



How to Get Started:

In my first article I detailed the journey that took me from being a kid with a camcorder to being a featured filmmaker on www.sermonspice.com. It's nice to know that when your video is in the top ten downloads; it is literally going out to thousands and thousands of people. That sort of distribution is mind-boggling, even in indie film circles. I certainly have no ambitions of ever participating in a film festival. Why, because my work is screened in churches on any given Sunday. It's an amazing extension of my ministry that I'm so glad to be a part of. The same can be true for you, and not just for corporate assembly. Today videos can be seen on YouTube and GodTube, blessing people in their own homes or work places (hopefully during breaks and not work hours). As I write, I am blown away by a stat I just found. I knew that this one person drama I made in Spanish on YouTube had been seen in various countries, since various people have asked to do the drama live as an evangelistic outreach in their own cities. But until I checked, I never would have dreamed that over 35,000 people have viewed it—and it's not even a video I have up on Sermonspice.com!

Well, how does one get started? The first thing is obvious. You need a camera and tape. I mention this only because maybe you think your camera is not good enough, so you're making excuses not to create content for the church at large. Don't have a pity party; don't get bogged down with covetous desires for better equipment. Create! Use your creativity, which is part of the image of God, and create. Actually the first thing you need is an idea. Solomon said there's nothing new under the sun, but try and be original with your ideas. Don't copy other videos that already exist, unless you're making a parody. Start with a unique idea and run with it. Think like a producer. Do that thing with your hands like you're framing up a shot. Does it translate into film? Can you relay a

positive message with this idea? Ask yourself tough questions, knowing how powerful the medium of image and metaphor is. Is this too gimmicky or manipulative in any way? Once you have an idea, talent (actors), a camera, and tape, you're ready to roll, film that is.

I'll write about storyboards and shot lists later on, but first let's talk briefly about editing. You're going to need some non-linear software to edit your video once it has been shot. My experience has been with PCs. I hear Macs (and Final Cut) are very good for this kind of thing, but I wouldn't know exactly. I used to use Pinnacle Studio. This is very user-friendly, a little too much for my taste. I started out on early versions this software. I grew out of it when it could

not do what I wanted it to do but I hear that now it can do picture in picture and green screen, etc. So it's definitely an affordable option. I switched though to Adobe Premiere Pro and never looked back. The package bundled with After Effects is pretty pricey, but the Lord provided these great programs for me and I've tried to make good use of them. An exhaustive list of available software is located here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_video_editing_software. I also just recently started using muvee autoProducer for picture slideshows. These used to be very tedious to do right, but this little program saves a lot of time. I'm always leery of automatic programs, but it allows for human intervention when needed. I recommend you have it as an additional resource. But let's say you are not at the point where you can invest in a good program. Just use Window Movie Maker for now. Get your feet wet editing there. It's a good little program with nice transitions and effects. The downside is you cannot layer videos.

Next time I'll go into some basic but fundamentally important advice on constructing a shooting sequence. It will include the classic shots used by, well, everyone in the industry. I'll be the first to admit that I'm not an expert in this field. I'll assume the position of "fellow student" of film making. I do actually own a couple books on filmmaking, even though one of them has the word "dummies" in the title. I recommend that you purchase a book or two as well. Study them, and practice. Otherwise, you'll never get close to attaining perfection! I would like to think that each video I make gets better than all my previous ones. I try



to incorporate something different with each new video. There are a lot of tricks of the trade that I would like to implement in upcoming videos, because that will add to the overall production value.

One thing is clear. Shaky video is not good (unless that is the look and feel that you are trying to convey). Get a tripod. Or get a monopod. They are not very expensive, but are really important. I'm thinking about building

myself Johnny Lee's \$14 "Poor Man's" Steady Cam (<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~johnny/steadycam/>) for shots with motion. I know sometimes you get out there and decide that you want to shoot something and don't have your tripod handy. Don't panic. Put some twine in your camera case. Tie it to the hand strap, and put the other end under your foot. As you film pull up slightly so that the line is taut and you have a nifty stabilizing technique for when you're in a bind.

Another important aspect of video is sound. This is a hard get right if you don't have the right kind of equipment, especially while shooting outdoors. One way for certain that you can avoid poor sound is doing music videos or videos with narration. In these, you import the sound recorded elsewhere and you don't use the tape sound at all. But if you are shooting a scene

with acting and spoken words, make sure that the audio is clear and understandable. If your camera has a mic input, it would not be a bad idea to invest in a microphone. The windscreen is a must. Many who shoot outside regularly invest in a fur-covered zepelin. I think I bought a shotgun mic from Audio Technica for about \$60. It runs on an AA battery and unfortunately records in mono (so I fix that afterwards). My current camera doesn't even have a shoe for my mic, so I've used mic stands, or I've been a good steward and taped it to the camera with electric tape.

Although on one video (<http://www.sermonspice.com/videos/12085/christians-should-act-like-christians-1--wandering-eyes->) my director of photography at the time (my father-in-law) and I did not realize during the filming that some of the foam from the windscreen was in the shot in the top corner. I couldn't help that in editing except to put a (seems creatively intentional) widescreen matte through the whole video until the end when the Bible falls down. This worked out just fine. Another mistake, if you can learn from that, was that corner of my frame on the wide shots was not covered by the backdrop on this video (<http://www.sermonspice.com/videos/16663/worship-1-2-cd-info>). I had to put a rectangle the color of the backdrop to cover it in the editing stage. There is always extra bleed over that is not in your LCD screen or viewfinder, which you must take into account at all times. Use more than enough backdrop. Get your scripts far enough out of the way. Don't repeat my mistakes. Trust me it's better to shoot it right the first time, than to have to fix it later in editing!

