

Abilene Christian University

Digital Commons @ ACU

Landon Saunders Documents

Landon Saunders Papers

1974

Toward a Case for Heartbeat (First Rough Draft)

unknown

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/saunders_docs



Part of the [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), [Radio Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Toward a Case for Heartbeat (First Rough Draft), Box 3, folder Philosophy--1974 General, Landon Brady Saunders Papers. Center for Restoration Studies MS #575. Abilene Christian University Special Collections and Archives, Brown Library. Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX.

This Manuscript is brought to you for free and open access by the Landon Saunders Papers at Digital Commons @ ACU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Landon Saunders Documents by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ ACU.

TOWARD A CASE FOR HEARTBEAT
FIRST ROUGH DRAFT

~~PHILOSOPHY // FINANCE~~

Philosophy
1974 GENERAL

Introduction

"Man is destined to float around on a merry-go-round. Some try to reach for the brass ring--and some can't even see it." How can creative hope be extended to this man--only one of the United States' more than two hundred million--to prevent his joining the growing crowd of the apathetic and despairing?

The question is important because this man's life will touch ours. His attitude will affect his performance on his job. His marriage will be influenced, his children. Integrity, ethics, morality cannot help but be weakened. Can anything be done to combat this growing threat to the quality of American life?

Radio and television offer instant, mass-media possibilities to concerned people. Their immense influence is unquestioned by people interested in improving the general climate in which our children are growing up.

Among churches of Christ the Herald of Truth Radio and Television has been the most prominent expansion of mass-media outreach in the last two decades. Yet, the Herald of Truth experience has revealed an enormous void, a vast audience with still unmet needs--businessmen, youth, commuters, housewives--people who aren't being reached with current Sunday programming.

Further, it became increasingly clear, particularly in the late 1960's, not only was this vast audience virtually untapped but also it was an audience disenchanted with the efforts and claims made by organized religion.

Still, many of these same persons were found to be very open to a one-on-one message that spoke to their deeper needs in a personal, intimate way. This openness extended into the regular religious audiences as well. Multitudes, struggling with values in a radically changing, impersonal world, had come to sense this void: The lack of a daily, personal, caring voice in their own lives.

Out of this realization "Heartbeat," a four and one-half minute daily radio outreach, was born--first being aired in January, 1972, touching a limited audience provided by six stations.

Landon Saunders had been selected as the "Heartbeat" speaker. He travels widely, talks constantly with people, listens intently. He has a real rapport with persons--especially those who feel passed by, left out, used up or turned off, those who form the target audience for "Heartbeat."

Gradually, the daily voice of Landon Saunders became known personally in the lives of his radio listeners--a welcome, meaningful, anticipated visitor, a friend--as the number of "Heartbeat" radio stations grew.

"Heartbeat" is no "religious-know-it-all" approach, no "jamming-down-the-throat" of unwanted and highly suspected religious doctrines--all in the name of religion.

Instead, "Heartbeat" was simply a point of contact for a people who felt somehow out of touch. It was an out-reached hand of hope, a warm statement of life, gentle in its approach, loving in its sounds. "Heartbeat" conveyed a spirit of genuine concern

and warmth--innocent to some, even naive to a few--but coming from a man who was struggling to know the depth of one's innermost anxieties, insecurities, fears and even despair.

The daily "Heartbeat" visitor was willing to understand the misery of unhappy marriages, the threat to one's dignity caused by the middle-aged employment crunch, the strain of financial pressures in inflationary times, teenage disillusionment with the "system." "Heartbeat" communicated simple, gentle spoken words that seemed to relieve tension, heal, and support one's struggle to cope with modern life.

On the following pages is a description of why the "Heartbeat" ministry has found a vital nerve-center in the national radio audience and what--though limited by finances--Heartbeat envisions for its future.

The program in two and one-half years has already been a decisive influence in thousands of lives. It merits continued support and expansion.

BASIC PREMISE OF HEARTBEAT: KNOW

First, the producers of Heartbeat did extensive research in an effort to know what was needed in terms of audience needs as well as the most effective way to meet these needs.

Increasingly, people were found to be crying out for recognition. Due to the growing impersonal atmosphere created by the machine, the computer, we found a desperate need for a sense of personal worth. Factory workers felt like nameless cogs, housewives like no more than dishwashers, cooks and delivery drivers,

teenagers felt a sense of alienation from home. People felt known only in terms of "function"--not as persons.

Without recognition, people naturally feel they're not accepted. We live closer together than ever before; yet, never have we been so far from each other. In so many personal relationships we feel so unacceptable. Acceptance appears to be conditional on what the other person demands that we be instead of what we really are. "No one will accept me...just for me," a person says. And, much of the problem, admittedly, stems from an inability to accept ourselves. If we cannot accept ourselves, it's a cinch the other person will have difficulty accepting us. And, people who feel unacceptable aren't going to make very good neighbors, or employees, or employers, or husbands, or wives, or sons and daughters, are they?

Perhaps all we're saying is summed up in the word love. To a society adrift, alienated, estranged, intimidated by the machines around us there is the deep craving for love. "Will someone please love me?" a recent listener asked.

"It's a dog-eat-dog world," another says. "Everyone's out for number one...and they don't care who they must walk over in the process."

"Do you think the corporation cares about me? Ha!"

"I don't know my parents. I don't know if I love them. I don't think they love me."

Eloquent cries for love. Love...so human...so basic...but so often so lacking and ill-defined. You and I need love.

Recognize me, accept me, love me...and then I will be secure. Security cannot be guaranteed by income, retirement and insurance alone. No, real security actually grows out of what's really inside me--rather than what is assembled around me. But, who is speaking to this inner need?

HEARTBEAT'S HISTORY TO DATE

Station time. Heartbeat began in 1972 on six stations. By the end of the year the number of stations grew to thirty. Then, by the end of 1973, the number had more than tripled to 110. Many of these were stations that liked the program and wanted to run it on sustaining time. Some play the program two and three times during the day.

(Give testimonies from a few station owners and/or program directors and/or disk jockeys.)

Writer and Speaker. During these first months of operation, Saunders has worked virtually alone in the writing of his own material as well as the recording. He has also found ways to handle personally the volume of correspondence that has resulted.

Interchange with listeners. Several thousand people have written during the course of this time expressing their views of the program. Sometimes the exchanges are lively and stimulating. Ideas are shared. Deeply personal matters are discussed freely by many who write. At first skeptical many obviously warm to the replies they receive and have become increasingly involved

with their new "friend." Some businessmen have requested that replies be sent to their business addresses--at least until they were able to straighten some things out. People contemplating suicide, alcoholics, people caught up in the rat-race of living, bored, people whose lives no longer have meaning, elderly people who feel passed by--they are writing.

Armed Forces Network. In 1973, Armed Forces Network with their 350 stations around the world expressed interest in the program. Time was negotiated; it is now heard on their stations. Letters have come from several countries.

Methodology. Heartbeat content grows out of the wide range of everyday human experiences. It attempts to see these experiences from the perspective of Jesus and His recognition of people's needs to feel worthwhile, acceptable, loved and secure.

Heartbeat tries to see clearly the human condition and speak to it from right out of it. We speak to hundreds of everyday thoughts and experiences which constitute the fabric of our lives.

We are aware that people's minds are not necessarily changed by revolutionary rhetoric but rather by seeing a revolutionary way for seeing and caring for their baby, working next to a difficult person, accepting self. Life is people and people are combinations of thoughts and experiences, deeds, little deeds. Jesus' greatness was seen in His sensitivity to all the small things that, strung together, make up a life; then His ability to set them in a new light, offering men and women a different

way of looking at them which gives the whole of the life new meaning.

Heartbeat helps people find the right questions. How can we have answers when we are not sure of the real questions?

Heartbeat speaks with contemporary language, avoiding the tired cliches and worn out phrases that no longer communicate.

Heartbeat's address is Chicago, a metropolitan area, centrally located in the country.

It's format is simply four and one-half minutes presented without surrounding complex paraphernalia; it is known simply as "Heartbeat."

Follow-up. People are not left dangling when they write. A personal reply is immediately sent.

This is followed by a series of monthly two-page, single-spaced letters that deal in greater depth with their questions and concerns. These letters carry them into the study of the Bible itself. (NOTE: It is at places like this that an obviously different version is needed, pending on who is the object of our intentions, e.g., brethren as opposed to foundations.)

Response to these letters has been very gratifying. Approximately 2000 people are receiving these each month already. Some tell us they share them with their neighbors and relatives. Others report inviting several friends in to discuss them. Still other write and want the letters sent to people in other places they know and who, they feel, could be helped by them. And still

others send whole lists of names and addresses of people they would like to receive the materials.

Personal contact is arranged for persons who have particular needs or who have agreed to talk with someone in the local community.

(For brethren this needs additional expansion and explanation. It should parallel where possible what is already in their field of experience. E.g., the way they advertise meetings, spot announcements on the air designed to bring people to the place where they can hear the Gospel.)

Heartbeat Objectives for the 1970's. First, we plan to expand the present program to 400 markets. Second, we are researching and planning a variety of shorter programs which would be more adaptable to many radio station formats. Plans are now underway to market ten-second programs designed for prime drive time; 30, 60, 90 second programs for businessmen, teenagers, housewives, college students, etc. Many stations have already moved to selective audience and programming. These "packages" of programs will be adapted to meet the various requirements of these formats. These can be marketed even more widely as we move toward our goal of market saturation. We need something available for everyone.

Third, we see our follow-up ministry greatly expanded. The current teaching letters are being rewritten and improved in keeping with what we've learned from those who have responded to them already.

A series of audio-tutorial learning tapes are in current planning. These will be cassette tapes on which are recorded

biblical learning materials. Each will be accompanied by a learning manual. This is a carefully designed and planned self-learning approach. It preserves the intimacy of voice familiarity and contact with the speaker. This learning approach has already been validated in universities throughout the world. Dr. Sam Postlethwaite of Purdue University, a member of the church of Christ, has pioneered in this field. He is furnishing vital guidance to the project.

Fourth, out of this experience is being created a "model" for reaching the large city via mass media with the message of Christ. This model will be complete with actual programs, including descriptions, purposes, aims; what and how to market; how to use daily programming and how to coordinate Sunday programs with the daily; follow-up materials and implementation.

Compelling reasons for support. History tells us that nations are destroyed from within. Something happens to the hearts of the people, something affects our sense of value, something twists our priorities.

This internal confusion becomes visible in the institutions of our country--factories and corporations, schools and churches, homes. It affects morals.

No one can be untouched by what is happening. One can hardly sit "every man under his own vine" anymore. We feel an inter-relatedness that is undeniable and inescapable. I am involved with those around me in such a way that their values, thoughts and experiences affect me and those I love and vice versa.

Somewhere you and I must determine our responsibilities in life as citizens of this country and as concerned people about the welfare and hope of others. But, where do I begin?

Programs like Heartbeat are one way that we can affect what is happening in a meaningful and already tested and tried way. "Heartbeat" is a program that deals with this internal problem. It strikes to the core of personal and national problems in a way that causes people to see their lives differently, to realize more fully their responsibilities, to be more caring of those about them.

We can see the need. Perhaps in our own home. Or business. Here the mass becomes very personal. It reaches me in a way that affects my own happiness. It is hard to be unconcerned....

Needs. (Is this where we list our budget "packages" complete with description and costs? Then, out of this list "needs" are chosen for specific presentation to groups--given their own interests.)