



## Basically Basics:

**F**or the sake of those readers who are just getting started making their own videos, or maybe just considering making videos for church use, let's start with some basic fundamentals. I mentioned previously that we should begin with an idea, script it, and translate from paper to the screen. How do you do that?

I'll tell you for sure how you don't. Do not simply get people together with a vague concept and believe in your heart that you'll let the camera roll and just capture some magic spontaneously. That works for *Whose Line is it Anyway* or other improvisational shows, but I'm guessing it won't work for you (or better yet, the audience). This is what my friends and I used to do back in the day. Since we were Christians, when friends would marry, our big event for the bachelor party was the reveal of a video that all the guys made which poked fun at the groom-to-be's life. Those of us who got married early on got some pretty lousy videos, a bunch of non-sensible blah (though funny at times). Randomness ruled until we got some software and actually started planning these videos. Then there were real plots and

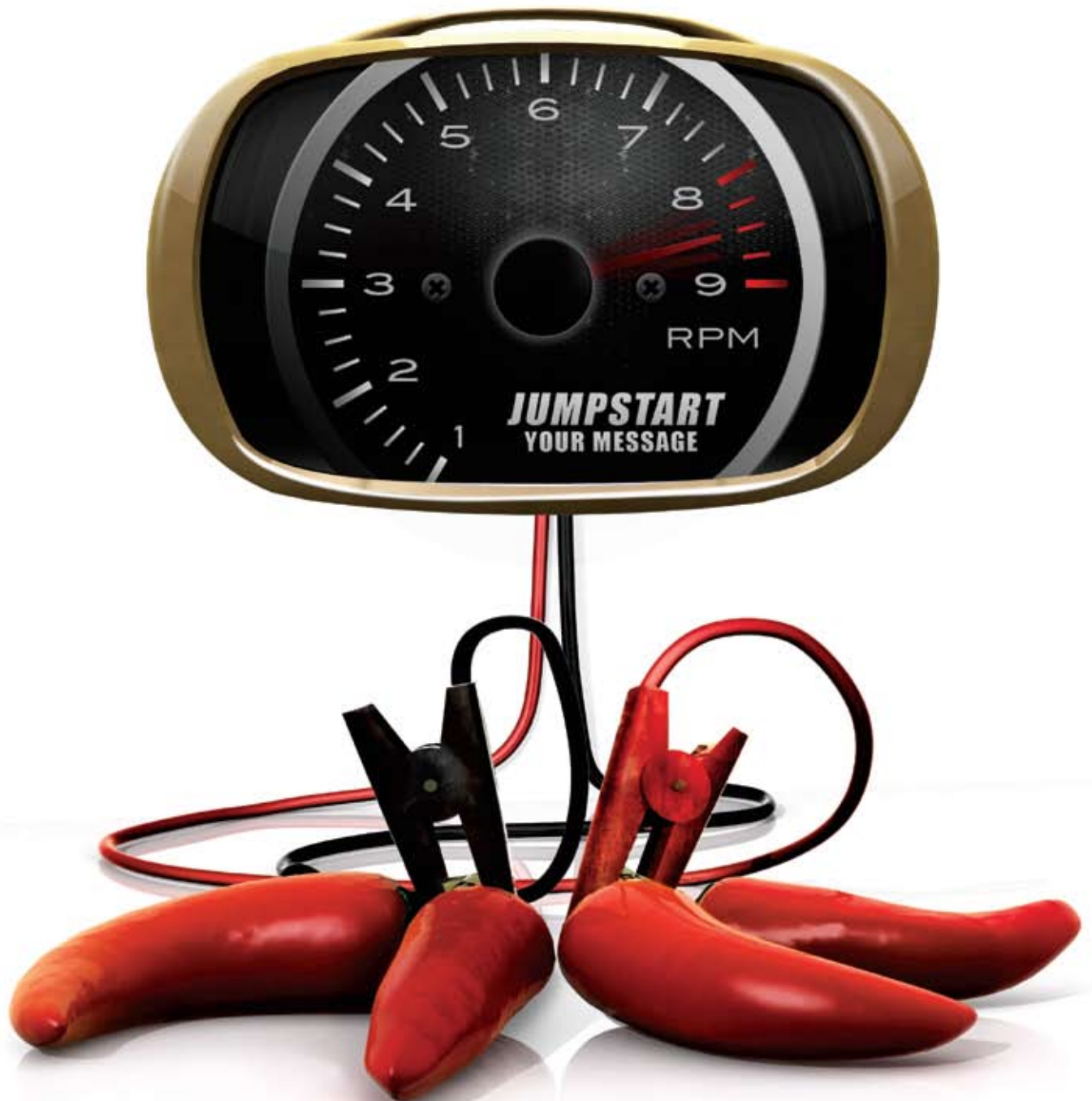
subplots, and carefully scripted re-enactments, etc. Obviously, we had to spend more than one night in their creation. Finally, the last guy that married received a movie that took almost a year to put together. You can see the changing of seasons and actor's different hair styles throughout. Those videos were far superior to their earlier counterparts. Naturally, if you are making a video for church use, that is a much higher calling than that of cheesy friend-roast videos.

With a high calling comes responsibility. The first fundamental is obvious. Prepare. When I am preparing for a sermon I don't wait until I walk up to the platform hoping that the Holy Spirit will help me. No, the Spirit is present with me in the preparation. That is when He helps (or we should want Him to help). The same can be said of video producing. If it is for church use, it should be done with a certain amount of reverence and reliance on God's inspiration. But then use the brain God gave you to prepare in advance. God blesses prep-

aration. This can be done with a full-fledged idea or concept, a working script, and a visionary direction. The technical term is preproduction. Actors, costumes, locations, etc. are secondary to the actual story or point you want to convey.

Storyboarding can really help. If you are unfamiliar with storyboarding, it is a scene by scene, shot by shot picture of what the camera will record. It is made ahead of time as you imagine how the shots should be filmed. It helps for the day of shooting as well as the editing process. Why? It forces one to think in a sequential way. The range of different shots (which we'll touch on shortly) adds overall production value to the final version. A storyboard breaks your script down into all the separate shots that you will use. It's a bad feeling going to edit and then realizing that you missed a shot. This practice will most likely avoid that blunder. Even if you are like me and can't really draw, this illustrated version, stick figures and all, will help

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tremendously and save you precious time.

My latest submission to SermonSpice is a short video called “Pure is Better.” Because I had spent a few minutes to draw (with my chicken scratch) the sequence of shots, I was able to film and edit in no time. I was able to do this by myself in minutes (with the help of a tripod, of course). The storyboard helped me to know where to set the tripod. I also developed a little code of sorts letting me know, in the progression, which shots were for each tripod setting. So I did not film all of the shots in sequential order. But rather I filmed all the shots in each tripod setting while it was set and unmoved. You can see the little video storyboard I quickly scribbled on my blog: <http://fishxpressions.wordpress.com/2008/07/09/chicken-scratch-storyboards/> and the final product on SermonSpice: <http://www.sermonspice.com/videos/18998/pure-is-better>. There is such simplicity in storyboards, but the advantage that they provide is great. On a bigger project, as opposed to blank sheets of paper, I would probably use a template such as this one:

<http://www.ronald-kaiser.com/film/Storyboardmaster.rtf>. More serious filmmakers would do well to maybe search for storyboarding software that exists to make this process easier, faster, and obviously more legible. StoryboardPro software is available as freeware: <http://movies.atomiclearning.com/k12/storyboardpro>. Hey, you can’t beat free!

Now that we have established that preparation is a must, what are the basic types of shots to craft into that storyboard?

First there is the Long Shot, also known as the wide shot or an establishing shot. These reveal the subject’s surroundings and other important details. However, these shots should be few and far between, so that the audience can truly understand what is happening more close up.

Then we have the Medium Shot. If taken of a person, they will typically be from the waist up. While much more personal than a long shot, the background is still in plain view.

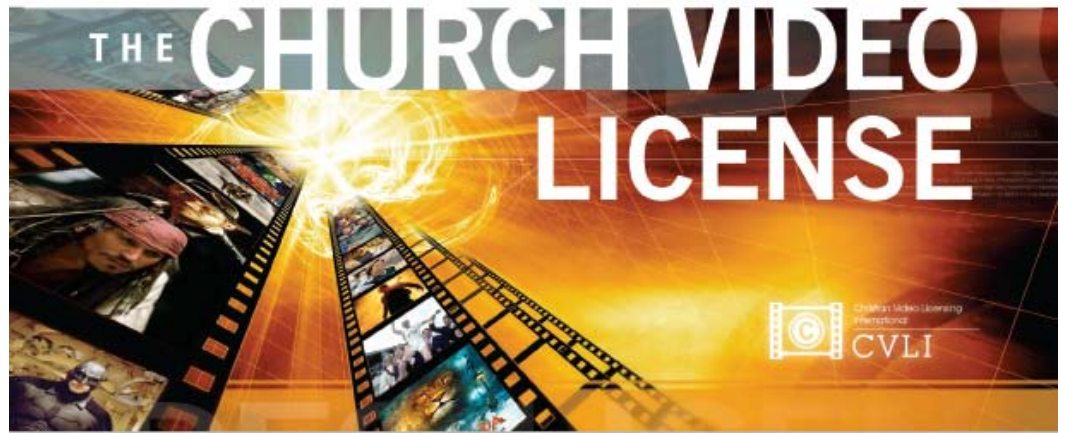
Next we have the famous Close-up shot. All of these shots can be applied to people as well as objects, etc. This is an important shot in storytelling. It is where you can reveal things that your characters don't communicate to the audience (for example: a stop sign that later plays into the plot). The shots are also all relative (in that a medium shot of a tree may be a long shot of a bird in a nest).

Last, but certainly not least, is the Extreme Close-up. It provides great detail and at the same time provokes more emotion or visual excitement. Like the long shot, this shot should also be used sparingly and with good judgment.

There are others that are commonly used in framing up a shot, as well as those wonderful moving shots. We'll leave some of those for another time. In this article my hope is to inspire others to put thought into their videos. Tell a story. Do this with the visuals and also with the audio. Video is a powerful medium. It can stir the emotions, and if done correctly will lead the audience into the desired effect- be it action, appreciation, or compassion. Video lets down the guard and heightens a person's will as it is a metaphorical language of our culture today. With such power at our fingertips, how could we not take it seriously? Never throw together a video with a nonchalant attitude just because other churches are doing this and having success. Be intentional about what it is you need to por-

tray. Start with a plan. Storyboard it using the vast array of creative but tactful shots. Create a composition that will reach the goals you set out achieve. Then move out of the way, and let God speak to the hearts of people using your hard work and hopefully - in my case sometimes I need a lot of - some divine intervention.

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