthly, until you become the authority on this matter. You invite people to like your content or follow you on social media. This grows your influence and audience so that you have people to evangelize when the time comes to run an evangelistic

people. A simple search on the Internet will reveal podcast packages to meet the needs of varied audiences, which would include the equipment necessary.

After the podcast, there is a live or archive stream where the gospel is preached. This could be achieved by simply securing your cell phone onto a cell phone stand, and livestreaming on Facebook or YouTube. The available stream can be marketed in advance and delivered at a fixed time and place so people can plan to join as they would a TV show.

More Sophisticated Streams

For a more sophisticated stream, with graphics, lower thirds, music, and multiple guests, one needs to use programs like OBS, Wirecast, or a service like StreamYard. These tools allow you to produce a stream, that is both eye-catching and aesthetically pleasing.

Sermons, Bible studies, seminars, church services, and others can be captured and streamed later for effective





Stephen Williams considers it a gift from God to be able to share the gospel to the world from his studio.

evangelism on all major social media platforms and your website. One can gather an audience online by advertising on social media inviting people to your online events. This could involve registration fees, or simply getting a commitment to attend. One can also offer Bible studies, spiritual counseling, and offers for prayer to all who desire it via similar advertising. These can result in thousands signing up or coming to the events.

Since COVID-19 started, I personally started a daily prayer service at 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. This results in over 8,000 people and 11,000 interactions on our church's Facebook page, which is only one of the 19 channels where the prayers are streamed. Everybody can achieve similar results with just a little work. At our last Communion service held in August, one member testified, "I have been trying to win my family to Adventism for years, but recently because of our livestream, 11 of my family members join daily and look forward excitedly to each day's service."

Digital evangelism opens 24-hour churches, as the streams can be made available on demand, so people can get the gospel at any time. It also removes the barriers of dress and distance, bringing people together from all over the world. Truly it is a gift from God to spread the gospel to the world, so we can go home to heaven. Everyone should take advantage of it. ①



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