

Should I Try Radio?

Written by Ben Winslett

Monday, 21 September 2015 11:35 - Last Updated Tuesday, 22 September 2015 10:05

One of the many forms of outreach we have at our disposal as preachers of the gospel is Christian Radio. Once a bedrock form of Christian media, online platforms such as iTunes has taken some wind from the sails of radio in recent years. That being said, it can be a useful evangelistic tool, especially if coupled with an online presence available with facebook and iTunes. I have been broadcasting locally since 2008 and would like to share a few thoughts as to why I have continued this form of ministry.

I will say up front that if possible, I feel every pastor should strongly consider it. Reasons to follow shortly. Radio time isn't free however, so one good route to go is to find a "Mom and Pop" Christian station in your town. It's likely that such a station can be easily afforded, especially if your home church sponsors it. Flint River was gracious to sponsor my program when it launched and that's made it possible since. Joining with other local pastors or church is also an option to help with costs. Again, it isn't free. Sometimes it isn't cheap! Your powerhouse talk stations have more listeners, but they also aren't affordable without a lot of help. I have opted for smaller chains, such as Wilkins Radio. They're priced as a smaller station and even offer "buy one, get one" deals to broadcast in multiple location.

Why Should I Consider Broadcasting?

If you're expecting dozens of new converts each year in the local assembly because of your radio program, you'll likely be disappointed. Locally, I've not had a single convert who learned of us on the radio. So why do I keep doing it? Filling pews isn't the end game - preaching the word is.

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1. I do this to add a Primitive Baptist perspective to the airwaves. I rejoice when there are several sound brethren on the air in one area. The gospel of sovereign grace is sounding out and the potential to influence God's children with the truth is there. I was looking over a map of one area earlier today, and due to three stations overlapping there are at least three PB radio programs on different stations. That made me rejoice! If the word itself is being preached - regardless of the outcome - I am happy.

2. I do this to help 'feed' the local Primitive Baptists. Folks get excited when one of "their brethren" are on the airwaves. I have fond memories from my college days of waking up each Sunday morning to Elder Ernie Stump's broadcast in the Birmingham area. I listened weekly, along with a great many other PB, and we were fed. Much of the feedback in the local area I receive are from other PB who listen. That the broadcast is a part of their Lord's Day is an honor to me. As far as online distribution, having a PB program folks can utilize is also a blessing. In our wicked, filth saturated culture, we really need to make use of preaching throughout each week. This facilitates it.

3. Yes, I do this to convert. While this hasn't been the story of my local broadcast, when coupled with the internet it CAN make a difference. While in Los Angeles earlier this year, I met a young man who was attending a local PB church there because of Youtube videos by a PB (search for TETH - The Ears To Hear). I get occasional phone calls and emails from people who listen via iTunes and are curious to attend a PB church. So there is an impact to be had here. I recommend a local program coupled with iTunes. More on that later.

How do I do this?

Unless you broadcast live, you'll need to prerecord each program. This isn't as hard as you'd think.

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Music - For a 30 minute program (some utilize 15 minute programs), you may want to include an acapella hymn in each broadcast. Tracking down CDs of PB singing schools is a good thing to do for this, as you want them to be broadcast caliber.

Equipment - As far as equipment is concerned, Samson makes a very affordable USB podcasting mic which can be purchased in a kit with a mic stand, shock mount, and pop filter. You'll need each and the entire package can be had for around \$100 new. Next is your computer, which I am sure you already have if you're reading this. Nothing fancy is needed; until recently I was using an old Toshiba from 2007.

Software - As far as software is concerned, there is a free program called Audacity that allows you to record and edit your sound file, as well as paste in your other clips (intro, hymn, invitation to write, outro, etc). Another free program, Levelator, normalizes and compresses the audio file so the volume levels are consistent. This especially helps with pulpit sermons! We have a tendency to be loud and soft at times - this levels everything out so your listener isn't holding the volume button the entire time.

Recording Space - If you've ever been in a studio, they utilize fabric and materials to absorb as much sound as possible. When producing a program, you want to record in a room with no echo, unless you use pulpit sermons. Even then, anything you add to the broadcast other than the sermon should be recorded in a "dry" room. Don't have a dry enough space? Improvise! I have recorded in a walk-in closet before, as the clothes absorbed all the sound waves bouncing around. Most of the time, I record in my office at the church house, surround myself with chairs, and drape blankets over them to make a pocket of sound absorbing material. I also have a couple of towels pinned to the wall around me. This works well enough, especially for AM radio. If you have a room you can permanently devote to it, you may consider gluing bedfoam to thin

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ply and hanging it around the room to deaden it. Hardwood floors should be avoided as should tall ceilings.

Distribution - Some stations have an FTP server to which you can upload each program for them to download. Otherwise, you can utilize Dropbox, a free file hosting service. Simply upload to dropbox and then email the station manager a link. It's that simple. The days of mailing tapes and CDs is over, thanks to the internet.

Time and Experience - The rest of producing a quality program each week is really just a matter of getting to know the software and being comfortable with a microphone. Just be yourself, sound like yourself, preach like yourself. No one likes their own voice, myself included. But there are even plenty of talk radio hosts with terrible "radio voices." Don't sweat it. The message is what's important.

Providence - Most importantly, we stand in need of God's blessings, grace, and providence. Prayer for the ministry should be a regular part of the broadcaster's life and also the personal prayers of the congregation. Please pray, we need it!

Sharing it Online

In short, online sermons should be in at least two places - your website and iTunes. If you already have a radio program and you have each week's program as a digital file, you're most of the way to launching an iTunes podcast. Submitting a program to iTunes is free, and the

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process is automated once it's started. Just add the new program to your site, and it appears in iTunes. It's much more simple than you think.

To get this ball rolling, simply set up a category of posts on your church website (or another website) to house the episodes. The website will need to have a functional RSS feed for that category, which is standard with free web platforms such as Wordpress or Joomla. Make a new post for each sermon, rather than a long page full of links. This enables the RSS feed. I use Feedburner to generate a third party feed of my radio section. Feedburner detects the link to the audio file when I add the "click to download" link pointing to the audio file on my server.

Once you have a working feed, make a cover picture for your podcast. I add or replace my cover photo with Feedburner. After you have this step complete, you can submit it to iTunes. I would recommend waiting until you have a few broadcasts on the site before submitting it to iTunes, as you'll stand a better chance of making it into "New and Noteworthy," which increases the potential for listeners. Other platforms exist, such as Stitcher, but iTunes is by far the most popular.

PLEASE READ: Even if you don't have a radio program, you should strongly consider making an iTunes podcast of your pulpit sermons. It's free. It's effective. It's largely automated. I suspect iTunes will continue to replace Christian radio, and we need a presence there as well. If you are already recording your sermons and posting them online, there's only an additional step or two to having a free podcast.

Give It A Shot!

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Ever considered your own local program? Give it a shot! If every local pastor who **could** have a program did, imagine the impact? Regardless of the number of converts, folks certainly wouldn't have to wonder what a PB believes. We often feel as if no one believes what we do, but the truth is most haven't heard of a Primitive Baptist! We can remedy this with radio and online ministry. If you have ever had a burden to try it out, I say go for it!