

Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

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Ingredients for Effective Worship

An assumption in many churches is that the sermon is the most important ingredient in the worship service.

So true is this assumption that the sermon is often referred to as “the message” by members and preacher alike. As a result, Paul Anderson has observed that “Pastors may spend fifteen hours on sermon preparation and fifteen minutes throwing the service together.”

The
sermon is
not the
message;
the
message is
the service.

A better paradigm, as you design your service, begins with a very different assumption: the message is conveyed via the *entire* service.

An important goal of most worship services is to communicate God's timeless truths so that participants incorporate them into their lives. This goal may-or may not-always be best accomplished through a 25-minute sermon. That's a hard one to swallow for many preachers. But if you can reframe your thinking in this way it will be a wonderful, freeing breakthrough in your worship service planning.

Charles Arn's post-graduate degree is in Instructional Technology, which is the study of how to facilitate the greatest learning, given: 1) the unique *characteristics* of the learner, 2) the specific *objectives* of the lesson, and 3) the instructional *media* available to the teacher.

The task of an instructional technologist is to create a learning experience that will

most likely result in the student's desired behavior change.

The goal of a Worship Planning Team is similar to an instructional technologist; namely, to: a) consider the unique *characteristics* of those attending the service, b) identify the specific *objectives* of that particular service, and c) use the communication *media* that will create the best learning experience and behavior change.

Incidentally, instructional technology studies reveal that the “unsupported spoken word”-which describes the communication style of most sermons-is one of the weakest mediums for changing behavior.

Check out Dr. McIntosh's new website for additional articles.

New website address:

www.churchgrowthnetwork.com

Participate in discussions at

churchgrowthnetwork.com/site/blog

Take listeners to the realm of their imagination.

Use testimonies, or true life stories, for dramatic impact.

An effective worship service does not simply plug activities into a “canned liturgy,” but seeks to communicate a clear message. Given that the *service* is the message (rather than the sermon, alone), try to utilize many different tools to best communicate your message, such as . . .

Music is the most important ingredient in a successful service. Good music = good service. Poor music = poor service. Of course, good music + good preaching + good drama + good pace + good transitions = a great service. Whereas the sermon speaks to the mind, and drama speaks to the heart, music speaks to the soul.

Drama is a powerful tool to communicate a message. Good drama can highlight the theme of the service, heighten attention of the congregation, and enhance retention of the viewers. It can range from a 3-5 minute sketch that illustrates a problem to be addressed in the sermon . . . to a 20-minute “sermon” given by a biblical character.

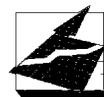
Story Telling takes listeners into the realm of their imagination. Whereas a good sermon illustration *clarifies* a point in the sermon, a good story *makes* a point which the sermon clarifies. Think about Jesus' parables. Were they sermons or stories? Jesus knew the indelible place that is created in one's memory by a stimulating, well-told story.

Puppets capture the imagination and a sense of childlike innocence in people. Whereas, people are often judged on their appearance, their manner of presentation, or their body language, puppets are immediately accepted. Puppets can teach many moral and spiritual lessons that might be lost if told by an adult.

Multi-media means using a variety of media to make the point. Media can include video, posters, audio, objects, art, slides, noises, smells, tastes. It is a fact that the more senses involved in processing a message, the more likely that message will be remembered.

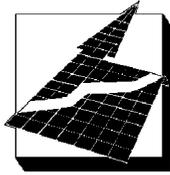
Preaching, according to the New Testament, is essential to faith, conversion, and Christian growth: “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). The preached word is a channel through which God, by his Holy Spirit, invites, instructs, challenges, comforts, and energizes people.

Testimonies are a true life story-told by a first-hand witness. Whereas a dramatic impact can be made by a good story, an even more powerful impact can be made when the subject tells his or her own story. It's hard to argue with life-change; especially when told by those who have been changed.



Adapted from *What Every Pastor Should Know: 101 Indispensable Rules of Thumb for Leading Your Church* (Baker Books April 2013), by Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn.

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Ministry Insights for Church Leaders

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Finding Them, Keeping Them

Gary McIntosh and Glen Martin have distilled the complex formulae of church growth and retention theory into concepts that are comprehensible to non-experts with a view toward recruiting the church at large in the work of evangelism and discipling.

The authors share principles for finding and keeping new Christians in a local church that have proven to be effective and well-received.

Includes worksheets to evaluate and plan for greater effectiveness in your own situation along with practical steps to implement in order to attain your goals.

"*Finding Them, Keeping Them* is an excellent step to help laypeople understand the science of church growth and apply it to their local church. McIntosh and Martin have taken the traditional converts of church growth and written them so the average layperson can understand them. For many years church growth has been in the hands of scholars and pastors. This book attempts to help laypeople and church leaders understand the terms and apply them to their church."

—Elmer Towns, Liberty University

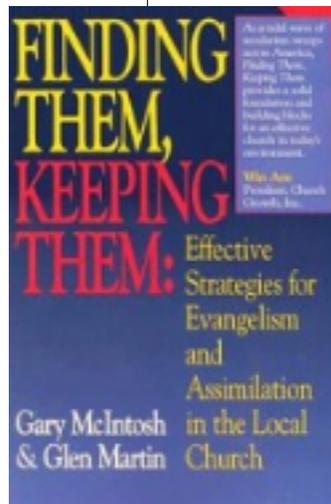
Finding Them, Keeping Them analyses the way in which a church enfolds people into a church and takes them from first contact through the steps of salvation, membership, discipleship, and service. The book is highly recommended for church leaders who want to understand the problems and solutions for attracting and keeping people in a local church.

Using the model of a funnel, McIntosh and Martin provide an easy and visible way for pastors and other church leaders to evaluate the outreach and assimilation ministry of a local church.

The book provides practical and useable ideas that church leaders may put to use immediately to make a difference in church ministry. A great read for boards, evangelism committees, and those working in the greeter or newcomer ministry of a church.

Order *Finding Them, Keeping Them* today for \$10.00 plus shipping and handling. Call for special discount on ten or more copies to the same address.

**Order today by
calling toll free
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