



Creating Great Work with Not So Great Equipment

The article you are reading is somewhat autobiographical, so let me introduce myself. My name is Gregory Fish. I was born and raised on the mission field in Chile, South America. I now live in Brownsville, Texas on the border of the USA and Mexico. I am a Spanish Language minister in a culturally diverse area. On the side, I try to impact lives of people in other states and even overseas through the small but powerful medium of Christian video.

My journey has taken me from being a kid with a camcorder to featured filmmaker on SermonSpice.com, the first, and one of the largest Christian video distributors today. Over the years, you could say my skills and know-how have improved, even though my equipment hasn't. This has not kept me from creating images with content, as I have made it my purpose to speak to today's culture using today's language, which is highly visual and metaphorical.

The Bible describes one of Israel's little-known tribes in an interesting way. I Chronicles 12:32 says that the "men of Issachar...understood the times and knew what Israel should do." While the other tribes get recognition for their military prowess, Issachar is known for being conscious of the times. That is very noteworthy to me, and should be to all of us. This timeless truth is a personal passion in my life. I've used video as a means to communicate God's truth in the two languages I know, English and Spanish, and to reach as many people as I can with nuggets of truth. These mini-messages are an extension of my ministry. Electronic media allows for this greater and more far-reaching impact.

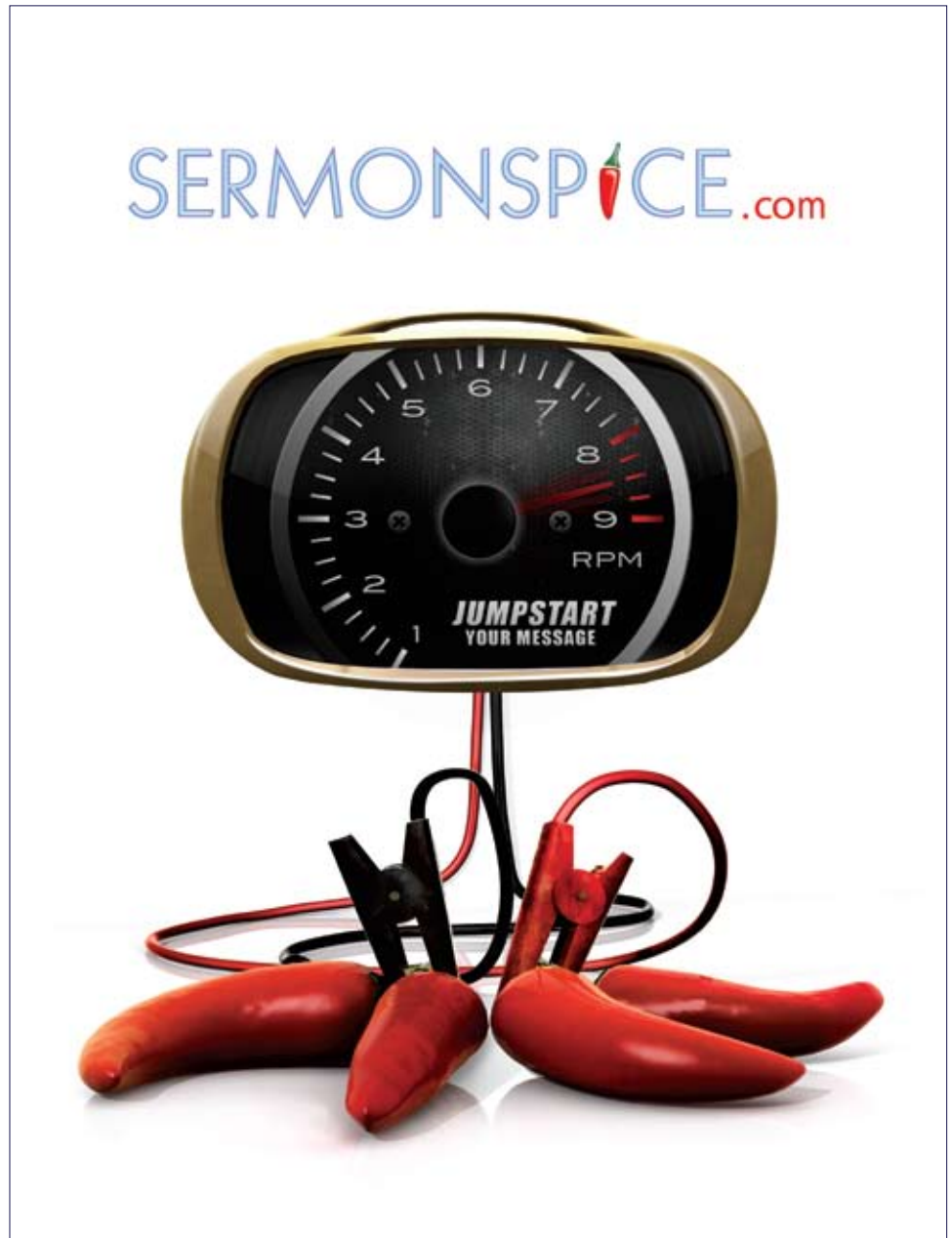
Shane Hipps, author of *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture* cautions us, that as we strive to be relevant to our culture, we should understand the fine line between awakening the senses through the awesome power of images, and exploiting or manipulating emotions. I take his advice and ask myself what the goal of each new video is, and ensure that it is not merely gimmicky or overdone. There needs to be an "integrity of message" in all that is produced. As filmmakers we need to ask hard questions before engaging a new idea.

My journey has naturally been an evolving one. As a teenager, even though I had never seen a non-linear editing computer program, my friends and I, bored from playing Nintendo, would go outside and make various crazy home movie adventures using a camcorder and a VCR. (Those were good times!)

The Lord provided me with my first personal camcorder, (a small consumer Sony analog 8mm Handycam). My father-in-law gave it as a wedding present. Some years later, he had me pass it on to his father, and traded us for a new digital model. He made me promise that I'd use it to send video of his grandkids regularly. I traded that for his older digital model (because it had a mic input jack). Little did he or I know that thousands of people from all around the globe would see my work on that camera. I had never imagined that so many people outside of my local church would ever be touched with the brief messages of my video clips.

My Dad fueled in me a love of computers. A friend introduced me to one of the earlier versions of Pinnacle Studio. Over the next few years I practiced, putting together videos. While serving at a Spanish church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, my sending church from Missouri provided a grant to purchase the Adobe Video Collection. That enabled me to make videos especially for the Spanish-speaking world, which does not have access to a very big selection to bless the church at large. The Lord provided me with some good software.

The first video I put up on SermonsPice was the poem "Footprints" (<http://www.sermonspice.com/videos/3494/footprints-in-the-sand->). I produced versions in American English, Spanish, and a version for the UK. Using my handycam and tripod at the beach, this was pretty easy to do. I kept creating more content, little by little. I used After Effects to create various countdowns, without the need of shooting anything. Outside shooting is easy for lighting purposes. I've used shoe-string budget tips for shooting indoors, such as halogen work lights behind glossy shower curtains or reflecting a flood light off of silver windshield



screens. I've used whatever means I can to improve my quality standards.

I totally understand the frustration or apprehension some people face when they want to get into video these days. Even if it's just a simple video testimony segment, we are up against some fierce competition in today's media. When the church, on a minuscule budget, tries to catch up with the accelerating current of technology, things can seem overwhelming. For me the issue is simple. God asked a reluctant and fearful Moses in Exodus 3:2, "What is in your hand?" He said he had a staff. In verse 17 God tells him, "take this staff in your hand so you can perform miraculous signs with it."

God wants us to use what is in our hand for His glory to do great things! He doesn't ask us to use what we don't have. We are simply to use what we have available at our disposal. That is our responsibility. Moses was the meekest of men. Yet he led a great nation of people through some very difficult times. He did what he thought he could never do.

My video "Freedom Is Not Free" (<http://www.sermonspice.com/videos/9347/freedom-is-not-free->) was the #2 video on SermonSpice.com in July of 2007. It was a surreal experience. The way that God used a simple little video that I conceived and put together blew my wildest imagination. The most humbling thing for me was to know on the Sunday before the 4th of July almost 400 churches were showing that video and receiving a powerful reminder of God's great sacrifice.

I am constantly looking for opportunities to translate objects and situations around me into modern day parables. That's what Jesus did. I arrived at home one day and saw two hummingbirds in my tree. I ran inside, got my camera and tripod. Then, I couldn't believe that a hummingbird sat still long enough for a 5 minute countdown about God's care for birds and for us. When my wife and I took some folks to a marriage conference at the beach it took me two mornings (without a tripod) to get the sunrise just right to create a time lapse for a countdown with verses that speak of "morning". Several new ideas keep coming. I have *irons in the fire*; I just need the time to get them started and completed.

Spoofs are a fun genre of Christian shorts. I created a parody of a popular beer commercial series with the slogan "Men Should Act Like Men". I made it "Christians Should Act Like Christians" and a large Bible falls on those who are acting in an unholy manner. I'm currently producing a fake infomercial ala the People's Church "It's All About Me" video, but with a different twist. Part of being created in God's image is being creative.

People often ask me how to get started making videos. It's easy, practice. Read and study. Do what you can, and do it the best you can. As Romans 16:19 says, be excellent at what is good. Even if you only have access to a free program like Windows Movie Maker that is enough to get started. Be creative. Incorporate the help of teens who are already familiar with Youtube or Godtube. You just might be surprised at how God takes your little offering, multiplies it, and makes it significant and meaningful.

I'll keep creating with the equipment I have as long as inspiration comes. I've got my eye on a Canon GL2 MiniDV camcorder. If the Lord provides for it, then I'll use it for His glory. Until then, home-made lights, consumer camera, volunteer action!

-Gregory Fish