

Why We Need the Media

You may love the media or hate them, but they reach millions.

When I'm speaking at conferences and events across the country, I'm often asked why so many ministries use the media. After all, it's a very expensive business. Couldn't we use that money for feeding the hungry or helping the homeless? Wouldn't Joel Osteen, T.D. Jakes, Joyce Meyer, James Dobson (and even your local pastor) be better stewards if they spent God's money on more traditional evangelism?

All good questions. No one wants to waste financial resources or damage opportunities for reaching the lost. So, my first response to such queries is to study the life of Jesus.

How did He reach people? Where did He reach people? How did He make an impact on them? What can I learn from His life and ministry?

The fact is, Jesus knew where the people were—in the marketplace, at the temple, at community events: all places where ideas were debated and discussed.

And that is where Jesus reached them.

Today the "place" where people gather is the mass media—radio, television, movies, the Internet. Every major advertiser in America knows that if you want to reach the largest potential audience, the media is the marketplace. That's why so many churches and ministries use the media.

When I was a kid growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, our church

did door-to-door evangelism. We'd walk from house to house and personally share the gospel with anyone who would come to the door.

But doing that today is nearly impossible.

In our post-9/11 world, when a stranger shows up at the doorstep most of us hate to open the door because crime and issues of security are so prevalent in society. That's a good reason it's far more effective to reach into every home through media.

Moreover, the sheer number of people we can reach with media technology make it an essential part of 21st century evangelism. Every day across the world hundreds of millions of people watch TV, listen to radio, read magazines or use the Internet.

The entertainment industry understands that power and spends billions of dollars a year to reach this vast audience. Shouldn't we do at least that much for a higher cause—to reach people for Christ?

You might love the media or hate them, but Christian media reach a potential audience of millions globally. That potential could shake nations.

It's unfortunate that for many Christians the question still is whether or not we need the media. The real and more pressing question is, How will we use it? Can we be innovative enough to compete in the media marketplace?

In the early days of Christian media, the pioneers usually were pastors and evangelists. They preached a powerful message, but most of them lacked the know-how to create interesting and compelling programs.

There will always be an important place in the media for great preaching and teaching, but I also dream of moving us from the era of TV preachers to one of TV producers. Leaders of this new era will be men and women who are skilled and gifted behind the camera, and who understand how to package the redemptive message of the gospel into drama, comedy, documentary and other programs that influence a wider audience.

Yes, it's expensive. It takes the highest-level skills and talent, too. But Jesus spent His life reaching people, and we have the opportunity to use media tools to do the same. When you consider the size of the potential audience, the cost of media programming just might make it the least expensive outreach of all.