

Abilene Christian University

Digital Commons @ ACU

Landon Saunders Documents

Landon Saunders Papers

1970

Spot Programming

Don Rutledge

Emory Tang

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

Spot Programming, Box 5, folder Programming Philosophy, 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.

SPOT PROGRAMMING

Don Rutledge

Man is basically egocentric. He is concerned first of all with what he wants, and then with what he needs. These two things are not always the same. One of the principal goals of spot programming is to make the listener or viewer want what he needs. Because the average listener or viewer does not know what he needs, or is even concerned with knowing, a way must be found to interrupt his listening or viewing in order to help him understand what he needs.

How can this be done when he is not the least bit interested in knowing? One of the most effective ways is through spot-programming. In this way, a person can often be jolted into hearing something that he needs in the midst of a program that is satisfying his desire for pleasure. The concept of sacrifice is worthwhile considering when discussing this type of listener or viewer. How much is he willing to put up with to see or hear what pleased him? Where is the tolerance barrier? The thief will consider the value of the loot plus the risk involved before breaking into the house or store. A construction worker, laboring hundreds of feet above the ground also contemplates the money to be earned in addition to the dangers before he decides whether or not to accept the job. How much "religion" will the teenager tolerate to hear his favorite rock music?

I'm afraid much of our Christian broadcasting is done without ever considering these factors. Many times when a listener first hears a spot, or a fishhook, or a micro-message, it is considered the medicine, and the other programs are the sugar that makes it go down. Even though the medicine may be exactly what he needs, he doesn't know it and needs a spoonful of sugar to make it go down. But once it does go down, we have the assurance from the Word of God that it will not return void. Perhaps he will be like the little boy who had to take his medicine with a spoonful of honey. After awhile he began to like the medicine without the honey, and finally liked it better than the honey. The spot can make the uninterested man desire the medicine. But in order for the medicine to do a person any good, he has to take it. Some people wouldn't get within a mile of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But the spot can help make him see his need and help him want to know more about Him. As for the "how" of producing spots, I believe everyone must use his own methods using his own abilities. However, there are at least three guidelines which we Christian broadcasters can all use.

First of all, the listener, or the viewer, must feel talked with and not talked to. For the man who already knows his need the sermon is not only helpful, but necessary. But for the ordinary man in the street who is much more interested in his upcoming fishing trip, or in the stock market than he is in his relationship with God, preaching will often be resented and the dial is full of stations where he won't have to tolerate it. But if the spot can be presented in an adequate way he will consider it a conversation, and not a sermon. The tolerance barrier can be broken and he may willingly listen to what he needs.

Secondly, the spots should be problem-centered. As Christians we know that the problems men face daily are only symptoms of the deeper and more serious problem of sin. But he does not know it. His problems may be financial, physical, marital, or any one of a multitude of problems. If we can touch the spot where he is sensitive, we may be able to get him to swallow the medicine. We won't have his attention for very long, so we must make the time count. If the spot is not of professional quality we won't have his attention at all. There is far too much competition to be able to get away with amateurism, even if the spot is short.

Finally, the spots should be current. There's very little use building the spot around the death of Martin Luther King at the moment when every ear and eye are upon the astronauts on the moon. The world is moving at a terrific pace. 1970 is not 1969. With 1970 comes new concepts, new events and new problems. The spot should be built around what is happening now. Of course, the message of the spot never changes. It is the one absolute. For Gospel broadcasters, there is just one basic message, and that is that man is a sinner and must come to God through the person of Jesus Christ. The bait changes because there are different species of fish. We can use all kinds of gimmicks, special sound effects, good music, trick recordings, and so forth. But the message must remain the same. Behind the idea of spot programming is the basic concept of sowing. We cannot expect to draw the net and see thousands of people come to Christ as the direct result of spot programming. I don't know of any broadcasters who have had this experience. It is basically a ministry of sowing the Word of God.

This means at least three things. In the first place, we should not expect instant conversions by the multitudes. Thank the Lord, some do receive Christ as Savior as a direct result of the spots, but relatively few do. Secondly, we should be prepared to have an adequate

follow-up ministry either ourselves, or in cooperation with other organizations. A goal of the spot should be to make further contacts. Get them to respond by phone, by letter, or in person. Then follow them up with phone calls, letters or personal contacts, or all three.

The third ramification concerning the concept of sowing is that it is essential that the Scriptures be used. God has promised to honor His Word and not necessarily what man says about it. A spot without the Word lacks the vital power to get men to want what they need. It's like a knife without any edge to it.

Who should use spot programming? Probably not everyone. Probably not every Christian station. IF the audience is the kind that will listen to good old KXXZ from dawn to dark, no matter what the programming, simply because it is our Christian station, then I don't see much need for spot programming. ~~But if we are truly desirous of reaching that person who in all likelihood would not hear it in any other way, then the spot is one of the ways of accomplishing the goal.~~

The spot has serious limitations that are obvious. It's a little difficult to teach doctrine in 30 or 60 seconds. We would be much better off putting our time into material that will accomplish our aims. If we have already built an audience, let's find out what that audience needs, and find ways to meet those needs. The 15 or 20-minute program may be the answer. But if we are concerned about the millions who won't listen to a sermon and aren't interested in the medicine, then the spot is capable of helping them to want what they need.

SPOT PROGRAMMING

Emery Tang

The Telespot, or the spot approach has many advantages. You will recall by psychological laws, these spots long after you have forgotten what I have said. And that is what I am interested in. The impact of the audio visual is something that we, as churchmen, have been slow to realize and which of course, industry in it's effort to sell us material products has learned long ago. I said in an earlier talk that it is not so much that you see every one of the spots that we have produced, nor are we at all claiming that each spot contains a compendium of theology, but you can see that by their variety the entire gamut of life can be covered.

What is happening now that we have gained some experience is that we are developing what we might call a telespot mentality. A way of thinking. What we are receiving now in the mail is suggestions from people to produce a telespot on an issue they consider important. And generally speaking the issues that we want to emphasize, the Presence of God, the Love of Christ, the need for authority and reverence, all stem from the foundation of our deep commitment to Christ Himself. In the technique that we adopt, you will notice a great care to avoid what we might call negativism or the moralistic approach. If we are the children of God, as indeed we are, then certainly we have every reason to rejoice. I suspect that this approach of using the negativistic approach in religious preaching has been the greatest disservice to the teachings of Christ. Brief as these are, they are positive. They are uplifting, and they offer a reason for hope, while still challenging the viewer or the listener. And now I want you to hear what has been released on radio stations in the United States, called "Listen for the sounds of love in your life". And don't forget, by this shall all people know that you are my disciples, that you show love for one another.

These audio spots were delivered to 3,000 radio stations without any credit line; they were judged among the top 10 in world competitions for commercials this year, released since December '69. From this involvement in radio as well as in television, and because of a number of appearances on national television in the talk shows and the showing of spots and discussing this, we have received offerings from music writers, from actors, from writers of scripts, trying to somehow get involved in what we are calling now, the Love campaign. The response has simply been phenomenal. To hear the stations praise the response from the audiences is extremely rewarding. The latest was a billboard in San Diego which says, "Listen for the Sounds of Love on Station WXYZ". We have requests from schools asking us for samples of telespots that the children are talking about around the country so that they can write their own telespot.